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On the cover, Rhet Schrock of S.I.C. Recycling stands in the 75,000 sq. ft. facility amid the piles of scrap metal that will be recycled into usable products.



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Doing the right thing

Many times this past winter I looked out the window and thought about how thankful I was to simply be warm. For me, this quickly lead to thoughts regarding the complexity and volatility of the production and transmission of electricity, probably because this is what I've spent my life doing. I have witnessed changes in the electric industry that I would have thought impossible 20 years ago.

However, one thing remaining constant throughout the evolution of the business is that cooperatives have always strived to do the right thing for their members. For us, this is a continuous search for ways to lower costs, ensure long-term price stability and be environmentally responsible. This harsh winter served as a reminder as to how elusive these goals can be without taking affirmative actions to secure our future.

I frequently discuss various elements of how we supply energy to our members with interested people all over the state. They share their concerns over our future and their opinions on issues of affordability and environment. One thing I have found to be true is that it often seems easy to resolve such issues when one problem is addressed at a time, but it is very difficult to find a comprehensive solution when all issues must be considered together.

But our mission requires that we do just that. Anything short of looking at the big picture is just not sound business. We know that focusing solely on one particular technology or fuel source is not in the best interest of our wallets, the future of our economy or the environment. Common sense alone is enough to see the danger in being too narrowly focused.

That is the reason cooperatives have truly embraced the "all of the

We understand our responsibility to deliver reliable energy affordably — and our responsibility to the costs that our children will face, and to the environment in which they will live.

above" philosophy with respect to energy resources. We don't just do it in word, we do it in practice. Cooperatives have invested billions of dollars to secure multiple, diverse energy resources to ensure that our future remains bright. We understand our responsibility to deliver reliable energy affordably — and our responsibility to the costs that our children will face, and to the environment in which they will live.

That is the reason cooperatives serving Illinois have added state-of-the-art clean coal generation, wind, solar, landfill gas and anaerobic digester resources into our generation fleet. It is also the reason we have invested heavily in pollution control equipment to keep the best of our existing fleet viable while simultaneously lowering emissions. Each of these technologies possess different cost characteristics and has differing impacts on the environment. At various times throughout a typical day, any of these resources can be the one that makes the most sense for generating electricity. However, none of these technologies is the best option all of the time.

Diversity in generating resources leads to the lowest cost, the lowest risk and the least impact on our environment. Putting diverse resources in place is not always the

cheapest thing to do in the short-term, but it most certainly will be in the long run.

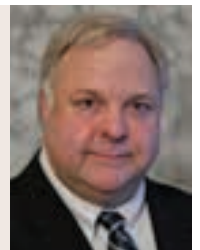
We also recognize that often the best supply resource is conservation. Cooperatives are investing in cutting-edge technology to facilitate managing demand and flow of electricity. The great thing about this technology is that it can do much more than help conserve energy; it will also facilitate lower bills through better market interaction, improve reliability and lessen environmental impact.

Here at Prairie Power, Inc., for example, we are currently in the process of implementing new high-speed data communications capabilities and are developing new software platforms and computers to make good on the promises of a smarter electrical grid.

Why do we do these things? Because it is the right thing to do. Illinois electric cooperatives invest wisely for the long-term, realizing that affordable, stable energy prices are essential to support our local economies.

I am proud of what electric cooperatives have accomplished by taking a proactive, common sense approach to the supply of electric power. I'm even more proud that we have had the character to do what is right each step of the way as the electric industry modernizes. I truly believe it will pay off in the future. Doing the right thing always does. ■

Jay Bartlett is President/CEO of Prairie Power, Inc. (www.ppi.coop), the generation and transmission cooperative serving 10 electric distribution cooperatives in Illinois.



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

Reported by J. Page

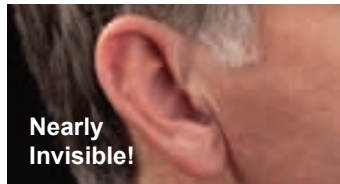
Chicago: Board-certified physician Dr. S. Cherukuri has done it once again with his newest invention of a medical grade **ALL DIGITAL** affordable hearing aid.

This new digital hearing aid is packed with all the features of \$3,000 competitors at a mere fraction of the cost. **Now, most people with hearing loss are able to enjoy crystal clear, natural sound—in a crowd, on the phone, in the wind—without suffering through “whistling” and annoying background noise.**

New Digital Hearing Aid Outperforms Expensive Competitors

This sleek, lightweight, fully programmed hearing aid is the outgrowth of the digital revolution that is changing our world. While demand for “all things digital” caused most prices to plunge (consider DVD players and computers, which originally sold for thousands of dollars and today can be purchased for less than \$100), yet the cost of a digital medical hearing aid remained out of reach.

Dr. Cherukuri knew that many of his patients would benefit but couldn't afford the expense of these new digital hearing aids. Generally they are *not* covered by Medicare and most private health insurance.



SAME FEATURES AS EXPENSIVE HEARING AID COMPETITORS

- ✓ Mini Behind-The-Ear hearing aid with thin tubing for a nearly invisible profile
- ✓ Advanced noise reduction to make speech clearer
- ✓ Feedback Cancellation eliminates whistling
- ✓ Wide dynamic range compression makes soft sounds audible and loud sounds comfortable
- ✓ Telecoil setting for use with compatible phones, and looped environments like churches
- ✓ 3 programs and volume dial to accommodate most common types of hearing loss even in challenging listening environments

The doctor evaluated all the high priced digital hearing aids on the market, broke them down to their base components, and then created his own affordable version—called the MDHearingAid® AIR for its virtually invisible, lightweight appearance.

Affordable Digital Technology

Using advanced digital technology, the MDHearingAid® AIR automatically adjusts to your listening environment—prioritizing speech and de-emphasizing background noise. Experience all of the sounds you've been missing at a price you can afford. **This doctor designed and approved hearing aid comes with a full year's supply of long-life batteries. It delivers crisp, clear sound all day long and the soft flexible ear buds are so comfortable you won't realize you're wearing them.**

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With Our 45 Day Risk-Free Trial

Of course, hearing is believing and we invite you to try it for yourself with our RISK-FREE 45-day home trial. If you are not completely satisfied, simply return it within that time period for a full refund of your purchase price.

Can a hearing aid delay or prevent dementia?

A study by Johns Hopkins and National Institute on Aging researchers suggests older individuals with hearing loss are significantly more likely to develop dementia over time than those who retain their hearing. They suggest that an intervention—such as a hearing aid—could delay or prevent dementia by improving hearing!

“Satisfied Buyers Agree AIR Is Best Digital Value!”

“I am hearing things I didn't know I was missing. Really amazing. I'm wearing them all the time” —Linda Irving, Indiana

“Almost work too well. I am a teacher and hearing much better now” —Lillian Barden, California

“I have used many expensive hearing aids, some over \$5,000. The Airs have greatly improved my enjoyment of life” —Som Y., Michigan

“I would definitely recommend them to my patients with hearing loss” —Amy S., Audiologist, Munster, Indiana



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U.S. nearing energy independence

The United States is projected to be energy self-sufficient by 2035 while also being the world's top liquids and natural gas producer, according to BP's 2035 Energy Outlook report. The report predicts worldwide energy demand will grow by 41 percent over the next 20 years, a slowdown from the 52 percent growth of the past 20 years.

