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# Illinois Country Living

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*Sweet tradition*





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The Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives and 24 Illinois electric cooperatives are members of Touchstone Energy, a national alliance of 740 electric cooperatives. Touchstone Energy cooperative employees adhere to four core values — integrity, accountability, innovation and commitment to community.



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# Promotion of education

## One of seven cooperative principles gives co-ops guidance

One of my favorite bumper stickers is, “If you can read this, thank a teacher.” The importance of education was drilled into me by my parents and grandmother from my earliest memories around the age of four. It is no accident that we educate children from a very early age while their young minds are still dry sponges willing to absorb so much.

The original seven co-op principles set forth in 1844 contained the simple phrase, “Promotion of Education.” Today, Principle Five states that all co-ops should promote “Education, Training and Information.” This is intended for the employees, members and the community at large.

It is based on the simple premise that if people know more about the cooperative business model, they will be in a much better position to understand the benefits and promote better use of the co-op and its resources.

While there are almost one million people in the U.S. that work for cooperatives of all types (agriculture, housing, credit unions and many others in addition to electric co-ops) very few of us learn about cooperatives in school. That creates a real challenge when trying to explain the cooperative difference. People understand an investor-owned business is designed to make a profit or that a non-profit, like the Red Cross, is designed to serve the community. Co-ops have both an economic and social purpose. We operate on a not-for-profit basis so that we can pass along the best price for our goods or service to you, the member-owner.

Due to the fact that the co-op business model is normally not taught



# Touchstone Energy<sup>®</sup> Cooperatives

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by teachers, it is up to us the Illinois electric co-ops through publications like this one to ensure that you know about the differences and benefits of being a co-op member. Consumer surveys by Touchstone Energy and others consistently affirm that people prefer to do business with a cooperative if given a choice.

So why don't they teach about co-ops in school? There are several theories about this including that there is not enough academic research about co-ops, which is often the source for curriculums. Another reason offered is that the co-op community is so diverse that teaching about it only creates more confusion. The first issue about research is being addressed by the Cooperative Business Research Institute at Indiana University. The second can be addressed by answering the old question: How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time. Simply by taking an interest in learning about electric co-ops through your co-op's website, annual meeting, stopping by the office or talking to your fellow co-op members are all good ways to better understand the cooperative model you're a part of.

Do you know the difference between an investor-owned utility and an electric co-op? Cooperatives around the world operate according to the same core principles and values, adopted by the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA). Cooperatives trace the roots of these principles to the first modern cooperative founded in Rochdale, England in 1844.

All cooperative businesses have at their foundation these seven cooperative principles:

1. Voluntary and Open Membership
2. Democratic Member Control
3. Members' Economic Participation
4. Autonomy and Independence
5. Education, Training and Information
6. Cooperation Among Cooperatives
7. Concern for Community

By knowing more about how cooperatives operate, you are in a better position to participate as member-owners. We always welcome your questions and comments to help us promote the Cooperative Way of doing business. ■

Adam Schwartz is the founder of The Cooperative Way, a consulting firm that helps co-ops succeed. He is an author, speaker and a member-owner of the CDS Consulting Co-op. You can follow him on Twitter @adamcooperative or email him at aschwartz@thecooperativeway.coop.



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## Ralls County Electric Cooperative (RCEC) seeks leader to replace its retiring CEO/Manager of 29 years

Headquartered in New London, Missouri, the Cooperative services approximately 4,685 members in Ralls, Pike, Monroe, Marion, and Audrain counties.

The CEO/Manager of RCEC is responsible for the day to day management of the cooperative and reports directly to a 9 member elected board of directors.

RCEC, in conjunction with its wholly owned subsidiary, Ralls Technologies, LLC, provides the RCEC service territory with access to a fiber optics network, providing RCEC members with the opportunity to purchase at affordable rates high speed internet, phone and television services.

Applicants should hold a bachelor's or advanced degree from a four year accredited college, or have at least 6 years experience at a senior staff/managerial level. The successful candidate will have a minimum of 6 years experience in the rural electric cooperative industry sector at a senior staff/managerial level. Further details and requirements of the CEO/Manager position can be found on the RCEC website at [www.rallscountyelectric.com](http://www.rallscountyelectric.com).

RCEC offers an excellent NRECA benefits package, salary commensurate with qualifications and experience. Please provide a complete application package, including cover letter, resume, recent salary history, along with 6 verifiable business and 3 personal references, by January 1, 2015 to RCEC's search consultant:

Andrew Sporleder  
Johnson & Sporleder, LLP  
2420 Hyde Park Road, Suite C  
Jefferson City, MO 65109  
email: [as@cjaslaw.com](mailto:as@cjaslaw.com)  
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## New Illinois landfill gas plant added to co-op energy source

Wabash Valley Power Association, an electric generation and transmission (G&T) cooperative, has added another landfill gas-to-energy (LFGTE) generating plant to its power supply portfolio. The Clinton facility is located in DeWitt County, Illinois, and marks the 15th project for the G&T, which serves 25 electric cooperatives including three in Illinois.

The purchase of this 3.2-megawatt (MW) plant brings the G&T's total generating capacity at its LFGTE facilities to just over 47 MW and marks its first such project in Illinois.

"Facilities like the Clinton project produce enough electricity to power 3,500 homes," reported Keith Thompson, Vice President, Power

Production for Wabash Valley Power. "The decomposition of garbage creates landfill gas, which is primarily methane. In most landfills, that gas is burned off, but with today's technology, we're able to transform it into electricity."

Since 2002, Wabash Valley Power has built or purchased 15 generating facilities at nine landfills throughout the northern half of Indiana and now in Illinois. The electricity represents a highly reliable energy source for the co-op, which also buys wind-generated energy from facilities in Illinois and Iowa. Including the Clinton facility, all plants run on engines manufactured by Caterpillar.

"Our board of directors has been



very proactive when it comes to looking at the fuel sources behind the electricity we produce," stated Rick Coons, CEO. "We've had great success with our landfill gas projects, we've made strategic wind purchases and now we're seeing the launch of community solar projects with several of our member cooperatives. In a state dominated by coal, we continue to make great strides to diversify our fuel sources." ■

## Illinois farmers help schools promote hands-on learning

Fourteen Illinois school districts have received \$170,000 in grants this year from America's Farmers Grow Rural Education, sponsored by the Monsanto Fund. The program partners with farmers to support rural public school districts with innovative approaches to teaching math and science.

The funding is utilized to prepare students for a wider range of career prospects in an increasingly technology-driven workforce. Increasing student engagement in math and science classes has been the focus of many Illinois school districts, and districts are looking to provide more hands-on learning opportunities through America's Farmers Grow Rural Education and other grant opportunities.

Winning districts across the state have designed many innovative programs supported by the grant funds, including an Ambient Weather Station project, a hydroponics system and mini fish farm, and technology and science laboratory equipment upgrades.

The Grow Rural Education program starts with farmers, who can nominate a public school district in



their community to apply for a grant of up to \$25,000. This program is part of the America's Farmers initiative, which partners with farmers to support education, service organizations and youth in rural America. Visit [www.GrowRuralEducation.com](http://www.GrowRuralEducation.com) to see the full list of winners for this year. A sister program, America's Farmers Grow Communities, is currently in its enrollment period. To sign up, visit [www.GrowCommunities.com](http://www.GrowCommunities.com). ■





## Corn Belt Energy Youth Tour participant wins nationwide grant contest



*Kaelan Smith*

Corn Belt Energy CEO Don Taylor announced that Kaelan Smith from Clinton won a nationwide student service project grant contest. With the \$500 grant, Smith will organize and host an autism awareness fair. The grant program was coordinated in partnership with generationOn, a global youth service organization.

“Students are our beacon of hope for the future,” Don Taylor said. “For 55 years, Illinois’ electric cooperatives have invested in our students by hosting an annual youth tour in Washington, D.C. – allowing some of our best and brightest students to gain first-hand insight. This grant program builds on that investment, and gives our students the tools to expand their resume while applying what they’ve learned to directly benefit their community.

“Kaelan Smith’s project will allow him to give back to

the community and learn valuable hands-on leadership skills at the same time. We’re honored to be able to help Kaelan give back, and look forward to watching him grow into a future leader.”

