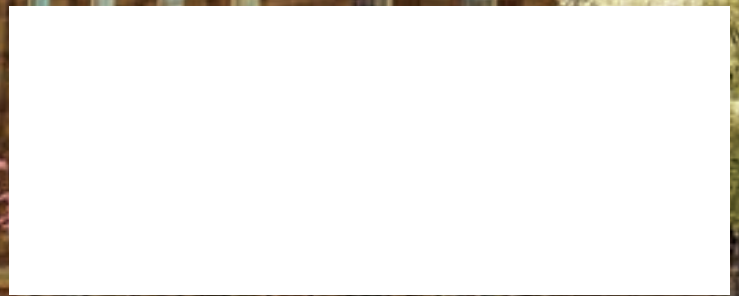


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Illinois Country Living

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The Smartphone Road Trip Mobile technology transforms travel



Chicago Doctor Invents Affordable Hearing Aid Outperforms Many Higher Priced Hearing Aids

Reported by J. Page

CHICAGO: A local board-certified Ear, Nose, Throat (ENT) physician, Dr. S. Cherukuri, has just shaken up the hearing aid industry with the invention of a medical-grade, affordable hearing aid. **This revolutionary hearing aid is designed to help millions of people with hearing loss who cannot afford—or do not wish to pay—the much higher cost of traditional hearing aids.**

**“Perhaps the best quality-to-price ratio in the hearing aid industry” – Dr. Babu, M.D.
Board-Certified ENT Physician**

Dr. Cherukuri knew that untreated hearing loss could lead to depression, social isolation, anxiety, and symptoms consistent with Alzheimer’s dementia. **He could not understand why the cost for hearing aids was so high when the prices on so many consumer electronics like TVs, DVD players, cell phones and digital cameras had fallen.**

Since Medicare and most private insurance do not cover the costs of hearing aids, which traditionally run between \$2,000-\$6,000 for a pair, many of the doctor’s patients could not afford the expense. Dr. Cherukuri’s goal was to find a reasonable solution that would help with the most common types of hearing loss at an affordable price, not unlike the **“one-size-fits-most” reading glasses** available at drug stores.

He evaluated numerous hearing devices and sound amplifiers, including those seen on television. Without fail, almost all of these were found to amplify bass/low frequencies (below 1000 Hz) and not useful in amplifying the frequencies related to the human voice.

Inspiration From a Surprising Source

The doctor’s inspiration to defeat the powers-that-be that kept inexpensive hearing aids out of the hands of the public actually came from a new cell

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phone he had just purchased. **“I felt that if someone could devise an affordable device like an iPhone® for about \$200 that could do all sorts of things, I could create a hearing aid at a similar price.”**

Affordable Hearing Aid With Superb Performance

The high cost of hearing aids is a result of layers of middlemen and expensive unnecessary features. Dr. Cherukuri concluded that it would be possible to develop a medical grade hearing aid without sacrificing the quality of components. The result is the MDHearingAid® PRO, well under \$200 each when buying a pair. **It has been declared to be the best low-cost hearing aid that amplifies the range of sounds associated with the human voice without overly amplifying background noise.**

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“LOWEST AFFORDABLE PRICE”**

*“I have been wearing hearing aids for over 25 years and these are the best behind-the-ear aids I have tried. **Their sound quality rivals that of my \$3,000 custom pair of Phonak Xtra digital ITE.**” — Gerald Levy*

*“I have a \$2,000 Resound Live hearing aid in my left ear and the MDHearingAid® PRO in the right ear. **I am not able to notice a significant difference in sound quality between the two hearing aids.**” —Dr. May, ENT Physician*

*“We ordered two hearing aids for my mother on Sunday, and the following Wednesday they were in our mailbox! **Unbelievable! Now for the best part—they work so great, my mother says she hasn’t heard so good for many years, even with her \$2,000 digital! It was so great to see the joy on her face. She is 90 years young again.**” —Al Peterson*

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Smartphones are transforming the way we travel.

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Planting seeds for the future

Co-op youth leadership programs truly make a difference

As spring arrives we immediately think about blooming flowers, corn planting season and planting seeds in our gardens. The legislative session also blossoms in both Springfield and Washington D.C. But I want to talk with you this month about the co-op programs that help plant the seeds of future leadership – the scholarship and youth leadership programs where the electric and telephone co-ops of Illinois invest in our future leaders.

Cooperatives have always been involved in youth leadership programs as part of their commitment to community principle. Trying to develop the growth of our young leaders, we're helping them understand the role of government, whether it is local governance of their electric cooperative, or with our state and federal legislature.

We also know that our young leaders need a good education. But higher education is expensive and saddles too many young people with debt. Local cooperative scholarships can help with educational needs. And, our Illinois Electric Cooperatives Memorial Scholarship program also provides help. This past scholarship season we evaluated nearly 250 applications from young cooperative members from across the state and awarded seven \$1,500 scholarships. So if you have a young person in your family trying to figure out how to fund their college education certainly contact your local cooperative and apply for those scholarship opportunities.

When it comes to understanding our legislative process we have two programs. One is the Youth Day in Springfield trip and the second program is the Youth to Washington tour. The Youth Day in Springfield trip

will engage more than 200 high school students and chaperones who will leave their cooperative office early one morning and travel to the state capitol. Electric cooperative staff will help them understand how a bill becomes law and why it is important to understand who their elected officials are. We want them to know that the issues being debated have a direct impact on them either personally, their family, or their family's business.

Cooperatives take this seriously because we are democratically controlled organizations. Our membership owns the electric cooperative and at an annual meeting they elect directors to govern the policies and direction of their local electric cooperative. So cooperative leaders respect the state and federal process because it is the same democratic foundation on which we build our organizations.

After the Youth to Springfield trip we often hear that the trip opened their eyes to a career opportunity they may have never really thought about. Political science or law might be a career they would enjoy because it is a chance to make a difference for people. It sometimes impacts their college decisions and the major they will take.

Next, from the students who attend the Springfield trip we will help select some 80 students who will take a 10-day trip to Washington, D.C. We think the Youth to Washington Tour is an intense and involved program and offers opportunities that really impact young people. In this new world of social media these young people will stay in touch with each other because of this experience. They create life-long friends from this life changing experience.

This trip makes a big impression on all the students who go, and the

chaperones too. Some students even go back and become an intern in a congressional office. It truly helps plant the seeds of leadership.

For example, there is a young man who went on this trip just a few years ago, Luke Sailer. Luke was just hired as Senior Public Service Administrator in the Illinois Department of Agriculture. This trip peaked his interest for a career in public service. Another young man who represented Norris Electric Cooperative on the tour, Nick Klitzing, became involved in Governor Rauner's campaign and then worked on the transition team. Now he is Executive Director for the Illinois Republican Party. That's just two examples of young people whose careers and lives have taken a dramatic turn because of the influence of the cooperative youth programs through your local electric cooperative.

I believe we are just one piece of the effort that is needed to help develop young leaders who will in turn come back and make rural America a good place to live, work and play.

There is nothing worse than having a leadership vacuum or void. We need the benefit of that young leadership and enthusiasm to run our own organizations whether it is a co-op, a township, county, state or even your local church council.

I urge you to also get involved locally in planting the seeds for young rural leaders. ■

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.

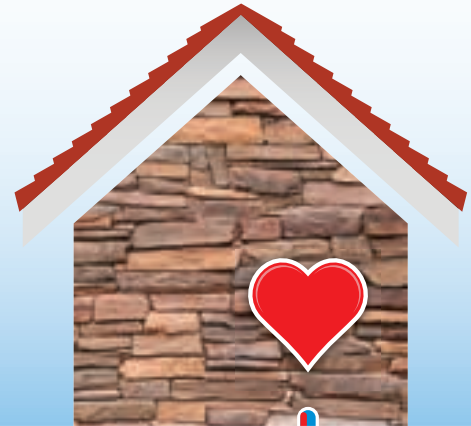


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Illinois board member part of national leadership team

Two electric cooperative CEOs and a director will comprise the new leadership of the NRECA Board for the next two years. The new NRECA Board leadership team is President Mel Coleman, Vice President Phil Carson and Secretary-Treasurer Curtis Wynn. Carson is a board director for Tri-County Electric Cooperative and the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives.

"This is a partnership," Coleman told the board after his election. "It's a board of very talented people who represent 47 states."