Energy production in the United States is expected to increase by 24 percent, while consumption expands

by just 3 percent, according to BP, while energy consumed in power generation rises by 10 percent. Coal is expected to remain the dominant fuel source, although BP anticipates its share will drop from 43 percent to 35 percent.

Increased energy efficiency will play a role in reduced energy demand, and BP anticipates that the United States and other advanced countries will see their economies grow while energy

use falls moving closer to 2035.

Worldwide, oil, natural gas and coal are each expected to account for 27 percent of the global fuel mix by 2035, with nuclear, hydropower and renewables accounting for roughly 5 percent to 7 percent each. Renewables are expected to be the fastest-growing source of electricity generation. BP said. "Including biofuels, renewables are expected to have a higher share of primary energy than nuclear by 2025." ■



Shelby Electric Cooperative comes to the rescue of fire department

A year ago during an oil well fire a lot of the firefighting gear of the Shelbyville Fire Department was damaged and left unusable. "We believe it was a lightning strike, during a bad rainstorm, that struck an oil battery southeast of Shelbyville setting off a fire in one of the tanks, which eventually exploded," said Fire Chief Gary Lynch. During battle, the team's uniforms were drenched with oil and other debris.

Shelby Electric Cooperative raised \$10,000 to aid the department in replacing damaged firefighting uniforms. "I coordinate a balloonfest at Lake Shelbyville, and during the glow portion we always do a cookout type fundraiser,"

said Kevin Bernson, Media and Public Relations Manager for Shelby Electric Cooperative. "The husband of one of our cooperative employees works at the fire department and said that a lot of their clothes got ruined by fuel or oil, or something that got on their gear that made it very unsafe."

"We probably had more than 6,000 people come out to this cookout glow," said Bernson. "Shelbyville's population is just under 5,000, so we had people coming from all over the area. We were able to match the fundraising donation to get \$10,000 to go towards this equipment." ■



A long and winding road to a Farm Bill

After a long effort, the passage of a five-year Farm Bill made a huge step forward when a conference report cleared the House on a bipartisan 251-166 vote. This compromise included several key items for electric cooperatives: It returned the ability for RUS to make baseload generation loans, authorized zero percent loans for consumer efficiency programs and made improvements to the Senate's changes

to the RUS broadband loan program.

For decades Farm Bills have included funding for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programs (SNAP, formerly known as Food Stamps), along with commodity programs in order to secure enough votes for passage from a coalition of rural and urban members. This year that theory was tested as House conservatives insisted on deep SNAP

cuts and reforms which were not supported by their more liberal and urban counterparts. In the end, the bill contained a modest SNAP cut of \$8 billion over 10 years, or about 1 percent. Other battles were fought over dairy programs, conversion to more crop insurance-based risk management programs for commodities, and repealed a number of livestock production regulations. ■

Dairyland Power Cooperative using cow power

According to Wisconsin Dairy Data the state has 1.27 million dairy cows. Dairyland Power Cooperative, which serves Illinois cooperative Jo-Carroll Energy, is using the resulting waste as resource and turning cow poop into electricity. The generation and transmission cooperative is a national leader in what it calls cow power.

The co-op is also using biomass, wind and landfill gas to increase its renewable energy portfolio.

Cow power typically makes economic sense when there is a dairy herd of at least 1,000 cows. But Dairyland Power is exploring options for small scale manure digesters for farms with dairy herds of as few as 100 cows.

Methane gas is produced by the manure digester and the gas is used to generate electricity. Besides producing enough electricity for about 20 homes, the process also creates weed and pathogen free mulch that can be sold for an additional revenue stream. ■



Honoring the guiding light behind rural electrification

It is quite likely that rural electrification would not have happened without the leadership of Sen. George W. Norris. Nearly 75 years ago the leaders of Norris Electric Cooperative in Newton, Ill. understood that and honored his leadership by naming their co-op for this “founding father” of rural electrification.

Today a national fundraising campaign is requesting donations to build a memorial for Sen. George W. Norris, one of rural electrification's brightest lights.

NRECA has donated \$10,000 to jumpstart the campaign that was announced in a recent ceremony at the Nebraska State Capitol in Lincoln. The

George W. Norris Foundation is the drive's main organizer, along with the Nebraska Rural Electric Association.

Even though Norris died 70 years ago, his admirers are legion and they want to ensure his legacy is not forgotten.

“Electrification of rural America was one of the most important moments in America's history. George Norris worked across party lines to change the lives of rural residents and improve their quality of life,” said NRECA CEO Jo Ann Emerson. “This memorial to his service would be a fitting tribute to his vision for prosperous rural communities, a commitment which remains at the

forefront of NRECA's agenda today.”

Plans call for the Rural Electrification-Norris Eternal Light Display to go up in McCook, the tiny town in western Nebraska where Norris got his political start in the early 1900s. The Norris foundation has secured a location—a busy intersection of two U.S. highways—and a pro-bono designer based in Omaha.

For more information on how you can make a donation to the Rural Electrification-Norris Eternal Light Display, go to the Norris Institute, or contact Kristin Gottschalk, kgottschalk@nrea.org. ■

Source: Electric Co-op Today

New energy efficiency standards for external power supplies

The Energy Department on Feb. 3 announced new efficiency standards for external power supplies. Over the next 30 years, these standards will help save the equivalent of the annual electricity use of 6.5 million homes—and save families and businesses nearly \$4 billion on their energy bills.

External power supplies are used in hundreds of types of electronics and consumer products, including cell phones,

tablets, laptops, video game consoles and power tools, to convert power from a wall outlet into lower voltages. More than 300 million external power supplies are shipped in the United States each year, and the average American home has five to ten. These numbers are expected to continue growing as consumers and businesses purchase new types of personal electronics. ■

Cold snap to have lasting effect on power bills

Ratepayers used more electricity to get through this winter's cold spell and that's going to mean higher bills.

The Energy Information Administration (EIA) projects that double whammy will hit residential users in the pocketbooks, as the price of electricity jumps by about 2 percent in both 2014 and 2015. That's in addition to the higher bills that are resulting from extra consumption needed to get through a winter that's 20 percent colder than a year ago.

"The rising cost of generation fuels,

particularly natural gas, contributes to a projected increase in the residential price of electricity," the agency said. EIA said it expects the U.S. residential price of electricity to average 12.4 cents per kilowatt-hour in 2014, an increase of 2.2 percent from 2013. Residential electricity prices will increase another 1.9 percent during 2015, it concluded.

The agency placed the blame for the higher cost of generation on the cold weather, which tends to produce spikes in natural gas use and prices.

Residential natural gas prices are expected to increase this winter to \$10.16 per thousand cubic feet, a jump of \$0.41 per mcf from a year ago.

"Last winter, natural gas consumers spent an average of \$603 on their heating bills. This season, consumers can expect to spend \$649 on natural gas heating for the winter months, a 7.7 percent increase," EIA said. ■

Source: Electric Co-op Today

NRECA raises \$120k for typhoon victims

Michael Guidry, a former NRECA board president, and Martin Lowery, NRECA executive vice president, toured parts of the Philippines devastated by last fall's Super typhoon Haiyan. During the visit, they awarded more than \$120,000 raised by the NRECA International Foundation to help 11 co-ops rebuild their leveled systems. Donations from U.S. co-ops and individuals will help recipients defray reconstruction costs of low-income members and other economically disadvantaged residents.

