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

www.icl.coop
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Illinois Country Living is a monthly publication serving the communications needs of the locally owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives of Illinois. With a circulation of more than 189,000, the magazine informs cooperative members about issues affecting their electric cooperative and the quality of life in rural Illinois.

Illinois Country Living (ISSN number 1086-8062) is published monthly and is the official publication of the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives, 6460 South Sixth Frontage Road East, Springfield, IL 62712. The cost is \$2.88 plus postage per year for members of subscribing cooperatives and \$12 per year for all others. Periodical postage paid at Springfield, Illinois, and additional mailing offices.

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

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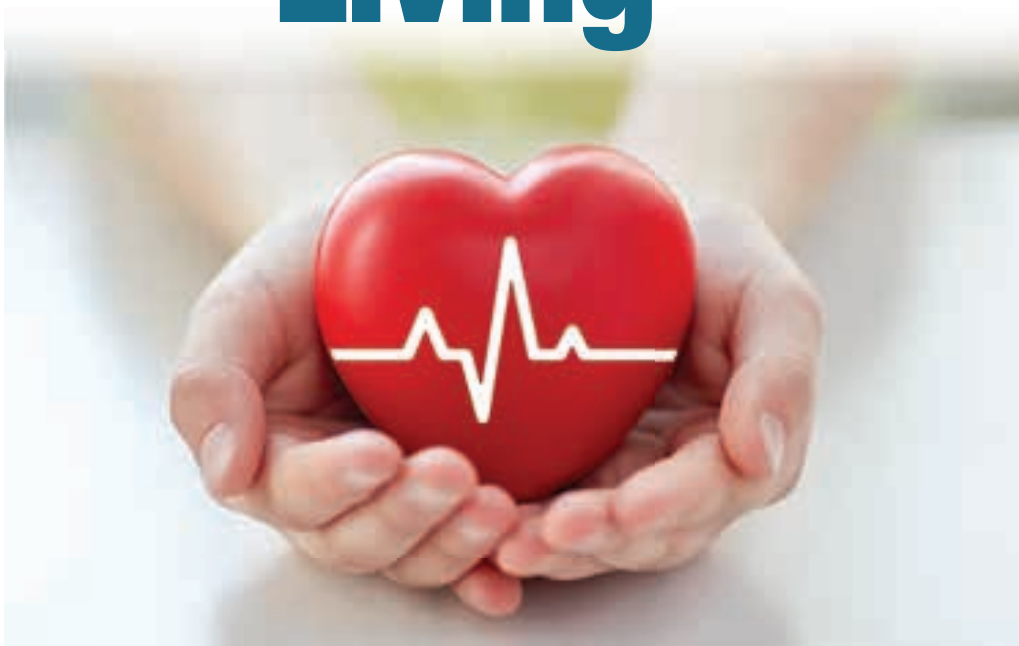


The Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives and 25 Illinois electric cooperatives are members of Touchstone Energy, a national alliance of 750 electric cooperatives. Touchstone Energy cooperative employees adhere to four core values — integrity, accountability, innovation and commitment to community.



Illinois Country Living

February 2018 Volume 75, No. 10



FEATURES

- 14 A personal journey into heart disease
- 22 Financial health – finding help during the most stressful time of life
- 26 The Best of Illinois – vote for your favorites
- 28 What's hot? The way you get most of your electricity.
- 30 Taste of the Prairie – Evandy's Boatel

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DEPARTMENTS


- 4 Commentary
- 6 Currents
- 10 Safety & Health
- 12 Energy Solutions
- 18 Finest Cooking



Sugarless Pineapple Pie



- 20 Yard & Garden
- 24 Powered Up
- 32 Outdoors
- 36 Marketplace
- 38 Datebook

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Congress must not lose sight of our core values

When you're in Congress, you learn quickly to keep your head down, do your job, and not get distracted by the political games of Washington. It's the members who lose touch with their constituents who are the first to go in the next election. That's why I have worked to advance a pro-growth agenda.