The autism awareness fair will have a focus on bullying and self-esteem issues that students living with autism face at school. The fair will also address how a student living with autism is labeled by others and themselves. Smith hopes to work with the Clinton Rotary Club and the Clinton Community High School Interact Club to host the fair in the spring of 2015.

Grant winners were chosen from a pool of applicants, all of whom participated in the 2014 Electric Cooperative Youth Tour. ■

## Touchstone Energy co-ops raise \$4,000 for charities

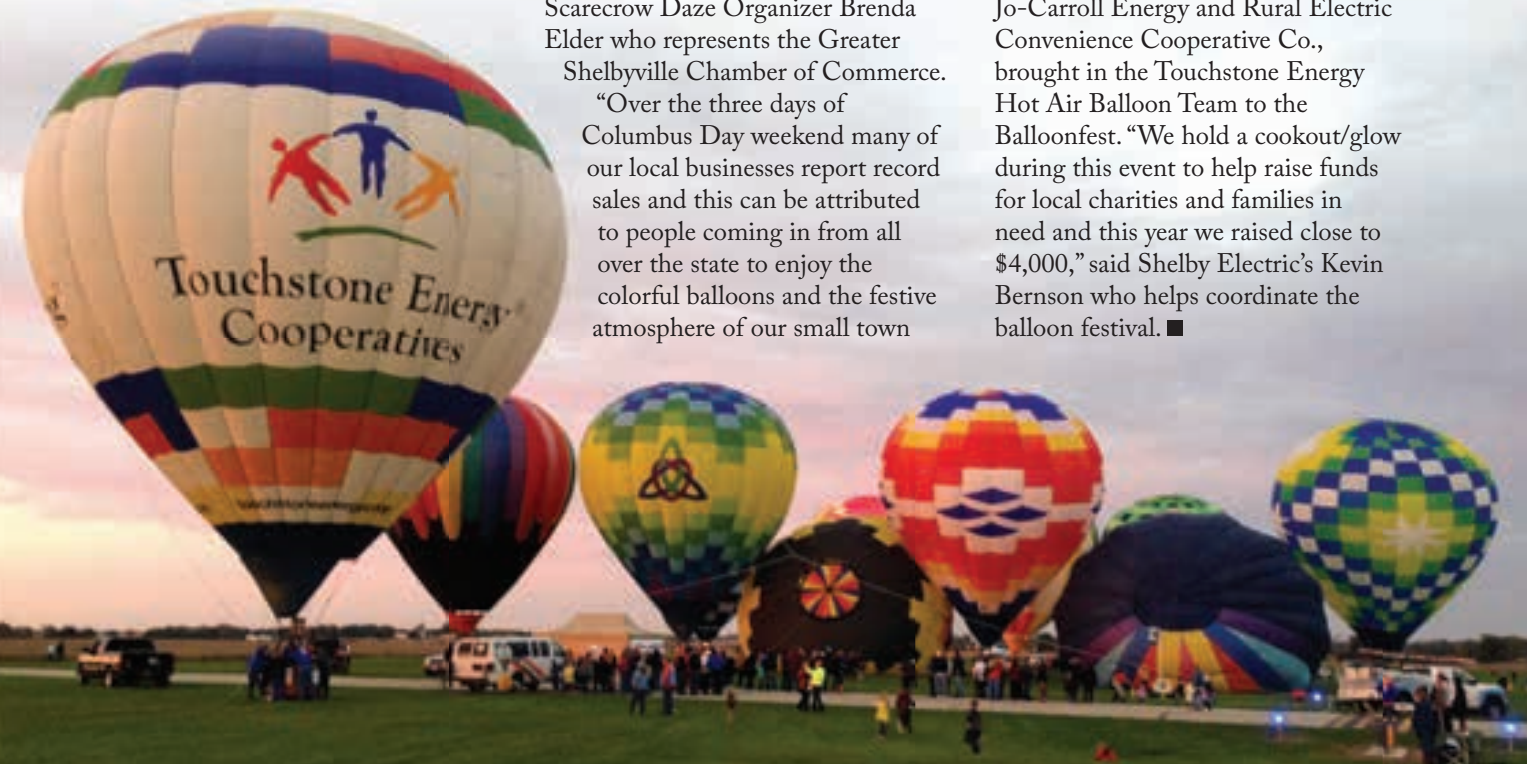
Shelby Electric Cooperative (SEC) once again helped coordinate the 5th annual Touchstone Energy Hot Air Balloonfest at Lake Shelbyville held in conjunction with Shelbyville

Scarecrow Daze. “By combining these two events, we bring people to Shelbyville that may not otherwise find a reason and it helps our local economy and area businesses,” said Scarecrow Daze Organizer Brenda Elder who represents the Greater Shelbyville Chamber of Commerce.

“Over the three days of Columbus Day weekend many of our local businesses report record sales and this can be attributed to people coming in from all over the state to enjoy the colorful balloons and the festive atmosphere of our small town

festival” said Chamber President Tim Miller.

SEC, along with M.J.M. Electric Cooperative, Prairie Power, Inc., Illinois Rural Electric Cooperative, Jo-Carroll Energy and Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative Co., brought in the Touchstone Energy Hot Air Balloon Team to the Balloonfest. “We hold a cookout/glow during this event to help raise funds for local charities and families in need and this year we raised close to \$4,000,” said Shelby Electric’s Kevin Bernson who helps coordinate the balloon festival. ■



## Hoosier Energy inks wind deal in Illinois

When Hoosier Energy, an Indiana-based generation and transmission cooperative, wanted renewable energy assets they could add to their generation portfolio quickly, they looked to their neighbors in Illinois to help make it happen.

The 100-megawatt Rail Splitter Wind Farm in Illinois will be sending 25 percent of its output onto co-op lines before the end of the year. The power produced is headed for co-op lines in Indiana and southeastern Illinois.

“The Rail Splitter Wind Farm is a proven Midwest provider of renewable energy that will provide benefits for our members,” said Heath Norrick, Renewable Energy Manager for the Bloomington, Ind.-based G&T. “This whole project came together quickly.”

Under a 15-year power purchase agreement, the 18 distribution co-ops will receive about 25 MW of the wind farm’s total output beginning in December. That represents about 74,000 megawatt-hours of energy annually for co-op members.

“That should be enough electricity to power about 7,500 homes in southern Indiana and southeastern Illinois,” said Paul Cummings, a Hoosier Energy renewable energy analyst.

“Our agreement with EDP Renewables adds more wind resources to our portfolio, which already includes wind, hydro, landfill methane and coal bed methane generation,” said Steve Smith, Hoosier Energy’s president and CEO. ■

## Men in pink hard hats seen at electric co-ops

There’s nothing tougher than a lineman. But almost everyone has been impacted by breast cancer at some level, and it wasn’t tough to

get many linemen at electric co-ops across the state to wear pink hard hats during Breast Cancer Awareness Month in October. Eastern Illini

Electric Cooperative’s employees below participated in several breast cancer awareness initiatives during the month. ■







The lively sound of carols and storytelling around the table, the familiar smell of pine and grandma's freshly baked cookies, the sparkle of softly falling snow and the little ones' breathless anticipation of Santa's arrival.

Let the sounds, aromas and visions of the season be the memories you cherish.

*Merry Christmas from our cooperative family to yours.*



Touchstone Energy®  
Cooperatives

**TOGETHER WE SAVE**



# Sweet tradition

*by Valerie Cheatham*

*T*here is the warm glow of a crackling fire, the smell of ever-green wafting in the air, sparkling lights in a rainbow of colors, along with holiday music and laughter as family reconnects. These are all sights and sounds of the Christmas season. But wait, one thing is missing – the mouth-watering aromas associated with one of our favorite holiday foods. Where are the cookies?

For many it's not Christmas

without cookies, and it's tradition for some families to bake and decorate them together. Children leave cookies out for Santa, and just about everywhere you go during the holidays, there are plates of these delectable treats. And, there are special ones we may only see during the holidays.

The cookies we most enjoy may or may not be the very best by critics' standards, but they are near and dear to our hearts. They likely invoke those

special memories of holidays' past. Some may have been passed down from mothers and grandmothers, while others are just family favorites.

In tribute to holiday cookies, the employees of the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives share with you some of their family favorites. While some may sound familiar, others may be new. Either way, perhaps they will become a part of your family's tradition.