"I never saw anything like the total devastation I've seen here," Guidry said. And that speaks volumes, considering that Guidry, as general manager of South Louisiana Electric Cooperative Association, oversaw post-disaster restoration efforts from hurricanes Katrina, Gustav and Ike.

"The destruction is degrees of magnitude greater. People



Filipinos are trying to regain some semblance of normal life.

are coping...but the reconstruction challenge is simply overwhelming," he said.

Of the island nation's 119 electric cooperatives, 33 sustained significant damage and 11 were nearly destroyed. Estimates to rebuild electric systems damaged by the Nov. 10 typhoon could exceed \$120 million, according to the Philippine's National Electrification Administration.

Power restoration in the hardest-hit areas surrounding Tacloban is about 40 percent, said Lowery. "Electric service is a first priority for stable planning. Without it, many who left after the storm will not return. With full service, many will come

home and begin the massive work of building the housing stock." ■

Source: Electric Co-op Today



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There are many costs we can't control. Fuel costs, the weather and environmental mandates can't be predicted, yet all impact rates. One way we can help you reduce expenses is through the Co-op Connections program. Through one free card, you can save on products and services from local and national vendors, prescription drugs, glasses and contacts, hearing aids, chiropractic care, X-rays, lab work and more.

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RECYCLING REVOLUTION

You can make a difference

By Lisa Rigoni

Recycling is more than saving bottles, cans, cardboard and plastics. It's an opportunity to make a difference in your life and community. Recycling is a daily activity for more than 100 million Americans and a great way to protect the environment and stimulate the economy, according to eco-cycle.org.

Illinois electric cooperatives are doing their part to help their communities and members recycle. Two such cooperatives include Shelby Electric Cooperative and Rock Energy Cooperative.

Monte McElroy, owner of McElroy Recreational Sales, has used the Power of Green recycling since Shelby Electric Cooperative started the program.

Shelby Electric Cooperative

The Power of Green

Shelby Electric Cooperative officially opened its Power of Green program July 10, 2010, in Shelbyville. “We saw a need and are filling it,” says Josh Shallenberger, COO at the cooperative. Among the items accepted are newspapers and magazines, office paper, steel and tin cans, aluminum cans, #1 and #2 plastics and corrugated cardboard.

“It began with a grant from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity to help fund the start up of the project,” says Kevin Bernson, Vice President of Media and Public Relations for the co-op. “Initially, we purchased the necessary bins, fencing and cameras.”

Dustin Theiss, Coordinator of Member and Media Services and part of the Power of Green Team, explains, “When we first started the program we had nice recycling bins outside, but we’ve grown so much we basically have the big cardboard boxes lined up on each side of the garage.”

“It gives more room for storage and ease of use for the recyclers. Plus, it provides a more weather-friendly place for the drop off of items and accommodates the cardboard binder for prepping all the cardboard boxes dropped off for pick up,” adds Chris French, PWR-net Customer Service Rep and part of the recycle team.



Pictured left to right, Chris French, Tammy Carson & Dustin Theiss, share the duties of staffing the Power of Green recycling program.

Community Resource, a company out of Champaign drives a semi down to pick up what the community has donated.

It’s not only residents of the community, but the businesses who have taken advantage of the opportunity. In fact, 24 businesses use the recycling program. Monte McElroy, owner of McElroy Recreational Sales, is one example. He has used the Power of Green program since its inception,

bringing paper and cardboard to recycle several times a month. “As a cooperative member it makes me proud to not only use this service for my business recyclables, but also proud that my cooperative cares about the communities in which they live and serve,” McElroy says.

For a complete list of both acceptable and unacceptable items go to: <http://www.shelbyelectric.coop/Community/Recycling.asp>

National Recycling Figures

- ♻️ 243 million tons of trash generated in 2009 (last EPA report)
- ♻️ 82 million tons composted or recycled for recovery rate of 33.8 percent
- ♻️ 29 million tons of trash combusted for energy recovery
- ♻️ 74 percent of office-type paper recovered
- ♻️ 60 percent of yard trimmings recovered
- ♻️ 34.5 percent of metals recycled
- ♻️ 7 million tons of metals recycled reduced greenhouse gas emissions at equivalent of removing 5 million cars from road for one year
- ♻️ Approximately 9,000 community curbside recycling programs exist in United States, an increase over reported 2002 figure of 8,875
- ♻️ Approximately 3,000 community composting programs exist — a decrease from reported 2002 figure of 3,227 programs
- ♻️ Current amount of trash per-person discarded in landfills lower than 1960
- ♻️ Due to population growth, current total amount of waste discarded in landfills is significantly higher than in 1960, yet lower than 1990

Rock Energy Cooperative has seen a growing success in its recycling efforts on Member Appreciation Days.



Rock Energy Cooperative tons of recycling

In September 2012 Rock Energy Cooperative offered, for the first time, electronics recycling and document shredding during its Member Appreciation Day, in an effort to provide extra value to members. Barb Uebelacker, Communications Specialist for the co-op says, “The response was overwhelming. We had a record crowd with more than 1,200 people visiting our Janesville warehouse during the event. Those who brought recyclables generated a total of 6.7 tons of electronics for recycling and 2.5 tons of paper were shredded, all in less than three hours.”

Vehicles started lining up 15 minutes before the recycling began. In a team effort, co-op employees were assigned to help members carry their bags and boxes of documents to the

shredding truck and unload heavy electronics from their vehicles. At the end of the event, there were 33 pallets filled with various types of electronics. The bulk of the 6.7 tons of electronics collected that morning were TVs of various shapes and sizes.

“The document shredding service provided at the event not only helped with recycling, but it also gave members the security of knowing that their personal information would not fall into the wrong hands,” Uebelacker notes.

Due to the overwhelming response in 2012, Rock Energy Cooperative decided to offer electronics recycling and document shredding again during its September 2013 event. “After members recycled 6.7 tons of electronics in 2012, we weren’t sure there would be many old TVs and computers left,” she says. “But the 2013 event set new records. We had 1,370 people

in attendance, and 8.2 tons of electronics were recycled and 2.5 tons of paper were shredded.”

According to Uebelacker, because members took advantage of the recycling opportunities, they helped keep those used electronics out of the community landfills. “The items may not be valuable to us anymore because they’re broken or obsolete, but the products contain valuable resources. The metals, plastics and glass used in electronics require energy to mine and manufacture,” Uebelacker explains. “By recycling electronics and reusing the materials, we are conserving our natural resources as well as reducing the energy demands from mining and manufacturing.

Watch for details of the 2014 Membership Appreciation Days and recycle opportunities at www.rock.coop.

What happens to recyclables?



Plastic bottles are recycled into carpet, clothing, auto parts and new bottles.



Paper is recycled into new paper. Some grades of paper can be recycled up to seven times.

Scrap Metal • *economic, environmental boost*

Why is it important to recycle scrap metal? It's good for both the economy and the environment. The Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries, Inc., says, "Despite the sluggish economic recovery overall in the aftermath of the global recession, the U.S. scrap recycling industry rebounded from \$54 billion in sales in 2009 to more than \$90 billion in 2012. While the recovery in the U.S. labor market has been uneven, the scrap recycling industry has been at the forefront of job creation, adding more than 15,000 jobs to the economy since the beginning of 2010."

S.I.C. Recycling *family ties, early success*

The scrap recycling industry is thriving and one new company in Illinois is experiencing the growth first-hand. S.I.C. Recycling, with 25 employees, is headquartered in Riverton. Brady Bird is the President/General Manager of the company and Rhett Schrock serves as Commodities Buyer/Marketing Manager. How did they start?