Core to that agenda is the revival and renewal of American industry innovation. If America is to continue being the global powerhouse of commerce and manufacturing, it is crucial that we establish a globally-competitive environment for economic growth. For too long our country has been saddled by a tax code that has driven jobs overseas to countries like China and Mexico.

That changes with the Tax Cuts & Jobs Act, which recently became law. This historic tax reform brings the 35 percent corporate tax rate—previously the highest in the industrialized world—down to 21 percent. It also allows businesses to immediately write off the full cost of new equipment to improve operations and enhance the skills of their workers – unleashing growth of jobs, productivity and paychecks. Important to our Main Street entrepreneurs, tax reform protects the ability of small businesses to write off interest on loans, which helps small businesses start or expand, hire workers and increase paychecks.

Tax reform won't only result in higher wages due to economic growth. You'll also be able to keep more of what you earn in the first place. Tax reform doubles the standard deduction from \$6,500 to \$13,000 for individuals and \$12,000 to \$24,000 for married couples while also lowering rates across the board. The bottom line is that you work hard for your paycheck and you should be able to keep more of it.

I'm also convinced that agriculture will be a big part of any new American renaissance; and it's vitally important to Illinois' economy. Our fabled agricultural heritage must be protected, and it's common sense that we should stand behind our farmers and their families.

I've heard from farmers and ranchers throughout southern Illinois who are either just getting on their feet or are trying to grow their business. They tell me all the time that their cost of doing business is growing while their revenue to reinvest in their business and employees is shrinking. That's why I introduced the bipartisan Beginning Agriculturist Lifetime Employment (BALE) Act to ensure beginning farmers, ranchers and agricultural producers have access to credit to expand or diversify their operations.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), our nation will need 700,000 new agricultural workers over the next 20 years. It's also estimated that nearly 45 percent of veterans come from rural America. This startling data encouraged me to bring together a bipartisan group of lawmakers on the House Agriculture Committee to introduce the Veterans' Agricultural Apprenticeship Act. Our legislation instructs the USDA to prioritize veterans when making apprenticeships available. This commonsense bill kills two birds with one stone by helping our farmers and ranchers fill jobs and expand their operations, while offering our veterans new skills and a potential career path after their service.

As a veteran myself, I am honored to serve as chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on



Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs. Having supported military personnel throughout their active service, it is important that we do not neglect them afterwards. That's why I was privileged to sponsor bipartisan legislation that provides for a once-in-a-generation overhaul of the veterans'

benefits appeals process. Prior to this legislation, 400,000 veterans' appeals were backlogged in an outdated system just waiting to be processed.

With each passing day, a claimant was just another day further from receiving the treatment they deserved. I was proud to see this legislation signed into law in August. Now our veterans will have a modernized appeals process to have their claims addressed more efficiently. Congress cannot lose sight of the promises and obligations made to veterans and their families, and we must work together to protect those who have protected us.

Too often, politicians lose sight of the core values that drive our mission in Congress. I am driven every day by a promise to fight for our southern Illinois values in Washington. Then I look forward to returning to my district each week, talking with constituents and making sure my work has measured up. ♡



Representative Mike Bost has represented the 12th District of Illinois in the U.S. House of Representatives since 2015. He serves as Chairman of Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs under House Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

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Don't miss your chance

Illinois' electric cooperatives are invested in youth education and engagement programs throughout their communities. High school students with a passion for leadership and government are encouraged to contact their electric cooperative to apply for an all-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C. in June.

Electric cooperatives will bring youth to Springfield to participate in the Illinois Electric and Telephone Cooperative's Youth Day on April 18, 2018.

While in Springfield, students tour the State Capitol complex, meet with legislators, visit the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum and Old State Capitol, and attend a luncheon. The participants are then given the opportunity to interview for the chance to go to Washington, D.C.

The Youth to Washington Tour is a nationwide cooperative effort to help students learn about electric cooperatives, American history and U.S. government, and walk away with a better understanding of their role as an American citizen. For more than 50 years, cooperatives have been participating in this annual event. Students will gather with over 1,800 high school students from across the country for the annual tour. They will have the opportunity to meet with their U.S. representatives and senators and explore the capitol. The week-long tour also gives attendees the chance to see a wide variety of monuments and museums.