Carson has been a director at Tri-County Electric Cooperative in Mt. Vernon, Ill., since 1999. He joined the

NRECA board as Illinois Director in 2006.

He is a dairy farmer on a 160-year-old family farm and pastor at First Presbyterian Church in Nashville, Ill.

Carson joked that the duties of the vice president include toting the president's luggage. On a serious note, "you have done me a great honor by putting me in this position," he told the board. "This will be a great opportunity to grow."

Wynn is the newcomer to the board leadership, though not to the whole board. The CEO of Roanoke Electric Cooperative in Aulander has represented North Carolina on the national board since 2007. ■

Illinois Electric and Telephone Cooperatives Youth Day held in Springfield

Students from across Illinois met with their legislative representatives during the Illinois Electric and Telephone Cooperatives Youth Day on Wednesday, March 25 in Springfield. More than 250 students from around Illinois had an opportunity to visit the State Capitol, view state government in action and question their legislators on key issues.

While touring the Capitol complex, students were invited into the office of Secretary of State Jesse White and given the chance to meet David Nance, an Abraham Lincoln Presenter.

During lunch, Lieutenant Governor Evelyn Sanguinetti addressed students and chaperones and challenged them to take an interest in the political process and encouraged them to talk to their state senators and representatives about issues that interest them. Wyatt Reid, the 2014-15 Illinois Youth Leadership Council Representative from Rock Energy Cooperative, spoke about his experiences on the Youth to Washington tour and challenged attendees to maintain an interest in their cooperatives and the political process. While in Springfield, the



students also visited the Old State Capitol and Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum.

Youth Day is designed to introduce young rural leaders to state government. There were 26 co-ops from across the state represented at the event.

Representative Jerry F. Costello, II (D-116th) was one of many leaders who talked to students. Speaking to Monroe County Electric Cooperative student representatives he said, "I think vocational education is an area we need to concentrate on more. Not every kid is going to go on to do

a masters program, or go on to law school or med school. For me the two areas that we need to work on are protecting the elderly, people who can't protect themselves, and then also education. The only way that we can come out of where we are at in this country and this state is helping to educate younger people. You are the future and what happens with you all, how prepared you are to be the next generation of leaders, that is the only way things change. So to think that we are going to cut education and change things in a positive way I think is backwards thinking." ■



Electric cars could help co-ops control peaks

Many electric co-ops can already turn off a member's air conditioning and hot water heater to reduce peak demand and save money. The next step in load control could involve electric cars. That idea is already in the works.

Eight automakers, the Electric Power Research Institute and 15 utilities are teaming up to develop a communications platform to allow electric cars and utilities to "talk" to each other, via the cloud.

The implications could be huge. For example, if your co-op needed to shed

load on a peak day, it would be able to contact the electric car and instruct it to temporarily stop charging.

"This project is an important step in enabling plug-in vehicles to reach their potential as a valuable distributed resource that can increase grid stability, improve power quality and reduce demand peaks," said Steven Center, Vice President of the Environmental Business Development Office at American Honda.

At NRECA's Cooperative Research Network, Brian Sloboda, Senior

Program Manager, noted that, "Co-ops are interested in this type of technology, but they are not waiting on automakers to help craft a solution. Several co-ops are developing rate structures to encourage car owners to charge off-peak. Most cars come equipped with the ability to be programed to charge during certain times," Sloboda said.

But he also pointed out that this technology is primarily important for people using the faster 240-volt Level 2 chargers. ■

Source: Electric Co-op Today

Free co-op conference available for youth leaders

Each June, the Illinois Cooperative Council (ICC) hosts a two-day youth conference for high school FFA members from across the state to increase awareness of cooperatives. This event, to be held June 4-5 on the Macomb campus of Western Illinois University, provides leadership development opportunities for future cooperative leaders. Each year, approximately 75 students attend and learn how cooperatives began in Illinois, how they are governed and led, who they benefit and the importance they play in our everyday lives.

Students are able to attend the conference free due to the generous sponsorships from co-op businesses. During the event, students learn about the cooperative principles and tour local cooperatives while staying on campus and experiencing college life.

For nearly 25 years, the conference was held on the campus of Southern Illinois University, Carbondale. In order to make attendance more convenient for northern Illinois students, the ICC decided to begin a rotation

between WIU and SIU beginning this year. The WIU School of Agriculture is hosting the conference and the Illinois Cooperative Development Center, a program of the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs at WIU, is providing conference management services.

"The ICC is fortunate to have the support of so many dedicated cooperative-minded institutions throughout the state," said Nancy McDonald, ICC Chairman and Association of Illinois Electric Cooperative's Marketing Administrator. "It is our hope that through widespread cooperative business support, students will see demonstrated all seven of the cooperative principles, but especially #5: *Education, Training and Information*; #6: *Cooperation among Cooperatives*; and #7: *Concern for Community*."

The Illinois Cooperative Council was organized in 1966 to promote the growth and development of Illinois cooperatives. To learn more visit www.illinois.coop or on Facebook at Illinois Cooperative Council. ■



Final geothermal energy grant will save Macomb church

A \$50,000 GeoAlliance grant was presented in February to the First Baptist Church of Macomb. The grant will help offset the cost of the highly energy efficient geothermal heating and cooling system that was recently installed in the church's new fellowship hall.

Although the grant program is now closed, GeoAlliance was a collaboration between the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives (AIEC) in Springfield and Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation in Chicago (ICECF). The program was developed in 2003 to promote the use of highly energy efficient, clean and safe geothermal technology in commercial applications. The foundation

funded the GeoAlliance grant money; the association was the program's administrator and the grant money was re-granted to electric cooperatives within Illinois, such as McDonough Power Cooperative, to pass to not-for-profit entities in their service territories.

Nancy McDonald, Marketing Administrator at the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives, who presented the grant check to the church, said, "Geothermal systems generally save from 30-70 percent on heating and cooling."

It is estimated that the 51 projects in the \$1.5 million GeoAlliance grant program will experience energy savings of more than \$699,000 in annual savings. ■

Co-ops to build more community solar projects

Illinois Rural Electric Cooperative, Winchester, was the first in the state to build a 500 kilowatt community solar facility. Following that project Jo-Carroll Energy, Elizabeth, announced the completion of a community solar project of 456 solar panels, each with a capacity of 275 watts. In March, Prairie Power, Inc. announced plans for two 500 kilowatt community solar projects, one to be built at Shelby Electric Cooperative and the other at Spoon River Electric Cooperative.

"Our consumers own us," said Prairie Power's President and CEO Jay Bartlett. "These consumer members are best served by us having a diverse electricity resource supply portfolio. Our consumer members have expressed an interest in renewable resources such as wind and solar generation. We are working to fulfill their desire."

Prairie Power, Inc. is the supplier of bulk electricity supply and electric highline transmission services to 10 member-owned electric distribution cooperatives in central Illinois. Prairie Power, Inc., along with Southern Illinois Power Cooperative and Wabash Valley Power



Cooperative, already own wind generation at a facility located just east of Paxton, Ill.

Construction will conclude later this summer. After that all of the nearly 80,000 consumer members of the 10 Prairie Power, Inc. member cooperatives will be able to sign up to purchase electricity directly from these solar projects. There will also be a website where anyone can go to see how much electricity these solar and wind generation projects are producing. Visit the Prairie Power, Inc. website at www.ppi.coop.

In addition to Shelby Electric Cooperative and Spoon River Electric Cooperative, Prairie Power, Inc. provides wholesale electricity to Adams Electric Cooperative, Camp Point; Coles-Moultrie Electric Cooperative, Mattoon; Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative, Paxton; Illinois Rural Electric Cooperative, Winchester; Jo-Carroll Energy, Elizabeth; McDonough Power Cooperative, Macomb; Menard Electric Cooperative, Petersburg; and Western Illinois Electrical Coop., Carthage. ■



*I*t's not about the parades and picnics, and it's not about the extra day you may have off from work. It's about the brave men and women who aren't here to enjoy those activities because they gave their lives for our freedom. Before you start your fun Memorial Day activities, be sure to pause and remember their sacrifices.

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TOGETHER WE SAVE

The Smartphone Road Trip

Mobile technology transforms travel



By Russell A. Graves

I love road trips. In fact, I travel for a living.