S.I.C. Recycling is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Sloan Implement Company, a family-owned, full-line John Deere dealership headquartered in Assumption, Ill. It is the primary family business, with nearly 400 employees serving 12 dealers in Illinois and five in Wisconsin. "We already have the best practices and philosophy modeled from our parent company," says Bird. "We are guided by the core values and fundamentals that have driven the growth of Sloan Implement since its inception in 1931." He credits owners Tom Sloan, CEO, and Larry Sloan, Chairman of the Board, for leading by example. Tom has two brothers, Craig Sloan and Jim Sloan. Jim is S.I.C.'s Operations Manager and Schrock's

step-father. Tom is Bird's father-in-law and Schrock's Uncle.

"In the mid 1970s the family started GSI Green Systems, Inc., and from there invested in a number of other manufacturing-based operations. That is the lineage of where we come from, who we are. About five years ago, Larry started Ecovery, LLC. His son, Kevin, is CEO of Ecovery. They started as electronic waste recoverers and then evolved. Three years ago they were looking for an expansion project to their facility. The family decided to put one in the Midwest," says Bird. "So, we now have two separate business entities here sharing resources, and we have one common owner.

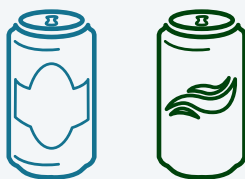
"We commenced operations in August of 2012 and in 2013 hit the ground running. We initially focused our effort on copper-aluminum radiators that come out of the HVAC market. Our equipment is all about size reduction and separation of equipment. Once we got that off the ground we added our expansion project, doubling our facility to 75,000 square feet. We will add a third shift to accommodate the recent expansion. Our plan has always been to grow, same as all of our family businesses."

Technology drives the process, according to Bird. "It's all about operational efficiencies, being able to quickly, safely, efficiently and effectively process and separate equipment. We test the materials for quality in our in-house lab."

The company now specializes in copper and aluminum radiators, insulated copper wire and wire harnesses and aluminum-conductor steel-reinforced (ACSR) cable. According to Schrock, S.I.C. processes approximately three million pounds of material per month and has the capacity to process in excess of 30 million pounds annually. In addition to recycling, the company also produces #1 copper flake and chops, #2 copper chops, aluminum shred, Grad 1 aluminum briquettes and EC chops.

"We serve a 500-mile radius and are very niche by design," Schrock says. "We now have the process for the ACSR in place, which opens up brand new markets with regard to finished product. We can source additional items from existing suppliers, scrap yards for example, for the radiators, and we buy from 28 states, where we can be competitive and freight isn't a differentiating factor."

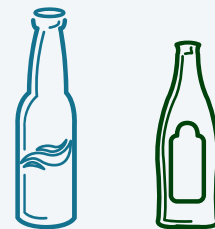
"We constantly want to evolve and grow. Partnering with different organizations, like the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives helps expand that scope," Bird says. "Cooperatives, municipalities and groups that generate that type of material make sense for us, but more importantly for those groups, to find cost-savings and value." ■



Aluminum cans are turned back into aluminum cans, and can be recycled almost indefinitely.



Steel cans are used in other steel products such as car parts and construction materials, and can also be recycled over and over again.



Glass bottles become new glass bottles.

Have a safe spring

Add electrical safety to your spring checklist

As the snow and ice melt away, many homeowners take to the outdoors to tackle projects including cleaning out gutters, trimming trees, mending fence and digging in the yard. Regardless of your to-do list of outdoor projects, electrical safety needs to be a high priority.

Safe Electricity urges homeowners to take a few minutes before a project to prepare for the job. Always examine electrical equipment before use by noting the wear and tear of the tool and cord, and take note of potential work area hazards by looking up and around.

Always be aware of power lines, especially when working with long metal tools like ladders, pool skimmers, and pruning poles or when working on a roof.

Keep yourself and equipment at least 10 feet away from power lines. Always call a professional for work near lines, like tree trimming for example.

When using extension cords, only use ones made for outdoor use. Use heavy-duty, three-pronged cords for tools. Never remove or bend back the third prong on a plug.

If it is raining or the ground is wet, never use electric tools. If using an electrical tool while wet or standing in water, you could be injured or receive a fatal shock.

Further, make sure all outdoor outlets are equipped with ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs). A GFCI monitors the flow of electricity in a circuit. If there is any irregularity, the GFCI will shut off the electric current. If the outdoor outlets do not have a GFCI, install one or purchase a portable GFCI. And always make sure to keep your work area tidy and free from any tangled or frayed cords.

Call 811 before you dig

If the spring outdoor project involves digging, like planting a tree for example, always call JULIE before you dig at 811 or 800-892-0123 to have public utility lines marked in your yard. This service is free and prevents damage and injury. Never assume you know the location or depth of underground utility lines.

Safe digging starts when you contact JULIE. According to state law, the person actually doing the digging is required to call JULIE with the locate request information at least 48 hours (two working days, excludes weekends and holidays) in advance of the start of excavation. If you want to start your project over the weekend, remember to contact JULIE, Inc. by Wednesday at 4:00 p.m.

At the end of your call, the operator will provide you with a dig number for your records. Please be prepared to write down this number as proof of your call to JULIE.

In order to help the utility locator properly identify your project area, JULIE recommends that you mark the area where you will be digging with white paint and/or flags.

Information to the JULIE operator:

- Your name, address, a phone number at which you can be reached and a fax and/or pager number, if available;
- County and city or county and unincorporated area of township;
- Location at which the excavation will take place, which may include but not be limited to, address, cross street (within 1/4 mile), subdivision name, etc.;
- The start date and time of the planned excavation;
- The type and extent (size of



Know what's below. Call before you dig.

excavation area) of the work involved, including if white paint, flags and/or stakes were used to outline the proposed excavation area; and

- Section and quarter numbers if available.

What happens after the call?

Within two working days of your call to JULIE, a representative from each member utility company will mark the location of their underground facilities with paint and/or flags at the excavation site. Make sure that your property is accessible.

The utilities are only required to mark the facilities that they own, not privately installed or owned lines or facilities. Privately owned facilities may include water and sewer services, as well as electric and gas lines to a garage or workshop.

For more information about outdoor electrical safety, visit SafeElectricity.org. ■

Molly Hall, Executive Director of the Energy Education Councils Safe Electricity program. 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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Ready for spring gardening chores?

Before you start the heavy work limber up, clean up, prune and plan

As this is being written, the temperatures are in the single digits. The forecast calls for more snow. Blah.

When you read this, hopefully it will be sunny and warm. The only thing predictable about the weather is its unpredictability, and our ability to shortly forget how good or bad it was.

Come July, if and when the mercury in the thermometer climbs into the triple digits, we'll look back at the last few months and think they weren't that bad. We'll forget the utility bills. We'll forget the layers of clothes.

Let's keep happy thoughts, though. Dream of temperatures in the mid-80s with rain only during the week and never on weekends and humidity levels hovering around 60 percent.

In the meantime, plan on getting the garden ready for spring planting.

We're going to assume your tools are already sharp, with wood handles sanded to prevent splinters and sharp edges filed on the ends of hoes, shovels and trowels.