*Kourabiethes* (Below)

from Chris Reynolds

1 lb. butter, softened  
1 egg yolk  
1/2 c. powdered sugar

3/4 c. almonds or walnuts, toasted  
and finely chopped  
1 oz. whiskey  
4 c. flour

Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Add egg yolk to soft butter and beat for 30 minutes (yes, 30 minutes) until light and fluffy. Add sugar, nuts and whiskey and mix. Blend in flour a little at a time until dough can be handled without sticking to fingers. Shape into crescents. Place on greased cookie sheet and bake for 25 minutes until very lightly browned. Remove from cookie sheet with a table knife and place on waxed paper which has been sprinkled with powdered sugar. Sift powdered sugar on top of cookies and cool. Makes 60.

*My Grandma Barb's father emigrated from Greece in 1909, and she is half-Greek. As I grew up, one of my favorite foods at Christmas time, and something I still look forward to today, are Grandma's Greek butter "Crescent Cookies."*

— Chris Reynolds, Coordinator of Web Services/Graphic Designer



*Sugar Cookies* (Above)

from Valerie Cheatham

3/4 c. shortening  
1 c. sugar  
2 eggs  
1 tsp. vanilla  
2 1/2 c. flour  
1 tsp. baking powder  
1 tsp. salt

Mix shortening with sugar. Add eggs and vanilla and mix well. Add dry ingredients mixing until incorporated. Refrigerate dough several hours or overnight. Roll out to 1/4 inch thick and cut into shapes. Bake at 400 degrees for 6-8 minutes, until just barely brown around the edges. Cool completely. Frost and decorate as desired. Makes 30-36 large cookies.

*My children (and now grandchildren) enjoy cutting these out and decorating them. From the time they were little, we would take a day to make these special cookies. We would use everything from colored sugars and sprinkles to forming different decorations out of Starburst candies.*

— Valerie Cheatham, Assistant Editor,  
Illinois Country Living





## Caramellows (Left)

from Amy McDaniels

2 bags Kraft caramels, unwrapped  
1 can sweetened condensed milk  
2 bags large marshmallows  
Rice Krispies

Melt together first two ingredients in a double boiler and heat until caramels are completely melted. Dip marshmallows in caramel mixture and roll in Rice Krispies. Let set up.

*These simple treats are what I always look forward to making with my mom and sister during the holidays. And, I sample many during the process!*

– Amy McDaniels, Administrative Assistant/  
Digital Communications Coordinator

## Molasses Cookies (Below)

from Don Wood

1/2 c. butter, softened	1 tsp. cinnamon
1/2 c. sugar	1/2 tsp. cloves
1 egg	1/2 tsp. ginger
1/4 c. molasses	1 c. raisins OR 1/2 c. raisins and
2 tsp. baking soda	1/2 c. chopped nuts
2 c. flour	

Cream butter with sugar. Add in egg and molasses and beat with a mixer. Sift in baking soda, flour, cinnamon, cloves and ginger and beat until mixed. Stir in raisins and nuts. Refrigerate until chilled. Shape dough into 1" balls. Flatten on greased cookie sheet with bottom of a juice glass greased with butter and dipped in sugar (repeat sugar dipping often to avoid sticking.) Bake at 350 degrees for 8-10 minutes or until done. Bake less for a soft cookie and more for a crisper cookie – watch carefully. Makes 4 dozen.

*These molasses cookies were the traditional Wood family (our dad's mom's) cookie, made with one pint of lard and rolled out and cut with a round cookie cutter. Our mother, Ruth, adapted the recipe to make it easier and healthier. She used half the nuts and raisins the original recipe called for and also used oleo or oil, but butter tastes better. Our dad always thought they tasted just like his mom's.*

– Sr. Vice President of Government Relations Don Wood's sister Barbara Wood Peterson



## Mom's No Name Cookie Bars (Above)

from Rick Polley

2 c. graham cracker crumbs  
1 stick butter, melted  
2 c. coconut  
1 can sweetened condensed milk  
10 regular sized almond Hershey bars

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Combine the graham cracker crumbs with melted butter and press into a 9x13" ungreased pan. Bake 10 minutes. Combine coconut and sweetened condensed milk and spread over crust and bake 10 minutes. Remove from oven and top with candy bars while still warm. Let melt and spread to cover.

*Mom always made these cookie bars at Christmas-time. She knew I loved them and I don't remember her making them any other time of the year. I really look forward to eating them each year.*

– Rick Polley, Manager/Field Services





*Cry Baby Cookies* (Above)  
from Sandy Wolske

- 1 c. butter, softened
- 2 c. sugar
- 2 eggs
- 3 tsp. vanilla
- 3 c. flour
- 1 c. cocoa
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/2 tsp. baking powder
- 1/2 tsp. baking soda

**Frosting:**

- 8 oz. cream cheese, softened
- 1/2 stick butter, softened
- 1/2 tsp. vanilla
- Powdered sugar
- Walnut halves

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Cream together 1 c. butter and sugar. Add eggs and 3 tsp. vanilla and mix. Combine flour, cocoa, salt, baking powder and baking soda. Add flour mixture to creamed mixture until completely incorporated. Roll into balls and place on parchment paper covered cookie sheet. Flatten balls with palm of hand. Bake for 10-12 minutes. Cool. Mix together cream cheese, 1/2 stick butter and 1/2 tsp. vanilla. Add powdered sugar to spreading consistency. Ice cooled cookies and top each with a walnut half. Makes 6 dozen.

*My mother got this recipe from my Great Grandmother Foster and makes them at Christmas. I really look forward to having some each year.*

– Sandy Wolske, Advertising Coordinator/  
Graphic Designer

*Fantasy Fudge* (Right)  
from Kathy Feraris

- 3 c. sugar
- 3/4 c. margarine or butter
- 2/3 c. evaporated milk
- 1 – 12 oz. pkg. semisweet chocolate chips (roughly 2 cups)
- 1 – 7 oz. jar marshmallow creme
- 1 c. chopped walnuts (optional)
- 1 tsp. vanilla

Grease a 9x13" pan. Mix sugar, margarine and evaporated milk in a large, heavy saucepan over medium heat, stirring to dissolve sugar. Boil 4 minutes or until candy thermometer reaches 234 degrees F, stirring constantly to prevent scorching. Remove from heat. Stir in chocolate chips until melted and thoroughly combined. Beat in marshmallow creme, walnuts and vanilla. Transfer fudge to the prepared pan and let cool before cutting into squares. Dad's tips: Always have everything measured and ready to go. When the mixture reaches the correct temperature it's best to be ready to act fast. Soak the jar of marshmallow creme in warm or hot water for a few minutes to make it easier to get it out of jar.



*My Dad and I shared a love of chocolate. Every year at Christmas he would make several batches of fudge. A lot of it was given away to neighbors, friends and family as gifts, but the rest was fair game. I used to love watching Dad make it and hung around to make sure I got first dibs on licking spoons and getting the very last bits of warm chocolate out of the pan.*

– Kathy Feraris, Graphic Designer





## Neapolitan Cookies (Left)

from Mary Zitek

1 c. butter, softened	1/2 tsp. almond extract
1 1/2 c. sugar	5 drops red food coloring
1 egg	1 (1 oz.) square unsweetened chocolate, melted
1 tsp. vanilla	1/2 c. finely chopped or ground walnuts
2 1/2 c. flour	
1 1/2 tsp. baking powder	
1/2 tsp. salt	

In a medium bowl, cream together the butter and sugar. Stir in the egg and vanilla. Combine the flour, baking powder and salt; stir into the creamed mixture. Divide dough equally into three small bowls. Add almond extract and red food coloring to one portion; stir until thoroughly mixed. Mix chocolate into second bowl and walnuts into third bowl. Line a 9x5" loaf pan with waxed paper, and spread almond dough evenly in the bottom of pan. Spread the walnut dough evenly over the almond layer and top with the chocolate layer. Cover with waxed paper and refrigerate at least 4 hours; I usually do it overnight. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Turn out chilled dough by inverting pan; peel off waxed paper. With sharp knife, cut dough lengthwise in half. Slice each half of dough crosswise into 1/4 inch slices. Place slices on cookie sheet one inch apart. Bake 10-12 minutes, until light brown. Remove to wire racks to cool. Sometimes after I remove the waxed paper from the loaf pan, I press each side into red colored sugar or chocolate sprinkles. Makes 5 dozen.