Interested students should contact their local electric or telephone cooperative for more information. 



USDA highlights \$906,000 in infrastructure investments in rural Illinois

More than \$40 million was invested by the United States Department of Agriculture in FY2017 to help construct or improve infrastructure and boost economic growth in rural communities. More than \$900,000 was directed to Illinois.

“These investments in rural Illinois infrastructure strengthen our communities by providing essential facilities, and ensuring safety and economic viability,” said Doug Wilson, USDA Rural Development Director for Illinois.

Infrastructure projects funded in Illinois through the Community Facilities Direct Loan Program include a \$251,000 loan to the Village of Energy to resurface 3,950 feet of the west side of College Street, the major east-west road through the town. The project will repair pot holes and bumps for a safer and more attractive business district for the approximately 1100 residents in the Village.

The City of Paris in Edgar County is improving road conditions and traffic flow near the new high school.

The \$405,000 of Rural Development funding will be used for renovations including a turn lane to alleviate road safety hazards in and around that area.

USDA Rural Development in Illinois provides loans and grants to help expand economic opportunities and create jobs in rural areas. This assistance supports infrastructure improvements; business development; housing; community services such as schools, public safety and health care; and high-speed internet access in rural areas. For more information, visit www.rd.usda.gov/IL.

State Fire Marshall launches “Be Alarmed!” program

The Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM) and the Illinois Fire Safety Alliance (IFSA) launched ‘Be Alarmed!’ – a joint smoke alarm installation program that provides smoke alarms to Illinoisans through their local fire departments. The OSFM will distribute smoke alarms with 10-year sealed batteries and fire safety educational materials to participating fire departments, at no-cost to residents. The OSFM requires participating fire departments to personally install each smoke alarm, educate the community on fire prevention and safety, and provide installation survey data to the IFSA.

“Working smoke alarms provide crucial advance warning and can potentially save lives,” said State Fire Marshal Matt Perez. “The ‘Be Alarmed!’ program will help ensure that Illinoisans have the tools and know-how to prevent and escape a fire should one occur. We encourage everyone to be alarmed in the new year and make sure your home is equipped with working smoke alarms.”

“Six out of ten residential fire deaths occur in homes with no smoke alarms or no working smoke alarms,” said Illinois Fire Safety Alliance Executive Director Philip Zaleski. “The Illinois Fire Safety Alliance is excited to



have developed this program in cooperation with the State Fire Marshal’s Office to provide smoke alarms to Illinois residents and help reduce the number of fire related injuries and deaths across the state.”

‘Be Alarmed!’ is a fire safety educational program developed to educate Illinoisans and to ensure that properly installed and working smoke alarms are in homes across Illinois.

The program seeks to:

1. Educate Illinois residents, young and old, on home fire safety and prevention methods.
2. Reduce the number of fire-related injuries in Illinois.
3. Reduce the number of fire-related deaths in Illinois.
4. Identify the reason for non-working smoke alarms in Illinois homes.

All fire alarms and educational materials will be provided at no-cost to eligible fire departments from OSFM and IFSA with additional assistance from corporate partners including Kidde and Menards.

Contact your local fire department to see if it is offering the program. Interested fire departments should go to www.IFSA.org/programs/alarms for eligibility requirements and the request form.

Bright spots in rural America's finances

Rural America's finances improved a bit in 2017, but it's far from a healthy picture according to Creighton University's Rural Mainstreet Index which rose 11.4 percent from December 2016 through December 2017. The monthly index surveys bank CEOs in rural areas of 10 states.

For the period from November 2017 to December 2017, the index edged up from 44.7 to 47.8. That's still below the growth neutral point of 50.0, but Ernie Goss, economics professor at Creighton University's Heider College of Business, saw the bright spot.

"This is the highest December reading that we have recorded since 2014. Clearly, based on our recent surveys, the negatives are getting less negative," said Goss.

While just 20.4 percent of bank CEOs reported that



their local economy was expanding, that's considerably higher than the 8.7 percent who said that in February 2016.