The first step is to walk around the yard, with a cup of steaming coffee or tea in your hand (or something cold and fermented if that's your cup of, well, tea) and get an overview of what you want to accomplish this year. This is also an opportunity to picture what needs to be picked up, moved, or pruned before any heavy gardening. Remember, this is a thought-provoking stage. Don't do anything yet.



That's good enough for the first day. Stretch. Limber up. Those muscles are probably atrophied into some formless mass. Move the arms over your head, bend the knees, move from side to side. Do it all bit by bit. Otherwise, you'll notice the body saying "NO" dramatically the next day.

If you don't or can't limber up, bring a kitchen timer to the yard with you for the first couple of gardening sessions. Set it for 15 minutes. When the alarm goes off, stop what you're doing and do something completely different, even if that means going inside for more liquid refreshments.

Your body will be less sore tomorrow.

Before getting down and dirty, do

garden clean-up you might have been missed last fall or that occurred during winter.

Pick up fallen branches and sticks. Trim back those ornamental grasses, tightly tying the larger ones with twine or old nylon hose before cutting so you can easily haul the biomass away. Remove those mushy Hosta leaves.

Winter has probably destroyed the beauty of the hardy hellebores and heucheras. Take your pruners and cut off the dead and ugly about a half-inch to inch above the ground.

While it may seem easier to pull up lots of debris, cutting is better especially if the ground is soggy. A good tug and you may end up pulling the whole plant out.

Rake and mulch those leaves that seem to magically appear even though you swore you bagged every last one five months ago.

That's good enough for the second day.

For the rest of spring, plan out tasks in small increments. It's easier and makes gardening more exciting instead of a dreaded chore. ■

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



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Cooking



• Spaghetti Pizza

• Spaghetti Pizza (above)

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 16 oz. spaghetti | 1/2 tsp. salt |
| 2 eggs | 32 oz. spaghetti sauce |
| 3 1/2 c. mozzarella cheese, shredded | 1 1/2 tsp. oregano |
| 3/4 tsp. garlic powder | Your favorite pizza toppings |

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Cook spaghetti, drain and rinse in cold water. Add eggs, 1/2 c. mozzarella cheese, garlic powder and salt. Mix well and put onto a well-greased cookie sheet. Bake for 15 minutes. Top with spaghetti sauce, remaining mozzarella cheese, oregano and your favorite toppings (hamburger, onions, green peppers, etc.) Bake at 350 degrees until the cheese melts.

Salad Skewers with Tarragon Vinaigrette

- | | |
|---|---|
| 12 – 12" bamboo skewers | 3 T. white wine vinegar |
| 2 red, yellow and/or orange peppers,
cut into 1" pcs. | 1/2 tsp. Dijon mustard |
| 1/2 seedless cucumber (6 oz.) cut into
1/2" thick half-moons | 1/4 tsp. salt |
| 1 med. zucchini (8 oz.) cut into
1/2" thick half-moons | 1/8 tsp. pepper, coarsely ground |
| 1 pt. cherry tomatoes | 3 T. extra virgin olive oil |
| | 1/2 c. loosely packed fresh tarragon
leaves, chopped |

Alternately thread peppers, cucumber, zucchini and cherry tomatoes onto skewers. Arrange skewers on platter, wrap in plastic wrap or place in storage container with tight-fitting lid. Can be refrigerated up to one day. In small bowl, whisk together vinegar, mustard, salt and pepper until blended. In thin, steady stream, whisk in oil until blended; stir in tarragon. Transfer vinaigrette to small container with tight-fitting lid. Serve skewers with vinaigrette.

A Taste of Tradition

Who: OSF St. Joseph Medical Center Auxiliary
Cost: \$22 includes shipping
Details: hard-backed, ring bound
Pages of recipes: 245
Send checks to: Kris Burke,
 2005 Fallen Oak Rd., Bloomington, IL 61704
 or call 309-824-2005.

Chocolate Chip Cheesecake

- 2 rolls refrigerated chocolate chip cookie dough
- 3 – 8 oz. pkgs. cream cheese, softened
- 3/4 c. sugar
- 3 eggs
- 1 tsp. vanilla

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease a 9x13" pan. Take one roll of cookie dough, cut into slices and press into bottom of pan to form crust. Mix cream cheese, sugar, eggs and vanilla until smooth. Pour over dough in pan. Take second roll of cookie dough, cut into slices and place on top of cream cheese layer. Bake approximately 45 minutes. Cool and refrigerate until serving.

Pleated Potatoes

- 6 – 8 med. Idaho potatoes, washed
- 1 c. butter, melted
- 1 T. vegetable oil
- 1 1/4 tsp. salt
- 1/4 tsp. pepper
- 1 c. Cheddar cheese, grated

Slice each potato 3/4 of the way through vertically (slice thinly like an accordion.) Roll potatoes in combination of oil and butter. Put potatoes in a shallow pan. Pour remaining butter over potatoes. Season with salt and pepper. Bake at 375 degrees for 2 hours, basting with butter. Sprinkle cheese over potatoes and bake until cheese melts. Yield: 6-8 servings.

Calling all cookbooks!

Is your church or community organization selling its own unique cookbook filled with favorite recipes of cooks in your area? If so, send your cookbook to Valerie Cheatham, Illinois Country Living, P.O. Box 3787, Springfield, IL 62708. Please include the price of your cookbook plus postage costs and the name, address and telephone numbers (both day and evening) of the cooperative member we should contact for more information.

Recipes from the Parish

Stuffed Green Peppers

1/3 c. uncooked regular long-grain white rice
2/3 c. water
4 lg. green bell peppers
1 lb. lean ground beef
1/4 c. chopped celery
2 T. chopped onion
1/2 tsp. salt

Dash pepper
1/4 c. ketchup
1 med. tomato, chopped
1 – 8 oz. can tomato sauce
1 tsp. sugar
1/4 tsp. dried basil leaves
1 oz. (1/4 c.) shredded Cheddar cheese

Cook rice in water as directed on package. Meanwhile, heat oven to 350 degrees. Cut tops from bell peppers, remove membrane and seeds. In large saucepan, bring enough water to cover peppers to a boil. Add peppers; cook over medium heat for 5 minutes. Drain; set peppers aside. In large skillet, combine ground beef, celery and onion; cook 8-10 minutes or until beef is thoroughly cooked, stirring frequently. Drain. Add cooked rice, salt, pepper, ketchup and tomato; mix well. Spoon mixture into peppers. Place peppers in ungreased shallow baking pan. In small bowl, combine tomato sauce, sugar and basil; mix well. Spoon half of sauce over peppers. Bake for 30-40 minutes or until peppers are tender, spooning remaining sauce over peppers and sprinkling with cheese during last 5 minutes of baking.

• Banana Split Trifle (below)

3 c. cold milk
1 – 5.1 oz. box vanilla or cheesecake flavored instant pudding mix
1 – 8 oz. can crushed pineapple, drained
1 prepared angel food cake, cut into cubes

1 c. strawberries, sliced with 1/4 c. sugar on them
1 – 8 oz. container frozen whipped topping, thawed
2 med. firm bananas, sliced
1/4 c. pecans, chopped
12 oz. hot fudge microwaveable topping

Whisk milk and pudding for 2 minutes in large bowl. Stir in pineapple. Place half of the angel food cake cubes on the bottom of a large, clear glass bowl. Spread 1/3 of pudding mixture on top. Cover with sliced strawberries. Spread layer of whipped topping over strawberries. Remove lid from hot fudge topping and heat in microwave on high for about 30 seconds. Pour half the fudge over the previous layer and then add a layer of cake cubes. Spread another 1/3 of pudding mixture on top. Cover with sliced bananas. Cover with remaining pudding mixture. Spread whipped topping over all. Drizzle with fudge topping and sprinkle with pecans. Chill until serving. Garnish with strawberries and bananas when serving, if desired.