*I've been making these for more than 20 years. They are my son Nick's favorite cookies and also a family favorite. There are several cookie recipes that I usually make every Christmas but I also try some I haven't made before. I bake at least a dozen or more different kinds, depending on how much time I have, and I like to share them with all of my family and some close friends.*

– Mary Zitek,  
Safety/Education Services Coordinator



## Clothespin Cookies (Left)

from Mary Zitek

1 c. butter	1/2 c. margarine
1/2 c. sour cream	1 c. sugar
1-1/2 c. flour	1 tsp. vanilla
<b>Filling:</b>	Red or green food coloring
1 c. milk	Round clothespins
4 T. flour	
1 c. Crisco	

Cut butter into flour until completely mixed. Add sour cream. Mix by hand well. Roll into two balls and refrigerate overnight. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Roll out each ball on floured surface and cut into strips, about 1/2" wide. Wrap each strip around a round clothespin and put on parchment paper on a cookie sheet. Bake for 20 minutes. After they have cooled, carefully pull cookies off of clothespins. For filling, heat milk in saucepan and add flour mixing well. Cook until mixture pulls away from pan, cool. Beat Crisco, margarine, sugar and vanilla. Add cooled mixture to this mixture and beat until creamy. Add food coloring if desired. Cool for several hours before filling cookies. Pipe into cookies and dust with powdered sugar. Makes 4 dozen.

– Mary Zitek,  
Safety/Education Services Coordinator

Visit [www.icl.coop](http://www.icl.coop) to see more Illinois Country Living recipes.





## German Gingerbread Cookies (Above)

from Janet-Hawes Davis

5 1/2 c. flour	1 tsp. nutmeg
1 tsp. baking soda	1 c. butter
1 tsp. salt	1 c. sugar
3 tsp. cinnamon	1 c. molasses
2 tsp. ginger	1 egg
1 1/2 tsp. cloves	1 tsp. vanilla

Mix flour, baking soda, salt and spices in a bowl. Mix softened butter with sugar until fluffy-light in another large bowl. Add molasses, egg and vanilla to the mixture. Stir in flour mixture, a third at a time, blending well after each addition, to make soft dough. Wrap dough in foil and chill 4 hours or overnight. Roll out dough, 1 quarter at a time, to a 1/8" thickness on lightly floured wax paper. Cut out shapes with cookie cutters. Place 1" apart on ungreased cookie sheet. Bake at 350 degrees for 8 minutes. Cook until cookies are firm, but not too dark. Makes about 3 dozen cookies.

*My sister and I started making these cookies in our early teens. We made them every year until I moved out of state and got married. We would spend an afternoon rolling out the dough and carefully decorating gingerbread men, women, Christmas trees, stars, etc. with colored sugars, nuts and miniature chocolate chips. One year we decorated them with homemade buttercream frosting in various colors. I continued the tradition when my children were toddlers and today continue to make them with my adult daughter.*

– Janet Hawes-Davis, wife of Steve Davis, Manager of Regulatory Compliance

## What are your favorite Christmas memories?

“Scrambled eggs and cinnamon rolls on my wife’s side of the family, and lebkuchen and minced meat pie on mine. But most importantly – Christmas Eve midnight service.”

– Bryce Cramer, Murphysboro Office and Member Services Manager, Egyptian Electric Cooperative Association

“Our big soldier still likes to be a little girl! Maren and my wife Kate almost always sit down together and read ‘The Littlest Angel.’ Maren cuddles as Kate reads. Maren waits for the part when Kate always cries. It’s where the angel sends God’s messenger down to Earth to get his box. It contains, among other things, the collar from his dog who ‘lived as he had died, in true and utter devotion.’ It gets her every time!”

– John Lowrey, Editor, Illinois Country Living

“We always had an Advent calendar, gingerbread house (I loved eating the green jelly Christmas trees first), a Christmas village, and Santa only brought one present which magically appeared fully assembled in front of the tree on Christmas morning.”

– Jen Danzinger, Web Developer/Graphic Designer, AIEC

“My grandfather and father would always make Corv, what my grandpa called poor man’s sausage. As I was growing up, there was always some leftover meat after filling the casings, so my dad would fry up Corv patties. I think it was primarily for me, but it grew to something that was done every Christmas Eve. My father has passed on, so I’ve tried to keep it alive hoping one day my son will want to do it too.”

– Kevin Bernson, Vice Pres. of Media and Public Relations, Shelby Electric Cooperative

“I loved my grandmother very much, but not her ‘special treat’ for us on Christmas Eve. She would make oyster stew, which I’m sure was expensive and a delicacy to her because oysters weren’t as readily available some 40 years ago. The oysters tasted awful to me as a small child, but I didn’t want to hurt her feelings, so I’d turn away from her and swallow them whole! Needless to say, that’s not a tradition I carry on today.”

– Nancy Rhoads McDonald, Marketing Administrator, AIEC

# How to save your ash trees

Since 2006, the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) has spread throughout the state, usually following interstate highways or rail lines, though there have been a few exceptions.

Left on its own devices, the EAB flies about 1-5 miles a year, usually more on the lower end of the scale. With that, it would have taken an average of 300 years for the insect to populate the state.

Sadly, this isn't the case. The creature is a great hitchhiker on firewood and vehicles.

EAB is one of the prettiest creatures, but it goes to show that beauty is only skin deep. However, in the insect's defense, it is what it is. It was imported, most likely to Canada from China on packing material, and found a welcome source of food in the native ashes.

Most of the feeding is on native ash trees such as white, green, blue, black and pumpkin ashes. Mountain ash is not a true ash, but a member of the rose family, so it's not affected.

Identifying your tree is the first step. There are several trees including walnut, hickory, pecan and box elder that can look like ash to the untrained eye.

And not every problem with the ash is caused by the EAB. While ashes are native, it doesn't mean they aren't immune to other insects and some diseases. In other words, EAB causes ash some problems, but not all ash problems are caused by EAB.

While we thought the insect was strictly an ash problem, recent findings indicate the native White Fringetree (*Chionanthus virginicus*) can harbor the larva. That can also be a problem.

Since the early 2000s, reputable nurseries, garden centers and landscapers have avoided recommending or selling ash trees. We knew eventually there would be a problem.

Essentially, we have compounded the problem by planting lots of ash trees in the last 50 years since Dutch Elm Disease devastated the overplanted American elm. Ashes are native and well-adapted to a wide range of soil types and weather conditions. There are a few disease problems, but most are associated with poor care. Some of the selections on the market focused on the male seedless forms as well as those with outstanding fall color such as the Purple Ash.

The majority of the state is under an Illinois Department of Agriculture quarantine which is supposed to prevent the movement of hardwood firewood from an infected county into a non-infected. The USDA has quarantined the entire state preventing movement of wood products into other states. In both cases, if the firewood or lumber products go through a certification process, usually involving heat or chemical treatment, it can be moved.

Many of the southern counties haven't shown positive for EAB, but most of us think it is present in just about every county. There is just too much movement of vehicles and illegal firewood.

If you are in a quarantine area and have an ash tree you consider beneficial you may want to treat the tree.

If you look at the tree and think "gosh, it's not that great looking" you may not want to do anything and take your chances. Many communities are facing the issue of treatment costs versus removal costs.

The University of Illinois does NOT recommend treating trees



Photo courtesy of Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

unless you are within five miles of a confirmed identification. While that's my official position, I'd go for presence in your county or an adjacent county.

Treatment is best in the spring. DO NOT treat in the fall, as the chemicals won't be absorbed by the tree, and research shows the tree actually will ward off the uptake of the product when applied late in the season.

Unbiased research has shown the best products are either injected into the tree or absorbed by the roots in the spring. The websites listed below have the latest in chemical recommendations.

DO NOT move firewood unless you strip off all the bark and 1/2" of the sapwood. Most of us won't do that. If you go camping, check out the campgrounds first; they may have stockpiles of wood.

While it's usually prudent to say keep the tree healthy, EAB isn't discriminate and will attack healthy and weak trees with equal abandon. However, a healthy tree may not exhibit the symptoms as fast, so keep the tree fertilized, and watered during droughts.