One of the brightest spots in December's report was the retail sales index which showed significant improvement. It climbed from 40.7 in November to 52.4, which Goss noted is the highest December retail index recorded since 2014.

The confidence index, reflecting expectations

for the economy six months out, increased to 51.2 from November's 40.6. Goss said that indicates an improvement in the economic outlook among bankers, but he noted there is still caution.

"Concerns about trade, especially current NAFTA negotiations, and low agriculture commodity prices continue to restrain bankers' economic outlook," said Goss. ♡

Source: Michael W. Kahn, NRECA

Concern for community

With the assistance of Coles-Moultrie Electric Cooperative (CMEC), Charleston Stone Company, a limestone quarry in CMEC service territory, received \$400,000 through the Rural Economic Development Loan/Grant (REDLG) program. The funds are provided to rural utilities by the USDA Rural Development Program which then provides no-interest loans to borrowers in their areas for economic development.

Charleston Stone is using the funds to replace their existing diesel portable crushing plant with a new electric portable crushing plant. The company currently has about 20 employees and anticipates the creation of five new jobs. ♡



CMEC-Charleston Stone: Mike Vaughn (right), Charleston Stone operations manager, discusses company operations with Sam Adair, CMEC manager of marketing and member services.



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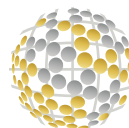
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In the dead of winter layers upon layers of ice can collect on trees and spread slowly over power lines. One inch of ice on a single span of electric wire weighs as much as 1,250 pounds – a force capable of causing far more damage than wind as the weight drives tree branches and power lines to the ground.

Winter ice storms and blizzards can lead to temporary power loss. Illinois' electric cooperatives routinely trim back foliage and remove trees hovering dangerously close to power lines to prevent outages, a process called right-of-way maintenance. But when nature prevails, your cooperative's line workers, engineers and other employees are standing by around the clock, ready to take action to get your lights back on.

First things first: report your outage by calling your co-op. Then it's a matter of waiting until repairs can be made.

Ever wonder how your co-op decides where to start restoring power? When a cooperative's staff begins assessing storm damage, they focus on fixing the biggest problems first, prioritizing repairs according to how quickly and safely they can get the most homes back into service.

Step one: Clearing the path

Transmission lines must both be inspected for damage and repaired before any other efforts take place. If the substation linked to your area's power supply has been damaged, it doesn't matter if lineworkers repair every problem near your home—the lights will stay dark.

Step two: Bulk efforts

After restoring the flow of power to local substations, your co-op focuses on getting power back to the greatest number of members. You might live on a farm with neighbors a mile or two away, or you could live in a neighborhood surrounded by 10 or 20 homes. Folks in neighborhoods

will likely see power return before members in remote areas. Line repairs are once again prioritized by the number of members who benefit.

Step three: One-on-one

After fixing damage blocking power from large pockets of members, the focus turns to repairing service lines. These lines deliver power to transformers outside homes and businesses. This is the final stage of power restoration, requiring a bit more patience.

Individual households may receive special attention if loss of electricity affects life-support systems or poses another immediate danger. If you or a family member depend on special medical equipment, call your co-op before an emergency arises.

Still in the dark?

If you notice your neighbors have power while you remain out of service, there might be damage between your home and the transformer on a nearby pole. If you didn't report your outage earlier, be sure to call your co-op so a line crew can make repairs.

Stay safe!

After a severe storm, broken power lines may land on the ground or in roadways. Stay away from all fallen power lines and report them to your co-op. Electricity could still be flowing through the line, making them dangerous.

If using a portable generator, connect equipment you want to power directly into outlets on the generator with a properly rated extension cord. Remember—never operate a generator inside your home or connect a generator directly to your home's wiring unless your home has been wired for generator use. Lineworkers' lives could be put in danger from power backfeeding onto electric lines. Some folks want the convenience of hooking up a generator directly to their home. Connecting the generator to your home's circuits or wiring must be done by a qualified, licensed electrician who will install a transfer switch to prevent backfeeding.