Who: Wesbein and Cropsey United Methodist Churches

Cost: \$16 includes shipping

Details: soft-backed, spiral bound

Pages of recipes: 137

Send checks to: Susan Wright,
36681 E. 1000 N Rd., Saybrook, IL 61770
or call 309-475-9080.

Oven Baked Praline French Toast

8 slices French bread, about 3/4 inch thick, or enough to cover 9x13" pan
6 eggs
1 c. half and half
2 T. sugar
1/2 tsp. vanilla
1/2 tsp. cinnamon
1/8 tsp. salt
1/3 c. butter
1/2 c. chopped pecans
1/2 c. brown sugar
1/2 c. butter, melted

Place bread in single layer in a greased 9x13" glass baking dish. Blend together eggs, half and half, sugar, vanilla, salt and cinnamon. Pour over bread, turning bread once to coat evenly. Refrigerate overnight covered. In morning, preheat oven to 400 degrees. Place 1/3 c. butter in a 10x15" jelly roll pan. Place pan in oven to melt. Remove pan from oven and tilt to coat pan evenly with butter. Arrange soaked bread on jelly roll pan. Melt 1/2 c. butter, then add pecans and brown sugar. Mix and spread on bread. Bake 25 minutes or until firm and golden brown.

Mexican Dip

1 can Mexican corn, drained
1 c. mayonnaise
1/2 c. Parmesan cheese, grated
4 oz. pepper jack cheese, shredded

Mix all together and place in a greased oven safe dish. Bake at 350 degrees for 35 minutes. Serve with crackers.

Editor's note: Most of the cookbooks we receive do not have the number of servings listed, however if you are looking for recipe nutrition information there are a number of websites that will do just that! One of my favorites is www.myfitnesspal.com/recipe/calculator.

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



How much air can you blow into a soft drink bottle?

Well, the answer is none unless the air has a way to get out of the bottle. You have probably never been asked that question before, and you may be wondering what that has to do with energy efficiency. The answer is simple - understanding the basics of airflow can help you understand an important aspect of home comfort.

An example is the wood-burning fireplace. An equal amount of incoming air must replace the amount of warm air that is moving up and out of the chimney. The replacement air may be coming from other rooms within the home, plumbing and electrical penetrations, from around switch and outlet covers, attic access doors, poorly sealed doors and windows, and from numerous unsuspecting sources of air infiltration. That's why a home heated with a wood-burning fireplace usually is cozy near the heat source and chilly in the surrounding rooms.

Understanding the nature of airflow can help you improve the comfort within your home and lower your utility bill. Folks often ask if it is beneficial to close off rooms that are not regularly occupied. Usually they are referring to closing the supply-air registers and the entry doors into those unoccupied rooms. I understand the idea seems logical, but the answer is almost always "no." Closing off the air supplies and doorways are almost always detrimental to energy savings and comfort. That statement usually catches most peoples' attention. "How can this be Doug?" they ask.

A properly installed forced-air



heating and cooling system is designed for balance. A balanced system will efficiently deliver the proper amount of airflow and the desired temperature into every room within a home.

Here's what can happen when changes are made to a balanced system. Suppose the supply-air registers and doors in two unoccupied rooms are closed. Now the overall heated and cooled living space has been reduced. This manmade circumstance just created a situation where the heating and cooling unit is now oversized, instead of properly sized.

Additional laws of unintended consequences develop, such as reduced compressor life, higher duct pressures and potential for greater duct leakage, additional burden on the air-handler and the likelihood of mold and mildew developing in the unconditioned rooms. The unit may also run for very short periods of time, causing humidity levels to climb and comfort to be diminished.

Also, if you have natural gas or

propane appliances, closing off rooms can be very dangerous from an indoor air quality perspective. Carbon monoxide can be back-drafted from water heater and furnace flues under certain situations.

The closed-off rooms represent a soda bottle. Air cannot move through the room and back into the return-air grille when supply-air grilles and doors are closed. Now, let's open the registers in these same two rooms, but leave the doors closed. No more air can blow into the rooms than can escape out of the rooms. For example,

if the doors are touching the carpet and the rooms are airtight, almost no air can enter the room. If the door is tight and air still comes in the rooms, you know there are leaks in the building envelope. In other words, the money you just spent to heat or cool just leaked to the outside.

We've tested many homes that were hot in the summer and cold in the winter only when the doors were closed. Properly trimming the bottom of a door to create a 1-inch air gap or installing a return-air grille in the door will often solve this problem. In conclusion, it is nearly always best to leave all registers and doors open. If you have questions, you may call my office 501-653-7931. I will be happy to help you.

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



N O M I N A T E A F A T H E R F O R

Illinois
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Father of the Year

2014

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

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

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

All nomination letters submitted will be published on Illinois Country Living's Web site at www.icl.coop.



2012 recipient Jack Graves

DAD

*What will the Illinois
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In which Illinois electric cooperative territory he resides

Organizations to which he belongs

Person nominating him

Relationship to the nominee

Your phone number with area code

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

DEADLINE TO SUBMIT:

Entries must be emailed or postmarked by April 1, 2014

Valerie Cheatham, Illinois Country Living • P.O. Box 3787, Springfield, IL 62708-3787 • vcheatham@aiec.coop

Trash to treasure

by Valerie Cheatham

You've probably heard the expression, one man's trash is another man's treasure, and that is increasingly true today. Many consumers are not only looking for a good deal, but also for "treasures" they can transform into something new for a fraction of the cost.

The popularity of "trash to treasure" has created a demand for gently-used items, and businesses are being built on that premise. Stores such as Goodwill, Habitat ReStore and resale/consignment shops are seeing a boost in business, which is helping to keep a tremendous amount of "trash" out of landfills.



**Re-claim,
re-purpose,
re-think**

Unlike Kermit the Frog, Nancy Martin of Peoria didn't know she was green. Being resourceful was just a way of life growing up on a farm. "My depression-era parents were composters and didn't know it," says Martin. "Old farmhouses have mice and you'd never put your scraps in the trash, you took them outside and threw them in the garden. My mother had the most beautiful flower garden! She didn't know she was composting – she was just keeping the mice out of the house."

That learned resourcefulness sparked the idea for Martin to open a business specializing in recycled, reclaimed and repurposed items, hence the store name, Re-.

The first winter the business was open, green became the buzz word on national television programs such as the Today Show, Oprah, and Martha Stewart, which really boosted interest.

Martin carries items that are eco-friendly, all-natural and/or organic. She is especially careful the items she chooses are fair trade. "I don't want to exploit people in this process," explains Martin. "That gets a little more challenging because if it's not



made in China or from low cost labor, it makes things a little pricier, but I'm not going to compromise that."

Martin says many people have the perception that the store is full of junk just thrown together, not brand new things, and are surprised at the unique selection. Nothing she sells is "used," though all merchandise is reused, recycled or repurposed.

In addition to the store, she also speaks to groups about how she started going green and conducts conservation craft classes. To learn more go to www.rehyphen.com.