For the past two decades, I've made a living as a professional writer and photographer, traveling back roads in search of great stories to tell. Planning each trip demands time and effort, so I'm always searching for the latest technology that will make me more productive and efficient. Even though the Internet has streamlined trip planning, on-the-fly changes to trips were not easy. Once plans were in place, it took more work to change them.

Smartphones make road trips much easier and more spontaneous. The paradigm has shifted: Instead of simply carrying a phone, I—like all road trippers now—carry a powerful handheld computer that just happens to make phone calls.

Just as the smartphone has replaced alarm clocks, cameras and wrist-watches, it also has taken the place of common travel accessories, like the GPS locator.

Before the smartphone, I used a dedicated GPS unit that I switched

from vehicle to vehicle when I traveled. With my iPhone, I have a built-in GPS mapping program that I use to plan trips. Once on the road, the same device gives me turn-by-turn directions until I reach my destination. It not only provides the quickest route to my destination, it also recommends other routes that take me off the beaten path—perfect for the times I want to take the road less traveled.

In addition to mapping, I also prepare for my trip by storing an automobile insurance card on my phone, along with a gas-tracking app that helps me identify the cheapest fuel stops, and a playlist customized to play my favorite traveling songs while I'm on the open road.

Along the way (while I'm stopped, of course), I check out Wikipedia on my phone's browser. The Wikipedia mobile site is GPS-enabled and will suggest articles about nearby points of interest. You can immerse yourself in local culture by learning more about the people and places nearby.

Smartphones, smart cameras

One of the ways smartphones excel is as both a still and video camera. You no longer require a dedicated camera to capture your travel memories. Sales figures indicate consumers have figured this out. In 2013, camera-enabled smartphone sales topped 1 billion—a 38 percent increase over the previous year, according to a report in *PCWorld*. During the same time, digital camera sales dropped 36 percent, mostly in the mid- and low-priced models. The trend is clear.

For photography, the in-phone camera app is the best place to start. The phone I use has settings for standard images in the 4:3 format and square format, and it includes a panorama setting. I use the panorama mode to take wide-angle shots from the road and to capture the broad vistas that smaller formats can't.

While the standard camera settings are fine for most uses, I often use apps that utilize the camera and the processing power of the phone's computer to give pictures a vintage feel. Even

though Hipstamatic is my favorite app, there are several others available in the Apple, Android or Google formats that add effects like filters, filmstrip borders, frames, light leaks and other creative embellishments.

For the traveler, one of the greatest tricks that a smartphone camera performs is embedding GPS information in each picture. Now, instead of guessing where pictures were taken once you're back home, you can rely on any one of several low-cost photo-management software solutions to extract the GPS location from the photo and pinpoint the location on a software-generated map. These maps save the key points of a trip and help you relive and share the memories later.

In addition to shooting still photos, smartphones also are equipped with high-definition video cameras. I use my HD phone camera sparingly because I own dedicated

high-definition video cameras that I prefer. However, the smartphone can produce impressive video. The smartphone offers the ability to shoot slow motion, use apps to record video with a vintage 8mm look and do on-the-fly editing along with seamless posting to social sites like YouTube or Facebook.

Stay connected

Speaking of sharing, wouldn't it be nice if you could take a picture on Integra and cross-post to other social platforms so you can keep in touch with all of your family, friends and followers? You can. All it takes is a single touch of the screen.

Most social apps have the ability to cross-post to a variety of networks. If you post to one site, you can post to many other social accounts on the go, all at once. It is a real time-saver.

Staying connected has advantages beyond social interactions. When you

are away on your travels, you can completely monitor your home from the road. Most security companies offer ways to monitor your home alarm and watch home-security cameras using your smartphone. You can also check to see whether doors are locked, close or open garage doors and activate or adjust the thermostat from the phone.

I use a Nest thermostat system that I can turn off when I leave. Half an hour or so before I arrive home, I can log in from my phone and turn on the heat or air conditioning so the house is comfortable when I walk in the front door after a trip.

Television providers also have technology that allows customers to set and manage recordings from a smart device. Gone are the days of missing your favorite show or the big game because you are driving in the countryside. From anywhere I have cellphone or Wi-Fi service, I can log

The Wikipedia mobile site is GPS-enabled and will suggest articles about nearby points of interest.





The best tip? When you get to that cool destination, be sure to turn off your phone for a while and enjoy the trip.

in to my Dish Network account, set my home DVR to record a show and either enjoy it from my phone while I am away or watch it when I get home.

Extending your trip longer than you'd initially planned? Use your smartphone to connect to your bank account and transfer money from one account to another or pay your bills remotely.

Make a note of that

While it goes without saying that you should not divert your attention from the road by looking at your phone, you easily can use the notes or audio memo app on your phone to speak and record your thoughts. Recording an audio memo is just like it sounds: You talk to the phone and it records your voice.

The notes or other speech-recognition apps such as Dragon make trip journaling easy. Using voice-recognition capability built into your phone, you can speak to the phone, and the software transcribes speech to text on the screen. When you get home and you are ready to put your notes with photos or videos, it's easy to email your

notes, edit them in word-processing software and then copy and paste them into a book layout or any other presentation method of your choosing.

I've found that I often speak to my phone and take notes on topics of interest that I've seen, story ideas, great restaurants or various musings that come to mind. The ability to take notes without physically writing something down has really increased my efficiency.

Eating and sleeping on the go

If you're like many travelers, the most important questions you face are, "Where am I going to stay?" and "What am I going to eat?" Not too long ago, staying in a hotel or eating at a restaurant with which you were unfamiliar was a hit-or-miss proposition. Even if you are choosing among locations of a national food or lodging chain, local management can make a significant difference in your experience. That's where the crowd can help.

Many downloadable apps double as a social network that offers input on lodging and eating establishments. The hotels.com app finds available lodging

in a given area, publishes the price and provides user-generated feedback about the quality of the hotel's amenities. Once you've found a place you like, you can book it from your phone in a matter of seconds.

The Yelp app works in much the same way that hotel apps work. Except with Yelp, the mainstay is providing crowd-sourced reviews of restaurants by giving patrons an opportunity to rate the establishment and provide feedback about the quality of food and service. Take the time to read the reviews and gather as much information as possible. I've found some great local eateries this way, and you can, too.

The bottom line is that the technology in your hand lets you focus less on planning and more on traveling. Smartphones are an indispensable tool for road trippers.

The best tip? When you get to that cool destination, be sure to turn off your phone for a while and enjoy the trip.

Photos courtesy of The Tourism Bureau ILLINOISouth.

Travel technology at a glance

The purpose of technology is to make our lives easier. With that in mind, smartphones help every traveler spend less time planning and more time enjoying the trip and making memories.

Here's a list of apps and smartphone functions that can make your travel easier:

Planning

Apple Maps: This app is built in to the iPhone and is proprietary to the Apple device. For other phones, Google Maps is a good alternative. Each will map out point-to-point directions and guide you along your route.

Gas Buddy: This app and others like it use the location service on your phone to track your whereabouts and tell you the cheapest gas prices nearby.

Insurance: Most insurance providers offer apps that let you carry your auto insurance on your phone. It's a great time-saver when you need to present up-to-date coverage information.

Information

I default to the Wikipedia app to update information. I love its encyclopedic format and the way it uses the GPS location to suggest local articles. It's a great way to research the local history that makes your trip more interesting.

Photography

Use your camera app for general photography because smartphones are as good as point-and-shoot cameras. GPS-enabled smartphones can geo-tag your images so you know precisely where they were taken. It's a great way to preserve the memories of a trip. There is a ton of information online to learn how to become an accomplished smartphone photographer.

Verizonwireless.com is an especially helpful website. Type "nick-lavecchia-morningcoffee" in the search field and get tips from a professional photographer.

Hipstamatic: This phone app uses your built-in camera and adds cool, artistic embellishments to the photos. I love the way it gives my images a vintage feel, and I take most of my on-the-road images using this app.

Super 8: When I shoot video on my smartphone, I often use the Super 8 app, which takes my high-def phone camera footage and makes it look like it was shot by a Super 8 camera from back in the 1970s.

While you're away

Home security: The Nest app connects to my Nest home thermostat so I can control the air and heat while I'm away. The house is at the perfect temperature when I arrive home.

The "connected home" is not the name of any specific app, but it does describe the incredible technology that's available. With a smartphone, you can use apps to control security cameras in your home, lock doors, check garage doors and even set your digital video recorder.