Be prepared

It's good to be prepared by storing a few basic items in your home. You should have at least a three-day supply of water on hand, one gallon per person per day. It's also a good idea to have a three-day supply of non-perishable, high-energy food such as protein bars, breakfast bars, and canned food.

To learn more about how to prepare for storms and other emergencies, visit www.redcross.org/domore. 💡

Source: American Red Cross, Federal Emergency Management Agency, National Rural Electric Cooperative Association



Eye Doctor Helps Illinois Legally Blind To See

High Technology For Low Vision Patients Allows Many To Drive Again



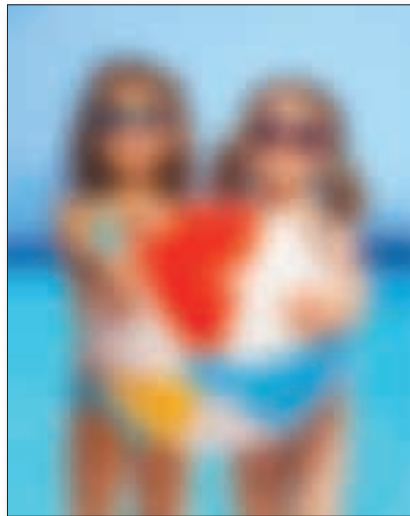
For many patients with macular degeneration and other vision-related conditions, the loss of central visual detail also signals the end to one of the last bastions of independence: driving. A Mascoutah optometrist, Dr. Marianne McDaniel, is using miniaturized telescopes that are mounted in glasses to help people who have lost vision from macular degeneration and other eye conditions.

"Some of my patients consider me the last stop for people who have vision loss," said Dr. Weingart, one of only a few doctors in the world who specialize in fitting bioptic telescopes to help those who have lost vision due to macular degeneration, diabetic retinopathy, and other debilitating eye diseases.

Imagine a pair of glasses that can improve your vision enough to change your life. If you're a low vision patient, you've probably not only imagined them, but have been searching for them. Bioptic telescopes may be the

breakthrough in optical technology that will give you the independence you've been looking for. Patients with vision in the 20/200 range can many times be improved to 20/50 or better.

Macular degeneration is the leading cause of blindness and vision loss in people over 50. Despite this, most adults are not familiar with the condition. As many as 25% of those over the age of 50 have some degree



A scene as it might be viewed by a person with age-related macular degeneration.

of macular degeneration. The macula is only one small part of the retina; however, it is the most sensitive and gives us sharp central vision. When it degenerates, macular degeneration leaves a blind spot right in the center of vision, making it difficult or impossible to recognize faces, read a book, or pass the driver's vision test.

Nine out of 10 people who have macular degeneration have the dry form. New research suggests vitamins can help. The British medical journal

BMC Ophthalmology recently reported that 56% of patients treated with a high-dose combination of vitamins experienced improved vision after six months.

While age is the most significant risk factor for developing the disease, heredity, smoking, cardiovascular disease, and high blood pressure have also been identified as risk factors.

Macular degeneration accounts for 90% of new legal blindness in the U.S. While there is currently no cure, promising research is being done on many fronts. "My job is to figure out everything and anything possible to keep a person functioning, especially driving," says Dr. McDaniel.

"Bioptic telescopes can cost over \$2,000," said Dr. McDaniel, "especially if we build them with an automatic sunglass."

"The major benefit of the bioptic telescope is that the lens automatically focuses on whatever you're looking at," said Dr. Weingart. "It's like a self-focusing camera, but much more precise."

To learn more about bioptic telescopes or to schedule a consultation, give Dr. McDaniel or Dr. Weingart a call. You can also visit our websites.

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Marianne McDaniel, O.D.

www.FoxValleyLowVision.com

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Do radiant barriers really make a difference?

By Pat Keegan and Brad Thiessen

Dear Pat: I've heard that installing a radiant barrier in my attic could save me a lot of money on my energy bill. What exactly is a radiant barrier, and does it really make a difference? – Don

Dear Don: A radiant barrier reflects radiant heat and can be used to keep heat in a home during the winter and to keep heat out in the summer. In order to understand the value of a radiant barrier we need to consider the three different ways heat travels.