Recycled – Taking the material back down to its raw state and making something new out of it

Reclaimed – You can tell what the item once was. Example: making a charm out of a Scrabble piece.

Repurpose – Using an item for something other than its original purpose; such as making a clock or mirror from a vinyl record.

Rethink – Purposefully thinking about how to cut down on waste, such as using a recyclable bag instead of plastic.

Building hope

The concept for Habitat for Humanity ReStores was born about 10 years ago in Winnebago, Canada. The nonprofit home improvement stores sell donated, new and gently-used building materials, furniture and home accessories to the public, and proceeds are used to build homes locally.

ReStore net profits in Springfield, Ill. currently provide about 50 percent of the cost to build four homes each year, according to Colleen Stone, Executive Director of Habitat for Humanity, Sangamon County. “Our market potential is well over a million dollars,” says Stone. “If we hit that mark, we could build three or four houses on our own and double our



impact to the community.”

The Springfield store has seen a large increase in both donations and purchases and its most frequent customers are landlords. The most popular items are kitchen cabinets, solid doors and kitchen sinks. According to Stone, some landlords stop in every day to see if something new has arrived.

Volunteers have also found a new source of revenue by selling repurposed wooden pallets. Habitat gets free pallets, and volunteers take them apart and make them into everything from coffee tables to wine racks, potting benches and memo boards.

To find a Habitat ReStore in your area go to www.habitat.org.

Not a hand-out, it's a hand-up

Employees at Land of Lincoln Goodwill Industries are gearing up for spring, its largest donation season.

According to Lauren Milligan-Turner, Assistant Regional Retail Director at Land of Lincoln Goodwill, “Spring cleaning provides a huge number of contributions and every donation that comes through the door has a purpose. If we can't sell it on our retail floor, we salvage or recycle. There really isn't much we throw out.”

From the donation door, everything gets sorted by hand. Anything that isn't in good enough shape is salvaged or recycled. The organization finds other creative uses for many of those items, such as recycling old clothing scraps into industrial cleaning cloths.

Salvaging keeps enormous numbers of items out of local landfills. Chris Lee, Director of Recycling

and Salvaging, says that in Fiscal Year 2013 Land of Lincoln Goodwill, alone, salvaged 10,084,715 pounds, of which 647,455 pounds was metal. That amounted to 79 percent of potential trash being diverted from landfills.

Some of the items the sorters find, which might be vintage or have a higher value, are sold online at shop-goodwill.com. Those higher-end clothing items, “mall clothes” as they refer to them, are sent to one of its LaBella Boutiques in Chatham or Urbana. Furniture is also popular as shoppers look for items they can buy inexpensively and refinish or repurpose.

Almost 84 percent of profits from sales and salvage go toward education, training and job placement programs for individuals with disabilities and other barriers. Goodwill is committed to helping clients learn how to earn a living and live independently. Its clients work in a store or warehouse which helps them understand work and gives



them a skill they can use elsewhere. Clients get paid by each piece they put on a hangar or sort into bins.

“It's the most rewarding job I've ever had,” stresses Milligan-Turner. “Everything Goodwill does, goes right back into the community.”

Reducing e-waste

In keeping with the theme of this month's feature article, let's talk about recycling. Specifically, what do you do with e-waste?

E-waste, or electronic waste, refers to all of those old electrical devices out there either already discarded, or waiting to be discarded. Many electronic devices now have such a shortened lifespan, the amount of them hitting the trash has become a huge problem.

Right now, an estimated 50 million tons of e-waste are produced each year. The amount produced has become such a problem that nearly half of the 50 states now have laws regulating e-waste, with many of them setting guidelines for recycling programs.

Illinois is one of the states with statutes in place.

The Electronics Products Recycling and Reuse Act of 2008 established a statewide system for recycling and/or reusing computers, monitors, televisions and printers discarded from residences, by requiring electronic manufacturers and retailers to participate in the management of discarded and unwanted electronic products. It also sets up a recycling benchmark system whereby manufacturers are required to recycle 60 percent of the yearly statewide goal. In fact, now the minimum percentage has risen to 75 percent, and manufacturers may not sell a computer, monitor, television or printer to residential customers in Illinois without having registered with the Illinois EPA.

You can find more information about the state's goal at <http://epadata.epa.state.il.us/land/eWaste/mfr-goals.asp>.

In addition, the EPA has compiled a list of e-waste collectors Illinois residents can contact regarding recycling at no charge or in exchange for a dollar-to-dollar coupon you can use to



reduce the cost of new equipment.

You can find the list at <http://epadata.epa.state.il.us/land/eWaste/collection-sites.asp>.

Of course, there may not be a location in your immediate vicinity, but for most people there should be something relatively close. If you check the list and still don't find anything, you can try the federal EPA's site as well.

Just go to <http://www.epa.gov/osw/conserves/materials/recycling/donate.htm>. While on the page, you will see a box at the bottom with a listing of Mobile Device, PC or Television. Choose the one you want and then click the Search box. You should see a list of stores and/or locations where you can take your devices to be recycled.

Alternatively, you may choose a specific company and search as well. Searching by this method will show which products the particular company recycles. For instance, if I select Best Buy (the first in the list) and then click Search, I see they accept televisions, PC's and mobile devices.

Be warned though! There may be certain restrictions when recycling. In fact, some locations may only accept

electronic waste at particular times or events. Others may take one manufacturer and not another. So, be sure you call first to verify the store or recycling location will accept your old electronics.

Also, don't forget charity organizations. Does that PC or television still function, and you're just replacing because you're upgrading? If so, consider donating it. You could try checking with your local library or preschool. Many times they need machines for simple web-browsing or programs that don't require lots of processing power.

Also, if you decide to donate a computer, make sure you clean off all your personal data. There are quite a few disk-cleaning utilities out there, and many of them are available for free. Killdisk (www.killdisk.com) does a great job of removing all data from your hard drive.

Just keep in mind you should back up everything before going through with the process. Next month, I plan to answer a few more of your questions in another Q & A column, so if you have an interesting dilemma, shoot me an e-mail, including your name and what cooperative you're with. I'd love to hear from you.

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



evanhose@aicc.coop

Buying or selling farm or hunting property? Please call Kerry Lusher, Land Specialist-Broker, 309-339-6716. KLusher@mossyoakproperties.com. Auctions & Brokerage. Mossyoak Properties Agrirecland.

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IL Rural Electric Cooperative holds ribbon-cutting for Scott County Solar Plant

First cooperative-owned utility scale system in Illinois

Illinois Rural Electric Cooperative on March 8 held a ribbon cutting for its new 500 kilowatt solar facility. The facility is located south of Winchester, Ill. on Illinois Highway 106, next to one of the substations that serves the west central Illinois cooperative's 7,800 members. The new solar plant, covering about four acres, consists of 2,223 solar panels, all of which were manufactured in the United States. At full capacity, it will provide enough electricity for about 170 homes on the hottest day of the year. The installation is the first utility-scale photovoltaic solar energy system by a cooperative in Illinois.

The co-op was greatly honored to have United States Senator Dick Durbin, State Sen. Sam McCann, State Rep. C.D. Davidsmeyer, the mayors of Winchester and Jacksonville, and representatives of the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity and USDA Rural Development in attendance for the ribbon cutting held on the sunniest and warmest day to date of 2014. In addition, students and teachers from two science classes from Winchester High School were present. Illinois Rural plans to partner with the high school to use the solar facility as an educational tool, as it has previously done with its wind turbine.