Enjoy the trip

Journaling and social networking: Notes is an integrated app on my Apple iPhone with which I can type up random thoughts while I'm out of the car. What's really cool is that I can talk to the phone and it transcribes my words into text.

Facebook, Twitter and Instagram: These social networking sites all have apps so you can post your adventures on the go. With Instagram, you can cross-post to Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Flickr and Foursquare. So instead of wasting a lot of time posting to multiple accounts, you can post to one and you're done.

Yelp: Yelp is a great way to discover local eateries. Using real user reviews, Yelp rates restaurants. Using the geo-location services built into your phone, Yelp determines your location and makes recommendations on where to eat.

Hotels.com: This app finds a place to lay your head. Like Yelp, the app provides prices and user ratings, and it allows you to book your hotel immediately.

Kids: Consider having games—Angry Birds or Minecraft Pocket Edition come to mind—and playlists of songs your children like at the ready for the times when the kids get antsy in the car.

Last but not least

Chargers: Finally, you need to keep your phone charged. Use your car charger when possible. If you get away from your vehicle—on a remote camping trip, for example—consider using a portable solar panel or a battery extender to help you keep your charge.

Proper pool preparation includes a GFCI

Young girl killed by household current at family swimming pool

The sweltering heat of summer encourages many to choose to cool off in swimming pools. Although pools can be both refreshing and fun, it is important to make sure all electrical safety precautions have been taken before jumping into a pool.

Homeowners should make sure that the National Electric Code (NEC) has been followed for wiring and that ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) are properly installed on equipment in areas around pools, spas and hot tubs.

At 10 years old, Caitlyn Mackenzie was killed by household current when she touched a lamp while still damp after swimming in a pool. Her life may have been spared if the outdoor outlet that the lamp was connected to was equipped with a GFCI.

Water and electricity do not go well together, and GFCIs were made to help prevent electrical accidents when the two mix. A GFCI monitors the flow of electricity in a circuit. If there is any irregularity, the GFCI will shut off the electric current. If GFCIs are not already installed in your home or near your pool, contact a qualified electrician to install them. It is recommended that you test your GFCIs on a monthly basis to make sure that they do not need to be replaced.

Safe Electricity advises swimmers to use battery-powered appliances and electronics around pools instead of connecting them to an outlet. Additionally, pool owners should have an emergency plan posted in plain view in the pool area with instructions on how to assist someone who is suffering from an electrical shock.

If someone has been in contact with electricity, do not touch the person. He or she may still be in contact with the source and may be energized. If the person is in the pool,



do not get in the water. Make sure to call 911 and the electric utility immediately.

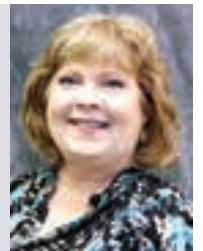
If it can be done safely, turn off the electricity at the source (the circuit breaker or breaker box). Otherwise, wait for the help of emergency responders. Once the source of electricity is off, then it is okay to check for vital signs. However, do not move a person with an electrical injury unless he or she is in immediate danger.

Anyone who has come into contact with electricity should see a doctor to check for internal injuries, even

if there are no obvious signs or symptoms.

For more information on electrical safety around water, go to 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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How to prune for renewal and rejuvenation

Two methods for pruning spring-flowering shrubs after blooming

Okay, here's one last column this year on pruning.

If all goes well, everything should have been in full bloom sometime last month or at least by this month. Forsythia, deutzia, lilacs, viburnums and spirea are just some of the many, many flowering shrubs peppering the landscape with colors ranging from white to yellow to orange to red to pinks and purples.

After a long and dreary winter, any blooms on any plant are appreciated.

Spring-flowering shrubs, though, have their own special needs to keep them going strong year after year, especially since few of them have any ornamental characteristics after they're done flowering.

That comes down to pruning and fertilizing.

If you took the clippers and loppers to spring-flowering shrubs back in February and March, you probably wiped out most of the flower buds, and thus are left with mostly bare branches right about now. And, probably a nagging spouse wondering where all the flowers went especially if the neighbors are enjoying a lush kaleidoscope of color.

The good news is you probably didn't kill the plant, but if you persist year after year to prune the plants in the late winter, your yard will never have spring colors except for bulbs. All those spring-flowering branches set their flower buds in the fall.

As a basic rule of thumb, don't prune spring-flowering branches until AFTER they finish blooming.

Fortunately, most of the early bloomers produce their flowers without spending time producing leaves first. So, you'll find the forsythia with yellow flowers on naked stems. Viburnums will flower with clusters of flowers up and down the stems.



The common lilac, which is one of the main plants with few redeeming characteristics once it's done blooming, may produce some leaves under the flower head, but not a massive amount compared to all the tubular fragrant flowers it has.

Once the branches are done blooming, that's the time to prune.

There are two basic methods: rejuvenation and renewal.

Renewal is the ideal method for multi-stemmed shrubs. Every two or three years, select the oldest stems and cut them back all the way to ground. This may seem counterproductive since you'd think the oldest branches produce the best.

But, sadly, like most things in life, it's the youngest that are the most vigorous. Those young twigs eventually will produce the best flowers. So, cut the old, leave the young.

An added benefit is the fact the older ones tend to be in the middle of the plant. Removing those opens up the plant to more light, allowing less disease and more vigorous growth.

On the other hand, it's easier to


cut the young whips at the outskirts of the plant instead of the big ones growing in the middle.

If the plant is so overgrown that you'd rather do anything else than prune out the old stems, consider cutting the entire plant back to about a couple inches from the ground. This is easier the more times you do it. This whack it back, way back method will rejuvenate the plant and it will respond with lots of new shoots that in a year or so will be a mass of bloom.

Whatever you do with flowering shrubs, just don't whack them back by half from the top. That doesn't produce all the new stems at ground level, but does produce weak shoots at the pruning point, which means poor blooms in later years. ■

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







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

Loose Saggy Neck Skin – Can Any Cream Cure Turkey Neck?

DEAR DORRIS: I'm a woman who is 64 years young who suffers from really loose skin under my chin and on my lower neck.



I hate the term, but my grandkids say I have "turkey neck" and frankly, I've had enough of it! I have tried some creams designed to help tighten and firm that loose, saggy skin, but they did not work. Is there any cream out there that Might help my loose neck skin?

Turkey Neck, Rockford, IL

DEAR TURKEY-NECK: In fact, there is a very potent cream on the market that is designed to firm, tighten and invigorate skin cells on the neck area. It is called the **Dermagist Neck Restoration Cream**.

This cream contains an instant-effect ingredient that aims to tighten the skin naturally, as well as deep-moisturizing ingredients aiming to firm the skin and make it more supple. Amazingly, the Dermagist Neck Restoration Cream also has Stem Cells taken from Malus Domesticus, a special apple from Switzerland.

These apple stem cells target your skin's aging cells, and strive to bring back their youthful firmness, and elasticity. As an alternative to the scary surgeries or face lifts that many people resort to, this cream has the potential to deliver a big punch to the loose saggy skin of the neck. **The Dermagist Neck Restoration Cream is available online at Dermagist.com** or you can order or learn more by **calling toll-free, 888-771-5355**. Oh, I almost forgot... I was given a promo code when I placed my order that gave me 10% off. The code was **"ILN3"**. It's worth a try to see if it still works.



Chicken Paprikas and Halusky

Chicken Paprikas and Halusky (above)

(Slovak Chicken and Dumplings)

3 lb. boneless, skinless chicken breasts,
cut into 2x2" pieces
1 med. onion, chopped
2 T. butter or margarine
2 tsp. sweet paprika
1 c. sour cream
1/4 c. flour

1/2 c. milk
Chicken broth
Dumplings:
2 1/2 c. flour
2 eggs
1 tsp. salt
3/4 c. water or milk

In a 6 quart pot, saute' onion in butter; add paprika. Add chicken pieces and brown for 10 minutes. Next, add enough chicken broth to cover chicken, cover pot and simmer for 45 minutes until chicken is tender. In a separate bowl, blend flour, milk and sour cream. Remove 1/2 cup of chicken broth and add to sour cream mixture. Add this to chicken. Simmer an additional 15 minutes, stirring occasionally. While chicken is cooking, combine dumplings ingredients in a large mixing bowl and form an elastic consistency dough. Beat well. Drop by teaspoons into a large pot filled 3/4 full with boiling water and 1 tsp. salt. Cook about 5 minutes. When dumplings float to top, remove with a strainer into a separate bowl. Add butter to keep from sticking. Serve chicken and gravy over dumplings.