- Convection is air movement from hot to cold. This happens through openings in your home, like doors, windows, vents and air leaks.
- Conduction is heat traveling through a solid material, such as the sheetrock and framing of your home. This can be minimized by insulation.
- Radiant heat loss is a transfer of heat from the sun, or when a warmer material transmits infrared radiation to a colder material. Radiant barriers are designed to reflect this type of heat loss.

Radiant barriers often look like aluminum foil. Sometimes the foil is fastened to oriented strand board or foam board, but the foil will only reflect radiant heat towards an air space of at least one inch. If the foil is in contact with a solid material, it conducts excess heat into that material.

A common location for application of radiant barriers is the attic; radiant energy from the sun is sent back out of the roof before it can heat the air and insulation in your home. It is commonly sold as a roll of shiny, aluminum



Foil is placed under the framing supporting the roof, reflecting unwanted radiant heat upward and out of the home. Photo Credit: Reflective Insulation Manufacturers Association International

material and is usually mounted on the underside of the framing that supports the roof.

The radiant barrier is only effective in reflecting radiant heat, not as insulation or as a wrap to block air loss, but it can be very effective at its intended purpose. Even something as thin as a sheet of aluminum foil can reflect 95 percent of the radiated heat back through the roof if it's installed properly, with an air gap between itself and the roof. While other solutions such as an attic fan try to remove the heat once it has accumulated, the radiant barrier stops the heat from building up in the first place.

The net impact of a radiant barrier depends on whether you live in a hot or cold-weather climate. For example, homes that were retrofitted with attic radiant barrier systems in Florida were able to reduce air conditioning energy use by about 9 percent. In colder climates, the radiant barrier that reflects unwanted heat outside of the house

in the summer will also be reflecting heat away from the house in the winter. In other words, the cooling bill may decrease, but the heating bill may increase.

So, is a radiant barrier in your attic a good investment? Sometimes. You need to do a little research, as savings vary in each situation and there are many inaccurate claims made about the cost savings they bring. In a warmer climate, a home with a large cooling load and a roof that is fully exposed to the sun, an attic radiant barrier could be a cost-effective measure, and it could make your home more comfortable. Products are getting better all the time, but even then, your expectations need to be realistic.

It's a good idea to compare an investment in an attic radiant barrier to other energy efficiency investments, such as improving your attic insulation or sealing air leaks around doors and windows. Of course, the best way to compare your energy efficiency opportunities is to schedule an energy audit of your home. Start by talking to your friendly energy advisors at your local electric cooperative. ⚡

Sources: www.e-education.psu.edu/egee102/node/2053, www.fsec.ucf.edu/en/publications/html/FSEC-EN-15, www.energyvanguard.com/blog/41522/Ooob-Shiny-Stuff-Radiant-Barrier-Fundamentals, www.fsec.ucf.edu/en/publications/html/FSEC-EN-15, www.rimainternational.org/index.php/myths

This column was co-written by Pat Keegan and Brad Thiessen of Collaborative Efficiency. For more information on radiant barriers, please visit: www.collaborativeefficiency.com/energytips.



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A personal journey into heart disease

By
Debra Gibson Isaacs

This is Amazon,” a man’s voice said on the other end of the phone. “I’m calling about your husband. He has been taken by ambulance to Saint Joseph’s Hospital—the main hospital.”

“What happened?” I ask, panic ripping through me.

“I don’t know any more than that,” the voice said. I’m sure he told me his name, but it was lost in a fog of fear. “Thank you,” was all I could think to say.

Until the call, it was an ordinary Tuesday afternoon. Our basset hounds, Crosby and Gertrude, were stretched out at my feet as my fingers did their familiar dance on the computer keys. My husband Mike was at his job in quality control for Amazon.

Now my mind imagined all manner of horrors.