For the latest info, check out the following websites:

[www.illinoisEAB.com](http://www.illinoisEAB.com)  
[extension.illinois.edu](http://extension.illinois.edu) ■

David Robson is Extension Specialist, Pesticide Safety for the University of Illinois. [drobson@illinois.edu](mailto:drobson@illinois.edu)







# *The legend of the* **Christmas tree**

**T**he custom of a Christmas tree, undecorated, is believed to have begun in Germany, in the first half of the 700s.

The earliest story tells how British monk and missionary, St. Boniface, was preaching a sermon on the Nativity to a tribe of Germanic Druids outside the town of Geismar. To convince the town's people that the oak tree was not sacred and unbreakable, the "Apostle of Germany" chopped one down on the spot. Toppling, it crushed every shrub in its path except for a small fir sapling. This chance event could have been interpreted numerous ways, and legend has it that Boniface, attempting to win converts, interpreted the fir's survival as a miracle, concluding, "Let this be called the tree of the Christ Child." Subsequent Christmases in Germany were celebrated by planting fir saplings.

The history of the modern Christmas tree goes back to 16th century Germany. In 1561, decorations hung on a tree in the town of Alsace were roses cut from various colors of paper, apples, wafers and sugar. Around Strasbourg there was a widespread practice of bringing trees (evergreens, not necessarily fir trees) into houses for decoration during Christmastide.

The modern custom is also connected with the Paradise tree hung with apples, present in the medieval religious plays. The decorations could symbolize the Christian Hosts. Instead of trees, various wooden pyramidal structures were also used. In the 17th century, the Christmas tree spread through Germany and Scandinavia. Eventually the tree was extensively decorated, first with candles and candies, then with apples and confections, later with any glittering possessions.



The success of the Christmas tree in Protestant countries was enhanced by the legend, which attributed the tradition to Martin Luther himself. It is a widely held belief that Martin Luther first added lighted candles to a tree. Walking toward his home one winter evening, composing a sermon, he was awed by the brilliance of stars twinkling amidst evergreens. To recapture the scene for his family, he erected a tree in the main room and wired its branches with lighted candles. In England the tradition was made popular by the German Prince Albert, husband of Queen Victoria. The German immigrants brought the Christmas tree to America in the 17th century. Public outdoor Christmas trees with electric candles were introduced in Finland in 1906, and in USA (New York) in 1912.

Today, the Christmas tree is a tradition of many families around the world. Decorated in many different themes and colors, they reflect the personalities and styles of the families they belong to. And though it's fun to decorate the family tree, it's important to reflect back to why this tradition is so important.



## All insulation is not equal

Most discussions about residential energy efficiency include the topic of insulation. Attic, wall and floor insulation normally become major points of discussion. Builders, homeowners, architects and salesmen use R-value language for comparing various types and thicknesses of insulation.

It has been that way for as long as I can remember. However, energy efficiency experts are continuing to learn more and more about the actual performance of properly installed insulation. Infrared thermal imaging cameras, used in conjunction with home diagnostic equipment, are revealing that some types of insulation perform differently in a real-world environment than in a controlled climate within a testing facility. For instance, the actual performance of a fiberglass-insulated wall on a cold, windy, 30-degree day is far different than the exact same fiberglass-insulated testing wall within a cozy, 70-degree testing laboratory.

While I was in college studying architecture, we were taught that about all you needed to know about insulation was the R-value. Back then, we only knew of one type of insulation and that was fiberglass. So, when we were challenged in the early 1970s to make homes more energy efficient, just about all of us started installing insulation with higher R-values. Many went from 2 x 4 walls with R-11 insulation to 2 x 6 walls with R-19 insulation. We perceived that adding more insulation did help some, but we learned it was not as much as expected.

The "R" in R-value stands for the resistance to heat flow. In theory, and in some cases, the larger the R-value, the better the resistance to heat flow and, therefore, the better for energy efficiency. So, for several years, that's



all we knew about insulation.

Then we learned about another type of product called cellulose. We learned it worked extremely well when used as a sound barrier and were told it was a very good insulation for walls and ceilings. We used it and quickly learned it performed better than fiberglass even though cellulose insulation has nearly the same R-value as fiberglass. When installed properly, we saw a dramatic reduction in air infiltration. The similar R-value rating was perplexing to many of us. But, about this same time, we were learning that by using a blower door diagnostic testing device, air infiltration could have a significant impact on the energy efficiency of a house and on the performance of the insulation.

The more we tested homes and looked at utility bills, the more we were convinced there was a major difference in the actual performance between fiberglass and cellulose insulation. Because of that, many of us started recommending cellulose

whenever possible. Practical experience, proven building science and much improved diagnostic processes have proven that properly installed cellulose insulation is a wise investment.

Then came foam insulation and we were impressed. Now we had two insulation products that actually performed like we desired. But wait. Not so fast. Some of the early foam products were thought to contain chemicals that were unhealthy, and some experts said foam insulation could also shrink after installation.

So, the use of foam in residential dwellings was almost non-existent until the late 1990s. Today, open- and closed-cell foam insulations are safe, reliable and, when installed properly, become exceptional thermal, air and moisture barriers — all three energy efficiency bonuses in one package.

Also, expanding-foam insulation is being installed in many new and remodeled homes across America. And five of the six co-op Energy Efficiency Home Makeover houses are performing well with foam insulation.

Despite the fact that all three types have similar R-values, practical experience and modern diagnostics have revealed that properly installed foam insulation outperforms its counterparts because of its ability to stop unwanted air-infiltration and for its moisture barrier attributes.

Call me at the office at 501-653-7931 with any questions. ■

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



# Make your holidays greener

While the holidays are festive and fun, they can take a toll on the environment. All that shopping, decoration, food preparation and travel adds up to more carbon emissions and more waste. But there are ways to minimize our impact and still celebrate the season in grand style.

For starters, buy fewer gifts. Homemade, personal gifts are always appreciated as much or more than something store-bought. Paint a painting, bake a cake, or make a playlist of favorite songs. EarthEasy.com recommends giving services instead of goods to cut down on the materialism of the holidays: "A great gift could be an hour's massage at a local spa, or music lessons for a budding musician." Other service gift ideas include childcare or tutoring, dog walking, cooking, window-washing, a car wash and vacuum or even Internet/computer lessons. To cut down on the amount of stuff passing under your tree have a Secret Santa exchange among grown-ups so that every adult doesn't have to get gifts for several others.

Another way to save energy and waste is to tone down the holiday decorating, especially with regard to lighting. A 2008 report commissioned by the Department of Energy found that holiday lighting across the U.S. uses up some six terawatt-hours of electricity per year, which is equivalent to the total electricity consumption of half a million homes in a month. If you do still decide to indulge in holiday lights, try to go LED. The smaller "light emitting diode" bulbs don't get hot to the touch (and are less likely to start a fire) and consume a fraction of the electricity of their incandescent predecessors while lasting 10 times longer. HolidayLEDs.com gives customers, who recycle their old holiday lights with them, a voucher for 15 percent off a new order of LED lights.

Believe it or not, your choice of a Christmas tree affects your environmental footprint as well. *The Epoch Times* reports that artificial trees are not necessarily the answer, as most are made out of petrochemicals, PVC, metals or sometimes even lead, and can't usually be recycled so end up in landfills after a few years of useful life. Furthermore, some 80 percent of artificial trees are made in China, meaning shipping them on trucks, railways and container ships uses a lot of fuel and emits a lot of carbon dioxide accordingly.

Getting a real tree, preferably one that is organic and sustainably harvested by a local tree farmer, is a better choice. After all, real trees provide habitat for wildlife while



they are growing, and they filter dust and pollen out of the air while producing oxygen and absorbing carbon dioxide. *The Epoch Times* adds that typically one to three tree seeds are planted for every Christmas tree harvested in the U.S. And if you get a potted (living) Christmas tree, you can keep it for years after the holidays pass, either in its pot (or a bigger one as it grows) or in the ground outside.

Of course, another way to keep your carbon footprint down over the holidays is by just staying home. A third of the carbon emissions we generate in our daily lives come from driving our cars, so why not stay off the roads over the holidays? And air travel is one of the biggest carbon splurges any of us indulge in, so not jetting across the country to visit in-laws might be the best environmental action you take all year.