Beef and Spinach Pinwheels

4 oz. cream cheese, softened
1 tsp. prepared horseradish
4 (8") flour tortillas

1 1/2 c. baby spinach leaves
6 oz. thinly sliced deli roast beef
4 oz. sliced Provolone cheese

In small mixing bowl, combine cream cheese and horseradish. Spread on one side of each tortilla. Top each with spinach leaves, roast beef and Provolone cheese. Tightly roll up. Wrap in plastic wrap. To serve, cut each tortilla into 1-inch pieces.

Wednesday Soup Lunch Bunch

Who: St. Paul Lutheran Church

Cost: \$12 includes shipping

Details: Soft-backed, spiral bound

Pages of recipes: 91

Send checks to: St. Paul Lutheran Church,

Attn: Judelle Murphy/Outreach Chair,
617 St. Lawrence Ave., Beloit, WI 53511 or
call 608-365-2994 or 608-365-7064.

Risotto ai Funghi

(Rice with Mushrooms)

2 c. Arborio rice
1 c. chopped onion
4 oz. dried porcini mushrooms
4 c. chicken or vegetable stock
1/4 c. chopped fresh parsley
1/4 c. dry white wine
1/2 c. grated Parmesan cheese
2 T. olive oil

Soak the porcini mushrooms in lukewarm water for 30 minutes; strain and reserve the liquid. Heat olive oil in a frying pan, add mushrooms, parsley and saute' gently for a few minutes; season to taste and set aside. Heat stock in saucepan. Saute' onion in olive oil until slightly brown, add rice and let it toast until light brown, stirring constantly. Add wine and liquid from the porcini mushrooms, stir until liquid evaporates. Add mushrooms and a couple of ladles of hot stock, just until rice is covered. Stir and simmer until nearly all the stock has been absorbed. Continue this manner until all the stock has been used. Once the rice is cooked (around 35 minutes), remove pan from heat, mix in Parmesan cheese and serve immediately.

Oreo-Strawberry Whip

4 c. fresh strawberries, divided
1 can sweetened condensed milk
1/4 c. lemon juice
1 - 8 oz. ctn. Cool Whip, thawed
8 Oreo cookies, finely chopped
1 T. melted butter

Line loaf pan with foil. Mash 2 cups strawberries. Stir in condensed milk, lemon juice and 2 cups of Cool Whip. Pour into pan. Mix together melted butter and chopped Oreos and sprinkle on top, pressing lightly into mixture. Cover and freeze 6 hours. Invert dessert onto plate and remove foil. Frost with remaining Cool Whip and garnish with sliced strawberries.

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

Taco Meatball Ring



LaMoine Christian Camp Cookbook

Who: LaMoine Christian Camp

Cost: \$15 for 1, \$25 for 2, includes shipping

Details: Soft-backed, spiral bound

Pages of recipes: 171

Send checks to: LaMoine Christian Service Camp & Retreat Center, Attn: Doug Hamer, 2760 E. County Rd. 1600, Tennessee, IL 62374 or call 217-654-2238.

Frozen Fruit Salad

- 2 c. sugar
- 2 c. water
- 12 oz. frozen orange juice
- 1 (No. 2) can crushed pineapple (in its own juice)
- 1 (No. 2) can apricots (in its own juice), drained and chopped
- 6 bananas, mashed
- 2 apples, chopped
- 3 peaches, fresh or canned, chopped
- 2 tsp. lemon juice

Heat sugar and water. Stir until sugar dissolves. Add orange juice and set aside. Mix pineapple, apricots, bananas, apples, peaches and lemon juice. Add to sugar mixture. Put in 5 oz. cups and freeze.

Black Bean and Corn Salad (below)

- 1/3 c. fresh lime juice
- 1/2 c. olive oil
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1/8 tsp. ground cayenne pepper
- 2 – 15 oz. can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 1/2 c. frozen kernel corn
- 1 avocado, peeled, pitted and diced
- 1 red bell pepper, chopped
- 2 tomatoes, chopped
- 6 green onions, thinly sliced
- 1/2 c. chopped fresh cilantro

Place lime juice, olive oil, garlic, salt and cayenne pepper in a small jar with lid. Shake until well mixed. Place beans, corn, avocado, bell pepper, tomatoes, onion and cilantro in a bowl. Shake lime dressing and pour over vegetables. Stir salad to coat vegetables with dressing. Serve.

Taco Meatball Ring (above)

- | | |
|---|---|
| 2 c. (8 oz.) shredded Cheddar cheese, divided | 1/2 head iceberg lettuce, shredded |
| 2 T. water | 1 med. tomato, chopped |
| 2 – 4 T. taco seasoning | 4 green onions, sliced |
| 1/2 lb. ground beef | 1/2 c. sliced ripe olives |
| 2 – 8 oz. tubes refrigerated crescent rolls | 2 sm. jalapeno peppers, seeded and sliced |
| | Sour cream and salsa, optional |

In a bowl, combine 1 cup cheese, water and taco seasoning. Add beef and mix well. Shape into 16 balls. Place 1 inch apart in an ungreased 10x15x1" baking pan. Bake uncovered at 400 degrees for 12 minutes, or until meat is no longer pink. Drain meat balls on paper towels. Reduce heat to 375 degrees. Arrange crescent rolls on a round stone or a greased 15" pizza pan, forming a ring with narrow ends facing the outer edge of the pan and wide ends overlapping. Place a meat ball on each roll; fold point over meat ball and tuck under wide end of roll (meat balls will be visible). Bake for 15 to 20 minutes, or until rolls are golden brown. Fill the center of the ring with lettuce, tomato, onions, olives, remaining cheese, sour cream, jalapenos and salsa, if desired.

Black Bean and Corn Salad



Recipes prepared, tasted and photographed by Valerie Cheatham. For more recipes and photos go to www.icl.coop. Questions? Email finestcooking@icl.coop.



Do it yourself energy efficiency projects

How to make cost effective energy efficiency upgrades

Congratulations, you have made it through another Illinois winter, but your household budget took a pretty good hit keeping the homestead warm. Now that the weather is nice, you want to get started on some do-it-yourself home improvements that will save money on your energy bill and make your home more comfortable. Where do you start? Personally, I want your efforts and hard earned money to be well spent making good cost-effective energy efficient improvements.

I have included some common DIY improvements and I could easily do a monthly article on each one I talk about in this article, so I will give you the shortened versions. FYI - when caulk is to be used in the following improvements use acrylic latex paintable caulk. Clear in color is usually best.

Attic hatch - air seal and insulate. Secure the trim to the ceiling and caulk between the trim and the ceiling drywall, apply foam tape to the trim to hatch mating surfaces, glue 6" of ridged foam board (R30) to the top of the hatch using PL300 Foam Board adhesive. No fiberglass batts here. They do not work!

Recessed lights - If the fixtures are airtight or use an Air-Loc® housing from the inside of the home, caulk between the metal housing and the drywall ceiling. If they are not airtight fixtures replace them if possible with IC rated, (Insulation Contact) airtight fixtures, if no attic access is possible you can install "air tight recessed light inserts." While you are at it, install a

CFL or better yet an LED bulb.

Bath exhaust fan - air seal the fan from inside the house by removing the grille and fan assembly from the housing in the ceiling. Clean all fan parts and the housing in the ceiling. Caulk between the metal housing and the ceiling drywall, seal all holes in the metal housing with silicone caulk or foil tape, check to make sure the damper is operating properly and put it all back together. A bath fan can leak a lot of air.

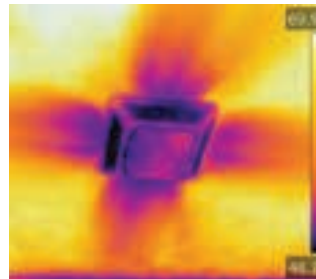
Doors - check the door and threshold seals by placing a dollar bill between the door and the weather seal, close the door. Pull the dollar bill out. If there is little to no resistance, replace the seal or adjust the striker so the door closes tight against the weather seal by bending the adjustment tab in the striker outward. Or, it may be time to replace that old door.