"We very much appreciate the support of the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity and its \$500,000 grant through the Renewable Energy Business Development Program," said Robert A. Brown, the cooperative's president. An additional grant of \$415,992 was received from the United States Department of Agriculture through its Rural Energy for America Program. The total cost of this new solar project

is \$1,800,000. "We couldn't have undertaken this project without federal and state assistance," Brown continued.

"We take real pride in being able to use renewable resources that are produced at a cost which is beneficial to our members," explained Brown. "Our renewable portfolio gives us the diversity which we believe to be critical for the long-term." In addition to the new solar project, Illinois Rural also owns and operates a wind turbine in Pike County and has a share of wind resources from its wholesale power provider, Prairie Power, Inc.

"The Scott County Solar Plant will provide clean, renewable energy to homes and businesses across this region. The plant continues the long tradition of cooperatives in Illinois providing safe, affordable and reliable electricity to rural communities and serves as an excellent example of local, state and federal governments working together to support clean energy," said U.S. Senator Dick Durbin, who has been a strong supporter of the project. "The plant will also provide opportunities for high school students to learn about solar power through hands-on lessons. Projects like this help ensure that Illinois communities will be well-positioned to create jobs, gain greater energy independence, and help build a strong, sustainable America for the 21st century."

Founded in 1936, Illinois Rural Electric Cooperative provides electricity in rural Adams, Brown, Calhoun, Cass, Greene, Jersey, Macoupin, Morgan, Pike, and Scott Counties through a 3,000 mile distribution system. Illinois Rural and nine other electric distribution cooperatives are members of Prairie Power, Inc. which provides generation and transmission services for its members.



Pictured here with U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin, science students from Winchester High School were in attendance for the ribbon-cutting. The high school and IL Rural plan to collaborate to use the facility as an educational tool.

The Scott County Solar Plant consists of 2,223 solar panels, all manufactured in the U.S.



Federal and state representatives were on hand for the ribbon cutting at Illinois Rural Electric Cooperative's Scott County Solar Plant on March 7. From left to right are: State Sen. Sam McCann; Mary Warren, USDA; Robert Brown, IL Rural Board President; U.S. Senator Dick Durbin; Ellen McCurdy, IL DCEO; and State Rep. C.D. Davidsmeyer.

- 3 Disaster Preparedness: Prepare for Tomorrow, Today is the Day Before**, Interstate Center, McLean County Fair Site, 1106 Interstate Drive, Bloomington. Special speakers, emergency response vehicles, information and local responder booths and displays, door prizes, children's games and activities, Red Cross blood drive. Free family event to teach about being prepared in time of disaster, learn about safety, indoor and outdoor exhibits. Sponsored by McLean County Association for Home and Community Education. 10 a.m.-2 p.m. www.mcleanhce.org; 309-728-2784 or 309-473-2283.
- 3 Hummingbirds Galore**, Rock Springs Nature Center, 3939 Nearing Lane, Decatur. Participants will learn how to attract hummingbirds, make nectar for them and discover what they can plant in their yard to bring in these beautiful birds. 2 p.m. For all ages. Free. Reservations required by 5/2 www.maconcountycorvation.org.
- 3-4 Heritage Quilt Show 2014**, St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 212 W. Grand Ave., Beloit, Wis. You're invited to the annual quilt show featuring antique quilts from the Beloit Historical Society and quilts and quilted items loaned by members and friends of the parish. Sat. 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Sun. noon-4 p.m. \$5, children under 10 free with paying adult. Salad luncheon \$5. Raffle items and door prizes available. Willmsab@charter.net
- 4 MIP Arts & Crafts Fair**, 325 E. 1st Ave., Milan. Heralded as one of the largest arts and crafts fairs in the Midwest, this fair features more than 200 vendors - both indoors and outdoors in Milan, just a few minutes from Rock Island and Moline in the Quad Cities. Hand-crafted items can be found for the inside of your home, outdoor gardens and even items to wear and use. If you like to attend arts and crafts fairs, this is one you won't want to miss. 309-787-6502.
- 10 9th Annual Mechanicsburg Magic Car & Truck Show**, Uptown Village Park, Mechanicsburg. Dash plaques and goodie bags go to first 100 vehicles, there will be one "best of show," "top fifty" awards and one long distance award. Also available are 50/50 tickets and raffles, along with automotive trivia questions and a DJ spinning 50s and 60s tunes. 9 a.m.-3 p.m. \$10 if registered by 5/3, \$12 for in-person registration. 217-364-4888 or galaxieguyandgal@ctiwireless.com.
- 16-18 Art on the Square**, 10 Public Square, Belleville. The #1 Art Show in the Nation (2008, 2010 & 2011) features 100 juried artists from all over the world. Come and shop for fabulous works in a perfectly beautiful setting of Belleville's Public Square. The show also features a high school exhibit from more than 25 Southern Illinois schools, outstanding main stage performances, gourmet food and wine courts, artists' demonstrations, and an art activity area for children. Fri. 5-9 p.m., Sat. 10 a.m.-8 p.m., Sun. 11 a.m.-5 p.m. 800-677-9255 or www.artonthesquare.com.
- 17-18 53rd Annual Springfield Old Capitol Art Fair**, Downtown Springfield between 5th and 6th Streets on old state capitol grounds. This juried fair features more than 150 artists with their unique and dramatic creations for you to enjoy. Includes local food and entertainment, children's tent, contests and scholarships. 10 a.m.-6 p.m. www.socaf.org.
- 17-18 Past Lifeways and Archaeology Adventure Weekend**, sponsored by the Children's Discovery Museum in Normal. For ages 7+ with an accompanying adult. Wonder what life was like for prehistoric people of Illinois? Weekend of fun, learning and discovery at the Center for American Archaeology in Kampsville. Includes excavation fieldwork, flintknapping, spear throwing, night hike and more. \$65 per person fee includes transportation, dormitory-style lodging, materials and meals. www.ChildrensDiscoveryMuseum.net or 309-433-3444.
- 19-26 HerrinFesta Italiana**, on Walnut and 16th St., Herrin. "Ciao" on delicious Italian food and delight in a grand parade, midway rides and games, live music, bocce tournament, grape stomp, pasta cook-off, kid's pet and bike parade, road race and art contest. 618-942-5055 or www.herrinfesta.com.
- 26 Aisle of Flags**, City Park, 100 Block of W. Pearl Street, Geneseo. See Geneseo's City Park sidewalks lined with more than 600 flags to honor Veterans and those who served our country. Free 8 a.m.-3 p.m. www.geneseo.org or 309-944-2686.
- 30-31 20th Annual Jasper County Strawberryfest**, 100 W. Jourdan, Newton. This two day festival celebrates strawberries in Jasper County. Free family entertainment, music, games, food and crafts provide fun for everyone on the square in Newton. 618-783-3399.
- 31 4th Annual Country Quilts and Memories Show**, Egyptian School, 20023 Diswood Rd., Tamms. Quilts on display will showcase the skills of local quilters. Tables with special memories, vendors, door prizes and demos. Presented by the Alexander County Tourism Group. 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Admission \$10, includes lunch. 618-776-5893 or Chism318@yahoo.com.



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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: April 1 for June events. **Mail to:** Illinois Datebook, PO Box 3787, Springfield, IL 62708. E-mail to: datebook@aicc.coop.



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