SOURCE: EarthTalk®



## Stuff stockings with safety

### Gift ideas that are easy on the wallet

Are you running out of gift giving ideas? As time runs out for buying this year's presents, remember there are gifts that could save the life of someone you love. To help you in your last-minute shopping and showing a bit of love, we've picked our top five gift ideas. They might not create the excitement of an iPad or Microsoft Xbox, but they don't cost as much either, and will make great stocking stuffers and protect our most important gifts — our family and friends.

The holidays are a time to let people know how much you care about them. A practical gift that helps keep loved ones safe continues to say 'I care about you' long after the holidays.

Safe Electricity's top five safety gift picks for 2014 are:

**Appliance Timer with a Safety Turn-off:** Is there someone on your list who is repeatedly forgetting to turn off a curling iron or other small appliance? An appliance timer with a safety turn-off can be found for around \$8 and provides an added layer of protection when a small appliance, such as an iron or space heater, accidentally gets left on. It has an auto shut-off timer that helps protect homes from fire or burn hazards.

**Portable/Extension Cord GFCI:** Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCIs) detect and prevent shocks. You may have noticed them in many bathrooms, kitchens, and other places where water and electricity may meet. They are the outlets with red and black buttons. If you know someone who works outside often, a portable GFCI is a perfect gift.

It offers protection from shock regardless of the electronic or tool that's plugged into it, helping keep your loved ones safe wherever they work. A GFCI extension cord starts at around \$25.

**Tamper Resistant Outlets or Outlet Plugs:** Young children may put fingers or other small objects in outlets without understanding the dangers of electricity. It is up to you to understand the dangers of electricity and prevent accidents. Tamper Resistant Outlets (TROs) provide a permanent solution. TROs have shutters that stay closed unless a plug with two prongs is plugged in. If you do not have a thorough understanding of electricity, TROs should be installed by a professional. Another option is simple outlet plugs. A TRO costs less than \$2. Packs of multiple outlet plugs start at around \$3.

**Non-contact Voltage Tester:** This gift is for the do-it-yourselfer. This is an inexpensive tool that detects the presence of voltage without touching a bare wire. The tester uses non-contact voltage detection technology to identify voltage in cables, cords, wires, circuit breakers, lighting fixtures, switches and outlets. Prices start around \$12.

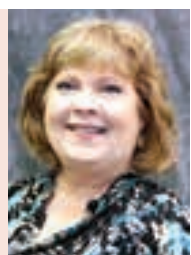
**Power Strips and Smart Strips:** Many people will get new electronics for the holidays. Help your friends power electronics safely

with a new power strip. Choose a power strip that comes with a circuit breaker that will trip if the power strip becomes overloaded. Overloaded power strips are dangerous and can cause shocks and fires. Power strip prices start at around \$7. Smart power strips are another option that add energy savings. Electronics that are turned off sometimes still draw power. So a control unit, such as a television or computer, is plugged into one outlet. The smart strip detects when the control unit is off and shuts off power to peripherals, like DVD players and printers. Smart strips can be found for as low as \$22.

During the busy holidays Safe Electricity encourages you to take time to keep all of your celebrations safe. For more information, visit [SafeElectricity.org](http://SafeElectricity.org). ■



Molly Hall is the Director of Safe Electricity. E-mail: [molly-hall@SafeElectricity.org](mailto:molly-hall@SafeElectricity.org) and for more information on these and other kinds of situations involving electricity visit [www.SafeElectricity.org](http://www.SafeElectricity.org).





*Merry Christmas*

*from the Illinois Touchstone Energy® co-op employees*



[www.touchstoneenergy.coop](http://www.touchstoneenergy.coop)





“**G**od literally woke me up and said ‘Feed my children.’” That was about 20 years ago, and Kenny Mayner knew it was God’s voice. The only thing he did question was what it meant at that time. He and wife, Marsha, have a family of two boys. They were well loved and well fed. What they discovered was the key word, “my.” “We were being asked to feed God’s children,” Marsha says.

Over the years, that phrase has taken on a multitude of meanings for the couple, fueled by a deep faith they have put into action. Initially, Kenny and Marsha, along with other volunteers, travelled to the Appalachian Mountains of Eastern Tennessee, in the wee, dark hours of the night, with a trailer full of food. “It was the day after Thanksgiving,” Marsha recalls. “When we arrived at the food pantry, we saw the one jar of peanut butter, and it broke our hearts.” They also laugh when thinking back to that time. “We discovered that air mattresses don’t hold air when you put them on a cold floor. We all scrunched up on the couch and slept with our feet propped up on a coffee table at that food pantry.” When they left, their hearts were full, and the pantry shelves were stocked. They knew, at least in that moment, they were there to feed others.

Marsha and Kenny live in Marsha’s hometown of Winchester, also the home of Illinois Rural Electric Cooperative (IREC), where her father worked for many years as a lineman. Marsha is an account support specialist for Prairie Power, Inc., in Springfield, while Kenny works

maintenance at the Morgan County Housing Authority in his hometown of Jacksonville.

Through the years, they have continued to follow their faith and God’s call. Between them, they’ve gone on mission trips to many U.S. states, as well as internationally. Kenny has been to the Dominican Republic and Marsha to Africa – quite a distance from their hometowns of Winchester and Jacksonville.

While understanding the importance of those trips, and helping around the world, they felt a nudge to help in their own back yard. “The Lord opened our eyes and showed us the need right here at home. We weren’t sure how we were going to make that happen,” Marsha explains. “We didn’t have a space, or the money to buy one, and then ‘coincidentally,’ a building right in the heart of downtown Winchester became available.”

It was too much money and too much space, so they decided it wasn’t what they were supposed to do at that time. Later, someone else also needed space. Together they went to the owner and an agreement was made to split the building. That was doable. They bought it in March 2011.

Today, the Outreach Community Center is housed at 31 South Main St. in downtown Winchester, across the street and a couple doors down from the IREC offices. They have practically outgrown it. “One of these days we will completely outgrow it, and we know that God will provide again,” Marsha says with a smile spreading across her face.

## Why they do it

It's all about the people. You can see it in their eyes when they tell the stories of those who come in. Kenny remembers a little girl coming up to him during one of their Back-to-School Bashes and asking how much the hotdogs cost. When he said "free," she asked for one. His eyes grow a little misty. "She was a petite little girl, and I think she may have come back three times for hotdogs. She was hungry. There are children who are hungry, right in our own communities," he says. "I don't want anyone to be hungry."

During last year's ice storm just before Christmas, there was a line already forming at the center well before Marsha was off work. "We start the giveaways at 5 p.m., and it is first-come, first-served," says Marsha. One of the Center's board members, Brandon Moore, communications supervisor at IREC had a good view out of the co-op's front window. He called to let Marsha know the line was forming at 2 p.m. People were nervous the center would close and they wouldn't have gifts for their children.

"We wouldn't do that. People need to be able to come in, but we also don't open early because that's not fair to the ones who work. That day, there was a woman," Marsha pauses, choking a bit on the emotion at the recollection. "There was a Mom who stood out there, in flip-flops, in the ice-storm, for a Friday night toy giveaway to get Christmas gifts for her children. She stood there for three hours waiting. Moms and parents do that! We give used toys to everyone who needs them, and there's not a limit. But we do expect people to be respectful of others. Each household also receives two tickets per child for new toys. I can't even tell you how many toys we have given away. The need is high."

What is evident is the Mayner's hearts are all-in. They are grateful for the many volunteers of all ages, from each of the counties, who give their time to serve, clean toys, shop for groceries and toys and help out at events. They are grateful for the monetary donations that show up at exactly the right time from individuals, businesses and churches.

Marsha and Kenny Mayner are grounded in their faith and conviction that people and community matter. They believe no one should go without and God will provide. Together,

they are doing their part. "We just say that we have always walked by faith. A faith that has been tested, shaken and every time proved. If it truly is God's plan, it will come to pass no matter what obstacles may seem to be in the way."