Rim joist - most homes have a fiberglass batt installed in the rim joist for insulation. Not good enough! Fiberglass batts do nothing for stopping air leakage and the rim joist is the leakiest part of the home. When air flows through fiberglass the R-value drops dramatically. The best way to seal and insulate this area is to apply two to three inches of two-part spray foam to the rim joist. Homeowners can buy "Froth-packs" of two-part spray foam and do

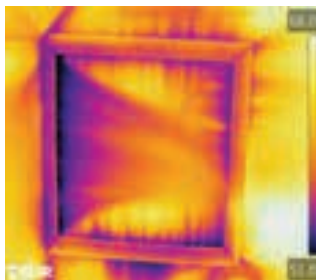
it themselves or hire a professional. Either way it will be money well spent.

Furnace filters - if you are using high efficiency pleated air filters check to make sure they are not too restrictive and reducing airflow in the system. Here is a quick check to see if you have this problem. With a new air filter installed and the air handler operating, slowly slide the filter out of the slot and slide it back in. If moving the air filter in and out changes the sound of the air handler then the filter is too restrictive. With this better filter media the size of the filter is too small and makes it harder for the air handler to pull air through it and reduces airflow. You have two options: replace the filter with a cheaper, less restrictive filter, or better yet have a "Box Media Filter" installed by your HVAC contractor. You will have cleaner air and your system will operate much more efficient.

Clean the dryer vent - you should clean your dryer vent once a year. Also, every few years the ducts inside the dryer should be cleaned. This involves taking the front and back of the dryer off to access these ducts and may need to be done by a professional. ■



An infrared photo of a bath exhaust fan leaking attic air into the home while the blower door is depressurizing the home



An infrared photo of an attic hatch leaking attic air into the home while the blower door is depressurizing the home.

Have questions? Brian Kumer can be contacted at brian_kumer@yahoo.com.



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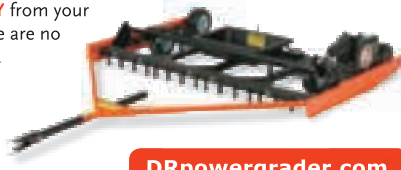
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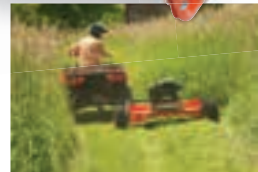
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Mary Higgs
2015 Illinois
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of the Year



Self-sufficient doesn't begin to describe Mary Higgs of rural Altamont. In fact, this Norris Electric Cooperative member prides herself on being able to live off the land – literally. Higgs seems to hail from a simpler time when you grew or hunted the food you ate.

This 75-year old grandmother of three and great-grandmother of two is most comfortable outdoors. She loves being outside hunting, mushrooming and fishing. Daily, she can be found feeding her rabbits and chickens, collecting eggs and tending to her daughter's peacocks and pheasants.

Higgs splits her own wood to heat her home during the winter and can often be found helping out a neighbor with outdoor chores. She definitely doesn't let the moss grow under her feet!

For more than 21 years, Higgs drove a school bus in Altamont and trained and raced Standardbred horses. After her husband Pete had a heart attack in 1999, they sold the horses.

She and Pete bought land in 1990 after she retired and lived without electricity for four years. It wasn't until 1994, when some of the land down her road was purchased, that electricity was run from Highway 40 back to that area.

"We are old fashioned farmers," explains Higgs. "We go by the Zodiac sign for doing things like when we would wean calves and things like that. I still can 90 percent of

the meat we eat. It doesn't get freezer burned that way, and when we didn't have electricity it was necessary so that it didn't spoil. We even had goats for milk, but now that the kids are gone we have gotten rid of them because I'm the only one that drinks milk, so I just buy it."

Daughter Mary Ann, who nominated her mother, says, "Growing up, I learned that the animals got fed first. I didn't get my breakfast until the animals were fed and watered. They depend on us, so we have to take care of them. I learned to respect animals and the land we live on."

Just like her mother, Mary Ann would rather be in the woods than sitting in the house.

Higgs starts her days by taking care of her house along with the animals. "Then my priority is whoever is on my calendar to help that day," she says. "Whoever needs to go to the doctor, or needs wood split, insulation put in, or the tractor run. There is no routine other than taking care of the animals."

Higgs also has a son Lloyd who trains Thoroughbreds. With pride in her voice, she says, "Lloyd is one of the top trainers in the nation and has raced over in Europe. In 2008, he was the assistant trainer for Eight Belles, which got second-place in the Kentucky Derby before going down and having to be euthanized." Lloyd still works with horses and has trained to do chiropractic work on them.

She taught both of her children, from a very early age, to respect guns. She took them to classes to learn about gun safety and they each got a firearm owner's identification card at an early age. "Children need to learn that regardless of the type of gun, you need to respect it. And, that includes BB guns. My children were taught that just like a hot stove, you didn't touch guns."

Mary Ann and her fiancé Joe are building a home just down the road from Higgs. Every weekend they are out working on the house and you can find Higgs hauling

rock or doing whatever she can to help. "She's such a good person," says Mary Ann. "She has been such a help to me and I know one of these days I'm going to lose her and I will just be lost!"

To thank her mother, Mary Ann and Joe took her on her very first vacation last year at the age of 74. They went down to the Land Between the Lakes in Kentucky. "She has done so much for us, we decided to take her with us," explained Mary Ann, "and she really enjoyed it. We went four-wheeling on all but the steepest climbs and went to a homestead to see free-range buffalo and elk. She really enjoyed it."

When asked if she ever planned to slow down, Mary shook her head and said, "No! If you do that you wither away. Hopefully with my dying breath I'll be out there on that deer stand."

Nomination Letter:

Thanks for giving me a chance to let you know about my mom. While raising my brother and I, she drove the Altamont School Bus for 25 years, trained harness horses and kept the house and farm going. She enjoys being outside, loves mushroom hunting, deer hunting, looking for ginseng plus spring and fall mushrooms, and you can't forget fishing.

If she's not in the woods, she's probably helping out a friend, her family or myself. Mom takes my aunt to Springfield for several doctor visits or if she needs to go get her blood work done. Then if she's not working at home, she'll be over helping out a friend with mowing grass, cutting up trees, cleaning up the barn, helping in his garden, or help drive to Chicago when needed. She uses a log splitter to cut wood for winter, takes care of her own chickens and rabbits and collects the eggs daily, while also feeding my peacocks and pheasants.

I've seen my mother work thru pain while having ribs broken, and she had both knees replaced at the same time, and started walking around soon as she could. She never complains, just keeps working. This woman is the hardest working lady I've ever known, she taught me everything under the sun. She's not only my mom, she's my best friend.

She has taken me to many of my own surgeries; one was in Chicago and she was extremely sick herself. They wanted to admit her, but she refused, and shortly after that she was taken to the Effingham Hospital with her temp being 104.

Since we had asked her to babysit our own dogs and critters – which she done many times as we went out of town, she'd have to drive from Altamont to Casey, stay overnight, drive home and care for her own - we took mom with us to go camping and 4-wheeling. She'd never had a "vacation" – ever. She enjoyed everything. After one of my hip surgeries she came fishing with us just to help me in and out of the boat and she got to fish too!

We are building a house on a hill above my parents, and if we need any material moved around or unloaded off the trailers, we call MOM and she brings over the tractor and helps us out. A couple of years ago I found out I had RA (rheumatoid arthritis) and when mom takes me anywhere and on long rides, she stops to help me stretch out because I get stiff and can't walk without an arm. Thanks MOM! I wanted to move close to help out my parents, but who is helping WHOM?

She taught me everything I know now, and then some! My parents may have been strict, but I still respect their morals and agree with the way we were brought up and taught.

I have forgotten to mention, my mom turned 75 in October. She doesn't look or act her age. My mom is my Hero – I look up to her.

Mary Ann Spesard

Scam alert warning

How to protect yourself from phone and online scammers

You see sophisticated “hackers” in the news almost daily now. In fact, just recently there were several health-care databases hacked, compromising the health records of millions of people worldwide. Large retailers have also made the headlines recently, with attacks like the one on Target in which a group stole 40 million credit card numbers and the personal information of over 70 million customers.

Unfortunately, the new reality is one in which personal security has become something upon which we must all stay vigilant.

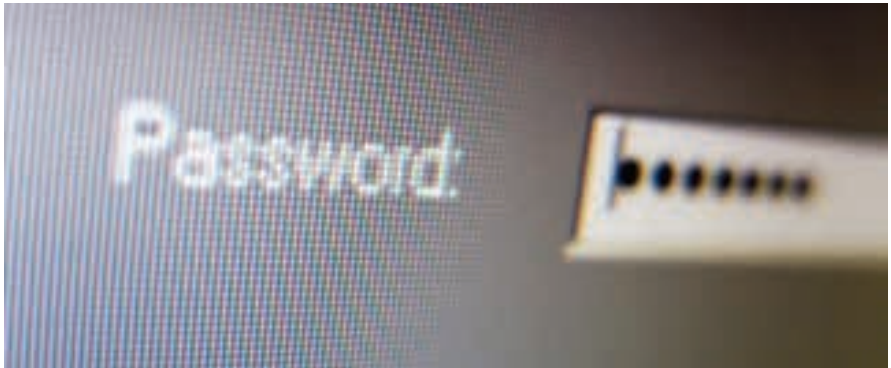
Recently, even electric and telephone cooperatives have begun to see attacks on their members. For instance, many members are now reporting phone calls requesting payment, with the caller threatening disconnection. The hard part is, some cooperatives do, in fact, make collection calls. And, some accept credit cards over the phone to help the member who just can't make it in to the office.

So, what do you do if you get a call saying you're late on your bill?

The best thing to do is to let the person know you will call them back. Then, don't accept a callback number from them. Just call your local cooperative's phone number. You should have a copy of it on your bill, on your member agreement, or you can always look it up on the co-op's webpage. Scammers do not want you to call them back because they are not actually at the cooperative's number. Many times they aren't even in the United States!

But, what happens if you're paying online? After all, your cooperative may have a portal set up to allow you to login and pay. You might even be able to pay through your bank's billing portal.

Let me assure you, using these means are probably the safest ways you can pay. Both co-ops and banks use



reputable, hardened sources for processing electronic transactions.

The problem comes when your own computer is infected. And, it's so easy to get a virus if you don't keep your computer patched, virus scan updated and even keep a malware removal tool installed and up-to-date.

Each of those things takes just a few moments to do, but can be difficult for the “non-techie” people out there. I always tell people, “I don't repair my own car, or do my own plumbing, but I can definitely fix my own computer.” By that I mean, we all have areas where we exhibit talent. Just because you can't fix your computer, doesn't mean you're not fully capable in other areas. So, don't be afraid to ask someone for help when you feel like you're in over your head.

Keep in mind, it can be difficult to spot some of the attempts to infect your computer. For instance, it is very easy these days to “spoof” a web page. Spoofing is when someone puts up a replica of a site and then directs traffic to it to try to get your username and password for a legitimate site. So, if you receive an e-mail saying your bank account is overdrawn and to “click this link” to login and correct the problem, you may actually see a legitimate looking site when you click the link. Actually though, you're just visiting a look-alike site. When you enter your login credentials, the thieves will now have your username and password and

can login to your account.

Again though, just like the phone call, you can easily prevent such an occurrence by simply visiting the bank's site directly. Just open a browser window (Internet Explorer, Firefox, Chrome) and manually type in the address you want to visit. Don't pay attention to the e-mail at all. Use the login information you were given by the bank. That way, you can be sure you're going to the correct place.

One final note, if you suspect your computer is compromised, discontinue using it immediately. Take it to someone who knows how to tell if you have an issue, and then have them fix the problem. And, don't forget to contact your financial institution to report the problem.

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 Florida



edv@ceci.coop

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www.careconnectusa.org. Public Benefit Organization.

Midwest Bird and Animal Swap & Sale, May 31 and June 28 at Monroe County Fairgrounds, Waterloo, IL from 5:30 to Noon. 618-939-6809.

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Co-op member provides shelter from the storm

Sometimes a tragedy provides a spark of an idea for a solution. In 2002 a tornado destroyed several homes near where Don Guymon and his wife, Betty, lived. Members of Tri-County Electric Cooperative in Mt. Vernon, Ill., the Guymons were alarmed by the lack of shelters for people who lived in vulnerable housing like mobile and modular homes and decided that an affordable storm shelter needed to be readily available in the Midwest where tornados often strike in the spring.

After researching FEMA design criteria and working with engineers who specialize in wind engineering, Guymon designed and tested an above ground storm shelter made of concrete and steel that exceeded FEMA standards. He began manufacturing the shelters that same year with just five employees, and the company now sells and installs about 300 shelters a year and employs 16 people.

Don served as a director for Tri-County Electric Cooperative, Mount Vernon, Ill., for 27 years and has also farmed 700 acres for over 50 years. Having lived in southern Illinois all his life, he understands first-hand, the importance of rural families being prepared for severe weather.

"Farmers and people who live in rural areas are on their own and responsible for their family's safety," Guymon says. "We've always been independent, and we know that we have to have whatever is necessary to get through bad weather - generators, heavy equipment or storm shelters. When the weather gets bad, we don't have time to load up and head to a community shelter, and there aren't tornado sirens in the country. Having a storm shelter is a critical piece of a rural family's emergency plan. I wish we would have had one when my kids were small."

Guymon is still actively involved in the day-to-day operation of Safe Sheds, Inc. and works diligently on product and manufacturing process improvement. He is joined by his daughter and son-in-law who help manage the business in Salem, Ill. Factory tours and more information about the storm shelters are available by appointment by calling 888-556-1531. Go to www.safesheds.com for more information.

April is Tornado Awareness Month but May is historically the peak month for tornados in Illinois. Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) Director

Tornado Safety Tips

Practice and Prepare
Know where you'll meet your family during the tornado (and after). Practice a tornado drill annually. Keep a weather radio in your storm shelter, along with safety supplies.

Seek Shelter
Go to your basement, a small interior room, or under stairs on the lowest floor of the house. If you live in a mobile home, get out and look for a stable building. If outside, find low ground—away from trees and cars—and lie face down with your arms protecting your head.

After the Storm
Stay away from downed power lines, and avoid flooded areas—power lines could be submerged and still live with electricity. Don't enter seriously damaged buildings and avoid using matches and lighters in case of gas leaks.

Know the Signs
Look for swirling clouds.
Watch for quick wind shifts or stark calm after heavy rain.
Listen for a loud roar or rumble that doesn't fade.

Source: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and Funnel, Inc.

James K. Joseph says Illinois experienced 48 tornadoes in 2014, which resulted in two injuries and nearly \$5 million in damage to homes and crops. In 2013, the state saw 54 tornadoes, including 25 twisters on Nov. 17, a vivid reminder that tornadoes and severe storms can happen anytime of the year.

"We can't prevent dangerous storms from occurring," says Joseph. "However, there are ways to prepare to help you stay safe when severe weather strikes. We encourage everyone to learn more about severe weather hazards, identify a safe place to go during storms, and assemble and maintain an emergency supply kit. These actions could help save your life or the lives of your loved ones."

IEMA and the National Weather Service developed a Severe Weather Preparedness Guide, which provides information about tornadoes, severe storms, lightning and flooding along with recommended actions to take before, during and after each of these weather events. It is available on the Ready Illinois website at www.Ready.Illinois.gov or by calling (217) 785-9925. Preparedness tips and information are also available through the Ready Illinois Facebook Page (www.facebook.com/ReadyIllinois) and Twitter Page (twitter.com/ReadyIllinois).



HONOR and REMEMBRANCE

By Jim Winnerman

Each year on the last Monday in May, the hauntingly beautiful scenes of rows of pristine white grave markers in our National Cemeteries appear in newspapers and on television reminding us it is Memorial Day. Usually the graves are decorated with American flags, helping us recall and honor those who perished in defense of our freedom. (Veterans Day on November 11 honors everyone who has served in the armed forces.)

However, it is an actual visit to any of the 131 National Veterans Cemeteries that leaves an indelible memory. The seemingly unending rows of gravestones that follow the contour of the land muster up feelings of deep sadness and serenity.

Yet, there is also an unexpected pleasure that comes with the realization that appropriate care is being given to the grave of each soldier interred. No blade of grass seems uncut, and the grave markers appear so white they may have been just recently placed. A sense of dignity pervades.

Shawn Baumgartner, the Superintendent of the Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery in Elmwood, Ill., says it is easy to understand why each cemetery appears so manicured. "We have the honor each day to serve our veterans by taking special care of their graves for eternity. We are the keepers of a national shrine," he says speaking about himself and his staff.