### Outreach Community Center

- Serves Greene, Morgan, Pike and Scott counties
  - Reaching a 50-mile radius
- Hosts Back-to-school Bash
  - Have provided back-to-school supplies to more than 600 families in four years
- Bags of Blessings
  - Since January 2013, they have provided food the last Saturday of each month to about 40 families, serving more than 100 family members
- Thanksgiving Dinner – volunteers come serve and/or deliver meals
- Breakfast with Santa – a time of fun and fellowship
- The space is available for churches, youth groups or families to use for events
- They host movie nights, exercise sessions, study times for kids and more
- Contact information: [www.facebook.com/outreachcommcenter](http://www.facebook.com/outreachcommcenter), email: [outreachcommcenter@gmail.com](mailto:outreachcommcenter@gmail.com), phone: 217-883-0359





# Tips for unwrapping a healthier YOU!

Party planning, creative dinner tactics and generosity boost holiday health

*Holidays are traditionally marked by celebration, family and food. Here are some tips to help you enjoy the festivities while keeping a balanced and healthful diet.*

## Party Snacks:

- ❖ **Take control.** Before a holiday event, eat a snack or light meal. You will be less likely to fill up on high-calorie foods at the event. Fasting before an event may lead you to overeat.
- ❖ **Keep it lean.** Go for the vegetable platter and lean proteins, such as shrimp. Try to avoid creamy or fried appetizers.
- ❖ **Bring a dish.** Offer to bring a low-calorie dish to the holiday party. It will help your host *and* your waistline!

## Holiday Dinner

- ❖ **Pile on the veggies.** Fill up on healthful items such as vegetables, salad and even fruit before going for the more decadent sides.
- ❖ **Reduce your portions.** Choose items you want to try the most and eat a small portion of each. This will help you keep your calories down, while still enjoying holiday favorites!
- ❖ **Eat slowly.** It takes about 20 minutes for your body to realize you are full. Make sure you slow down and savor your meal to prevent overeating.
- ❖ **Take a walk.** After your meal, get moving! It will help your body digest the food and use some of the extra calories you consumed during the meal.

## Seasonal Sweets

- ❖ **Moderation is key.** Enjoy your favorite desserts during the holiday; just be mindful of portion sizes. Sample a small amount of your favorite items. The holidays only come once a year so you should take the opportunity to enjoy the occasional sweet!
- ❖ **Share your dessert.** Cut calories in half by sharing your dessert with a friend or family member.

Source: NRECA



*Cranberries are a festive and healthy snack during the holidays.*

*Most importantly, enjoy yourself by making the focus of the holiday season your family and friends, not food.*

**Fish – Camp – Relax.** A private club setting on wooded property with 60 plus acres of striped mine stone quarry canals stocked full of fish. Muskie – Northern – Walley – Bass – Catfish – Pan Fish – and more. Developed for Families – Retired Individuals – Handicapped – and Professional Fishermen. Play grounds – Wildlife Park – Petting Zoo – Boating – Trails and more. Permanent campsites with full hookups. OPEN YEAR AROUND, Annual memberships, tight security. Ph – 309-826-8444.

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

**For Sale:** Like New Vending Machines. BC-12 drink \$1978, HR-32 snack \$2100.00, FF-200 frozen food \$2300.00 (1 of each). Bloomington/Normal, IL 309-824-9436

**For Sale:** Tuba. Miraphone 1291. Appraised for \$9000.00 Asking \$8700.00. Mint condition. Includes hard and soft case, 3 mouthpieces. Bloomington/Normal, IL 309-824.9436.

**For Sale.** 3 Bedroom brick home, finished basement, 26x42 building, 12x20 buidling, 5 acres fenced pasture, 24x32 barn Murphysboro. 618-684-6772

**Wanted to buy:** Standing timber. All species, except pine. Southern Illinois Area. 618-893-4223.



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# A smart plan for landing today's tech jobs

Recently, I attended a unique event in Effingham. The purpose of the event was to bring together manufacturers and educational institutions with the goal of aligning available jobs with school programs. Now, usually I take time in this column to focus on computer issues, or even “how-to” technology advice, but if you will forgive me this one time, let’s have a conversation about just how important the issue of aligning education with real-world job availability is to the future of our children.

Don’t get me wrong. I believe in higher education. But, what exactly does “higher education” mean? The problem we have is a pervasive mentality of “college for everyone.” And, more than that, it’s the mentality of “university for everyone.” In reality, there are many jobs that perhaps don’t require a four year degree. Rather, they require specialized training or skills that can be obtained at community colleges or even in job training programs.

Now, don’t get up in arms just yet defending your alma mater. I’m going to give you some specific examples, but because this is a technology column, I want to give you some specific examples related to the field. If your son or daughter is interested in a tech field, but doesn’t find the four-year university route appealing, then maybe he or she should check out the local community college.

Many students attend community colleges as a cost-savings measure, and that’s actually a very smart play. However, community colleges are much more than just university preparatory institutions. In reality, community colleges offer many certificate programs designed to place students directly into the workplace. Quite a few of those programs are even accepted as fulfilling state licensing standards.

For instance, if you want to be a lineman, check out the program offered at Lincoln Land in Springfield or at Frontier in Fairfield. Both



programs will put you on the way to a career in the electric utility industry. Interested in a job in renewable energy? Your community college may even have a certification program to get you ready to enter the field. Here is one such program: <http://www.llcc.edu/career-training/workforce/renewable-energy-academy/>

If you want a career in a more stereotypical technology job, then nearly all community colleges offer a certificate program in computer information systems. These programs differ somewhat from institution to institution, but they all have in common the fundamental standard of preparedness for the workforce. If you want to see a great example of workforce ready programs, check out Mattoon’s Lakeland College. Just go to <https://www.lakeland.cc.il.us/as/as/academicprograms/programs.cfm> and scroll down until you see the header. Once there, you will see a myriad of programs with a little “GE” beside them. The GE indicates programs specifically tailored for Gainful Employment.

On a personal note, I am particularly fond of Lakeland’s Geospatial Technology program, especially when combined with some (or all) of the coursework from one of the IT centered programs.

Remember the conference I spoke about earlier? Both Lakeland College and representatives from North American Lighting (NAL) were there

to speak about a great program jointly developed to train potential employees to be technicians at NAL. It’s this kind of collaboration that holds the future of education for our country.

Four-year universities still have a very valid place in our society. There will always be a need for higher education. More than that, there will always be a need for Master’s level, and beyond, educational institutions. But the good news is not everyone has to attend one in order to be successful. There are definitely options more suited for those who seek a different route to success. Perhaps if we start to think more about higher education as “training for all” instead of “university for all” we will see a sharper decline in the unemployment rate.

 **Reply Online**

**Have a technology issue and want some advice? Visit [www.icl.coop](http://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](mailto:edv@ceci.coop)



# In-floor electric heating options

## Lower your thermostat with warmer floors

**Dear Jim:** I often feel chilly in my home, especially during the winter months. I know electric resistance heating can be expensive to use, but I really like the idea of in-floor heating. Does it only work with tile flooring, or can it be used under carpet? What types are available? - Ron A.

**Dear Ron:** You're absolutely right. Electric resistance systems are expensive to use for heating the home. This is why most homes with all-electric heating use heat pumps, which are more energy efficient. Geothermal heat pumps can be several times more efficient than resistance heating and provide inexpensive central air-conditioning.

Electric in-floor heating, which can be used under tile, carpeting and hardwood, is technically no more efficient than an electric resistance furnace. However, it can be less expensive to operate because it pinpoints and improves comfort. And besides, what's better than stepping onto a heated-tile bathroom floor in the morning?

A home loses less heat through the walls, ceiling and windows when the indoor temperature is lower. The amount of electricity used is typically several percentage points less for each degree the thermostat is set lower. With improved comfort from in-floor heating, you should be able to lower the thermostat setting considerably and not feel chilly.

Another energy saving advantage of in-floor heating is the fact that each room can have a separate thermostat, allowing you to set different temperatures in various rooms and heat as needed.

Instead of heating the room air, a warm floor radiates heat upward to your body. When one's feet are warm, your entire body feels warm. In-floor heating reduces the extent of heat stratification where the hot air from



Electric radiant heating pads can be placed directly under a rug to add supplemental heat to a room.

*Photo credit - Warmly Yours*

a forced-air furnace naturally collects upward, near the ceiling.

In-floor heating is most commonly used in a concrete or tile floor with high thermal mass, but some types are specifically designed to be used under carpeting, hardwood or laminate flooring. It can actually provide better comfort under carpet and hardwood because their low thermal mass allows the system to respond faster to thermostat changes.