Baumgartner feels an intense loyalty to the families of veterans he meets, often during one of the most difficult times in their lives. "Our objective is to relieve them of a tremendous burden during the planning and burial process," he says. "We give them satisfaction and a sense of relief when they see our cemeteries and realize their loved one will always be taken care of in a manner in which they can take pride and comfort forever."

Origin of National Cemeteries for veterans

The concept of a veterans' cemetery originated during the Civil War. Due to mounting war casualties, on July 17, 1862, Congress empowered President Abraham Lincoln "to purchase cemetery grounds... to be used as a national cemetery for the soldiers who shall die in the service of the country."

Today the National Cemetery Association (NCA), an agency of the U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs, is responsible for the cemeteries. In Illinois five of the ten National Cemeteries in the state remain open for additional burials.

Among the first 14 national cemeteries established in 1862 was Camp Butler, located in Springfield. At the time, the site was a Union Civil War training camp and Confederate prison.

Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery in Elmwood opened in 1999, and is the second largest national cemetery. Consisting of almost 1,000 acres, it can accommodate 400,000 graves. Presently 40,000 service members are interred there.



Origin of Memorial Day

The idea for a national memorial day to honor the nation's war dead is credited to Union Major General John A. Logan who was born in 1826 in what is now Murphysboro. After the war and as national commander of the Grand Army of the Republic, he proclaimed that "the 30th of May, 1868, is designated for the purpose of strewing with flowers, or otherwise decorating the graves of comrades who died in defense of their country during the late rebellion, and whose bodies now lie in almost every city, village and hamlet churchyard in the land."

Gen. Logan's order for his posts included the words that the graves should be decorated "with the choicest flowers of springtime," and that "we should guard their graves with sacred vigilance. ... Let no neglect, no ravages of time, testify to the present or to the coming generations that we have forgotten as a people the cost of a free and undivided republic."

Public unaware

Baumgartner says one of his biggest challenges facing the NCA is getting the information out to veterans that they, along with their dependents, can be buried in a national cemetery at no cost. "I would encourage all veterans to visit a national cemetery and learn what we can do for them and their family," he says.



Illinois Veterans Cemeteries

The Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) National Cemetery Administration lists the following National Cemeteries in Illinois:

Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery, Elmwood*
Alton National Cemetery, Alton **
Camp Butler National Cemetery, Springfield*
Confederate Mounds, Oak Woods
Danville National Cemetery, Danville*
Mound City National Cemetery, Cairo*
North Alton Confederate Cemetery, North Alton
Quincy National Cemetery, Quincy
Rock Island Confederate Cemetery, Rock Island
Rock Island National Cemetery, Rock Island*

*open for burial

**open for cremation only

Facts about Memorial Day

- Memorial Day was originally named Decoration Day due to the custom that had developed soon after the Civil War of decorating Union and Confederate graves with flowers.
- Carbondale, Ill. claims to have had the first Memorial Day ceremony on April 29, 1866. However, at least 25 other places have made a similar claim.
- Initially the date of May 30 was chosen because it was not the anniversary of any particular battle. It is also thought to have been chosen because flowers would be in bloom nationwide. Subsequently the date has been moved to the last Monday in May to create a three-day weekend holiday.
- Since 1862, more than 3.8 million burials have taken place in National Cemeteries.
- Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Va. and Soldiers' and Airmen's Home National Cemetery in Washington, D.C., are under the jurisdiction of the Department of the Army, and not the NCA.
- The American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) oversees 25 permanent American cemeteries on foreign soil.
- Some states have established their own veterans' cemeteries not associated with the NCA. The Sunset Cemetery in Quincy is the Illinois state veterans cemetery.

2-30 “Quilted Keepsakes” Quilt Show, C.H. Moore Homestead DeWitt County Museum, 219 E. Woodlawn, Clinton. Admission includes the mansion tour, quilt show and much more. \$3 for adults, \$1 for ages 12-18 and ages 11 and under free. Open Tues.-Sat. 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Sun. 1-5 p.m. Call 217-935-6066 or visit www.chmoorehomestead.org.

3-24 Downs Village Market, Southwest edge of Downs just off I-74. Come to the market’s 13th season of selling locally grown and select regional produce, meat, baked goods, plants, and handmade items. Every Weds. in June from 4-6 p.m. Contact Carol 309-378-4223, Cheryl 309-378-4396 or email marketmaster610@gmail.com.

5-7 74th Harvard Milk Days, in downtown Harvard. Make it a weekend of fun for people of all ages. Events include a 2+-hour parade, carnival, food, fireworks, petting zoo and other animals, races, contests and entertainment. Call 815-943-4614 or e-mail at info@milkdays.com.

6 5th Annual Country Quilts and Memories Show, Egyptian School, 20023 Diswood Rd., Tamm. The event features quilts showcasing skills of local quilters as well as vendors, door prizes and demonstrations. 10 a.m.-2p.m. \$10 entrance fee includes a light lunch, call 618-776-5893 or email elc62990@gmail.com.

6-7 Art at the Mansion, C.H. Moore Homestead DeWitt County Museum, 219 E. Woodlawn Clinton. Arts Clinton, Ltd. will present the show on

Saturday from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Call 217-935-3041 or email dgrueber@itsintheair.net.

6, 20 Belden School Open House, 52 Heatherdowns Lane, Galena. Visit a restored 1859 limestone one-room schoolhouse. Docents on site will describe what school was like in the olden days. 1-4 p.m. Call 815-777-2000.

7 Chicken Dinner and Strawberry Festival, Concordia United Church of Christ, 7600 State Route 163, Belleville. Serving 11 a.m.-3 p.m., also a queen sized quilt raffle, call 618-476-3377.

7-13 Miss Illinois Scholarship Pageant, held at the Marion Cultural and Civic Center, 800 Tower Square Plaza, Marion. Miss Illinois Scholarship pageant is a part of the Miss America organization. Women from all over Illinois compete for a scholarship and a chance to enter the Miss America pageant. Visit www.missillinois.org or call 618-997-4030.

12-20 Heritage Days Festival and Agricultural Fair, Martinsville. Heritage Days runs from the 12-14; includes a “Night of Bluegrass”, equine parade, artisans with all handcrafted items and demonstrations. The Agricultural Fair runs 14-20 with free carnival rides Mon.-Sat. evenings with gate admission of \$6, free parking. Visit www.martinsvilleheritagedays.com or www.martinsvilleagfair.com.

13 Galena Territory Art and Garage Sale, at The Galena Territory Marina Pavilion at Lake Galena. 8 a.m.-1:00 p.m., private home garage sales 8 a.m.-4 p.m. Maps available at the Pavilion the day of

the sale. Proceeds benefit Belden School, a restored 1859 one-room Schoolhouse. For more information call 815-777-2000.

13 Christian County Quilter’s Guild Quilt Show “Color in Motion,” at Taylorville Community High School, 815 W. Springfield, Taylorville. Admission is \$5; children under 12 are free. Show open from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. 100-150 quilts, quilt raffle, many vendors, basket raffle and bed turning. Contact Kathy 217-691-6336 or Mary 217-823-0436.

20 Thomson Depot Days, Thomson. Outhouse races, historical exhibits, barbershop choir, brass quintet, and Art in the Park. Visit www.thomsonil.com.

20-21 Grierson Days: Civil War and All Veterans Celebration, corner of west Morton and South Main, Community Park, Jacksonville. Step back in time and experience the life of a Civil War soldier, visit the Confederate and Union camps, and watch the soldiers drill and prepare for battle. Call 217-243-5678 or visit www.griersonsociety.com.

26-28 Great Egyptian Omnium Bike Race, 700 Logan College Road, Carterville. This two-day, three-stage race will take place on the roads of Williamson County and at John A. Logan College. Cyclists will ride between 20 and 80 miles on day one during the road race, and compete in a thrilling loop ride on day two. Visit www.greategyptianomnium.org or call 618-985-2828.



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After May’s issue, Illinois Country Living will be transitioning to an online only events calendar. Please submit your event online at www.icl.coop.



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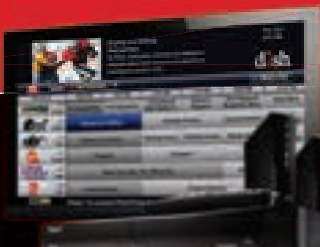


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