In a concrete slab or under a tile floor, electric heating cable is usually laid in a serpentine pattern. In one design by Nuheat, long cable guides are nailed along the outer edges of

the floor. Selecting how many slots to skip between cables determines the total cable length and heat output. It also simplifies even spacing. Once the cable is in place, it is covered with concrete or thinset for tiles.

For use with carpeting, thin mats or sheets with electric cable embedded in them are placed on the floor before the carpeting is laid. The manufacturer can calculate the amount your rooms need, and the cable is available in 120 or 240 voltages. Some of the systems for smaller areas are designed for do-it-yourself installation.

WarmlyYours has a unique design with thin electric heating cables embedded in a strong fiberglass mesh. This is particularly effective for use under hardwood flooring and laminate. If you're thinking about this option, first check with the hardwood-flooring manufacturer about the maximum allowable temperature to avoid excessive drying of the wood. Consider installing a special programmable thermostat with a laminate and engineered wood setting to protect the materials.

Another design by Heatizon uses a low-voltage heating mesh. This mesh is only about one-eighth inch thick and is stapled directly to the subflooring. Being a safe low-voltage, installation is relatively easy. WarmlyYours also offers a wafer-thin heating kit which is placed between the pad and the carpet.

With in-floor heating, you do not have to cover your entire house (or even an entire room), so you can add to the system as your budget allows. People sometimes add small custom mats or sheets in front of a mirror in a dressing area or workspace to pinpoint heating needs. At a home center store, a 10-foot by 30-inch heating mat costs about \$200, and a matching programmable thermostat is about \$140.

Also, if you're away from home for extended periods of time during winter and set your thermostats low to save energy, there's a chance a pipe may freeze during a severe cold snap. Self-regulating electric heating cables, which attach along water pipes, are available from the in-floor heating cable manufacturers. They automatically self-adjust the heat output depending upon the temperature of the pipe.

The following companies offer electric in-floor heating systems: Calorique, 800-922-9276, [www.calorique.com](http://www.calorique.com); Emerson, 800-621-1506, [www.emersonindustrial.com](http://www.emersonindustrial.com); Heatizon, 888-239-1232, [www.heatizon.com](http://www.heatizon.com); Nuheat, 800-778-0276, [www.nuheat.com](http://www.nuheat.com); Orbit Radiant Heating, 888-895-0958, [www.orbitrdiantheating.com](http://www.orbitrdiantheating.com); Suntouch, 888-432-8932, [www.suntouch.net](http://www.suntouch.net);



This electric floor radiant heating kit contains heating cable spaced properly in a mesh casing. This is ideal for tile floor applications.  
*Photo credit - Warmly Yours*



Electric radiant heating cable/mesh is placed on a kitchen floor before the ceramic tile is installed. The manufacturer can advise about how much to use.  
*Photo credit - Heatizon*

and WarmlyYours, 800-875-5285, [www.warmlyyours.com](http://www.warmlyyours.com).

Send inquiries to James Dulley, Illinois Country Living, 6906

Royalgreen Drive, Cincinnati, OH 45244 or visit [www.dulley.com](http://www.dulley.com).

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- 1-31 Undying Words: Lincoln**, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum, 212 N. Sixth St., Springfield. This exhibit focuses on Lincoln's best-known speeches while teaching visitors about Lincoln's transformation, ultimately putting the United States on track to become the first bi-racial democracy in world history. This exhibit is a collaboration with the Chicago History Museum and will be an inspiring and reflective commemoration of Lincoln's death. Roughly ninety to one hundred original objects, including the Lincoln family carriage and the death bed of Abraham Lincoln, will be on display. 9 a.m.-5 p.m. daily. [www.presidentlincoln.illinois.gov](http://www.presidentlincoln.illinois.gov) or 217-558-8934.
- 2-4 Let's Go Fishing Show**, 1 Gateway Dr., Collinsville. The Let's Go Fishing Show consistently attracts an enthusiastic audience due to its dedication to fishing and to having high quality exhibitors. Visitors to the show not only find a "fishing tackle super-store" but attend seminars and see exhibits of interest. Adults-\$7, Seniors age 60+ \$5 on Friday only, Ages 6-15 - \$3.50, Ages 5 and under-free, free parking. [www.letsgoshows.com](http://www.letsgoshows.com) or [www.gatewaycenter.com/calendar](http://www.gatewaycenter.com/calendar).
- 3 Alton-Audubon Eagle Festival**, Alton Visitor Center, 200 Piasa St., Alton. Join us for the kick-off of the eagle watching season. See a live bald eagle up close and personal. Learn about eagle watching - how to spot eagles, where to look and what brings the eagles to this region each year. Then, head back across the river to Downtown Alton for ice sculpting on the streets. Admission is free. 10 a.m.-2 p.m. For more details, call 1-800-258-6645.
- 3-4 Gun & Knife Show**, The Pavilion of the City of Marion, 1602 Sioux Dr., Marion. This event offers a large display of handmade and collectible hunting/work knives and guns. 618-993-2657 or [www.thepavilionevents.com](http://www.thepavilionevents.com).
- 9-11 Bald Eagle Days Environmental Fair**, QCCA Expo Center, 2621-4th Avenue, Rock Island. Don't miss the Fair and Wildlife Art Show. It is heralded as the largest event in the Midwest dedicated to the United States' national symbol of freedom. The three-day event includes live eagle, hawk, owl and vulture flying demonstrations along with educational programs and more than 200 fun and informative exhibits. 309-788-5912 or [www.qccaexpocenter.com](http://www.qccaexpocenter.com).
- 14 Galena Winter Farmers Market and Craft Fair**, Galena Center for the Arts, 219 Summit St., Galena. Market includes 16-20 vendors selling everything from winter produce, eggs, baked goods, meats, crafts, organic soaps and much more. From 4-6 p.m. [www.galenawintermarket.com](http://www.galenawintermarket.com).
- 17-18 Winter Wilderness Weekend**, Starved Rock State Park Visitor Center, Route 178 and Route 71, Utica. Guided hikes to see the spectacular ice falls of Starved Rock. Enjoy Bald Eagle viewing and the geology of the park. Meet at the Visitor Center at 9:00 am and 1:00 pm daily. Free event. For more information call the Starved Rock Visitor Center at 815-667-4906 or [www.starvedrockstatepark.org](http://www.starvedrockstatepark.org).
- 18 Jacksonville Main Street's Bridal Expo**, 110 N. East, Jacksonville. Join them upstairs at Hamilton's for a viewing of Bridal Expo Booths, yummy tastings and a wonderful fashion show. [www.hamiltonscatering.com](http://www.hamiltonscatering.com) or 217-291-0985.
- 23 No Strings Attached - Illinois Symphony Chamber Orchestra**, First Presbyterian Church, 321 S. 7th St., Springfield. Delight in the sounds of winds, brass, and percussion with no strings attached. From the Renaissance to the 20th Century, this performance has something for everyone including Gabrieli's antiphonal Sonata pianò forte, the sweet Serenade for Winds by Richard Strauss, Dukas' brilliant Fanfare from La Peri, and Stravinsky's serene Symphonies of Wind Instruments. To top it off, the satirical Little Threepenny Music of Kurt Weill makes for a mischievous night. Performances at 6 and 8 p.m. [www.ilsymphony.org](http://www.ilsymphony.org) or 217-206-6160.
- 30-1 Southern Illinois Boat & Fishing Show**, The Pavilion of the City of Marion, 1602 Sioux Dr., Marion. Local boat and tackle dealers show off their merchandise. Daily seminars on fishing. [www.visitsi.com](http://www.visitsi.com) or 618-997-3690.
- Selected Days Bald Eagle Viewing Programs**, Pere Marquette State Park Visitor Center, 13112 Visitor Center Ln., Off IL-100 (Great River Road) Grafton. A Park naturalist will be presenting informative programs about bald eagles. Visitors will learn to distinguish between immature and mature eagles, what they eat, why they winter in the area and more. There will be a lecture and a short video presentation followed by an observational drive. Be sure to dress warmly and have a full tank of gas. Binoculars are highly recommended but not essential as the Park brings along a spotting scope. Free, reservations required. For more information call 618-786-3323.



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

**Deadline:** December 21 for March events. **Mail to:** Illinois Datebook, PO Box 3787, Springfield, IL 62708. E-mail to: [datebook@aiec.coop](mailto:datebook@aiec.coop).





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