In the past five years, Mike’s leg had been ripped open by a German Shepard bite. It required 22 staples and left a scar worthy of Frankenstein. Just before that, a doctor had accidentally injected staph into his body while giving him a pain shot in that same leg. His leg doubled in size, turned a watermelon pink, and was so hot that ice melted quickly when laid on the leg. It was days in the hospital before we learned he had a life-threatening staph infection. It was

several more days before we found out if his leg could be saved. Ultimately, he would keep his leg but he has permanent lymph node damage. His leg now swells every time he stands on it. He will be in pain the remainder of his life. Neither party took any responsibility, financial or otherwise.

Now this.

At the hospital, one receptionist led me to another until I finally arrived at the hospital’s Cath Lab. Mike was inside undergoing a procedure. That was all I would know for two anxious hours, although there was a glimpse of good news already.

Amazon’s policy of having a nursing station in each warehouse had probably saved his life. When the nurse took Mike’s blood pressure, it was 200 plus over 100 plus. (Mike doesn’t remember the exact readings.) An ambulance had him at the hospital 10 minutes later. What you hear about fast action equating to better results is true.

Dr. Jonathan Waltman, a cardiologist in Lexington, Kentucky, where we live, appeared in the waiting room sometime later. He explained that Mike had a heart attack at work. The cardiologist had put three stents into one artery, which had been 100 percent blocked.

When the doctor left, I went to WebMD where I found that a “coronary stent is a tube-shaped device placed in the coronary arteries that

supply blood to the heart to keep the arteries open in the treatment of coronary heart disease.”

The procedure was successful. Mike was recovering. I could see him soon.

What I didn’t know then was that this was just the beginning of what will be a life-altering journey. Panic, fear and uncertainty would become familiar guests. But after they left, other guests would arrive—gratitude, hope, contentment, joy. I had a decision to make. I recalled an old Cherokee story about such a choice and looked it up on the internet:

An old Cherokee is teaching his grandson about life. “A fight is going on inside me,” he said to the boy.

“It is a terrible fight and it is between two wolves. One is evil—he is anger, envy, sorry, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego.” He continued, “The other is good—he is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith. The same fight is going on inside you—and inside every other person too.”

The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather, “Which wolf will win?”

The old Cherokee simply replied, “The one you feed.”

Which would I feed? Fear about the future—uncertainty, concern about Mike’s lifespan, mounting medical bills, medical emergencies arriving without warning. Or would I choose contentment—joy that we had



A heart attack strikes someone about every 43 seconds.

or cut off completely. This happens because the arteries that supply the heart with blood can slowly narrow from a buildup of fat, cholesterol and other substances (plaque).

Often, there is permanent damage to the heart or even death. Cardiovascular events and cancer are the top two causes of death in America and increasingly in the remainder of the world.

We learned the seriousness of Mike's condition a few days after his release when we met Dr. Waltman for a follow-up visit.

Waltman told us that Mike had been fortunate—little damage to his heart because of prompt action. He also said that Mike has congestive heart failure, hyperlipidemia (high cholesterol), hypertension (high blood pressure), and arterial fibrillation (commonly called AFib), which is when the upper chamber of the heart sometimes flutters instead of beating properly. This irregular, often rapid, heart rate commonly causes poor blood flow.

Mike felt it days after the follow-up appointment. "I don't have any strength," he complained, which was quite unusual for my big, country-strong man. We learned later that his heart was only working at about 50 percent of capacity.

We were back at Dr. Waltman's office the next day, and the doctor scheduled a procedure called an electrical cardioversion to restore regular rhythms by sending an electrical shock to the heart. Like you see on television, the doctors applied paddles conducting electrical current to his chest. He was back in regular rhythm...for less than a week.

For richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health... We said the traditional vows at our wedding. We have experienced both sickness and health, and are now much more aware of what we need to do to be healthy. Photo: Debra Gibson Isaacs

today together, a willingness to find a financial way to go on adventures we really wanted to, pleasure in simple, everyday things.

We booked our dream trip for a few months later. We went to Minnesota for a black bear study course with renowned wildlife biologist Dr. Lynn Rogers. We would learn more about these intelligent, curious creatures we had come to love on our trips to Tennessee's Great Smoky Mountains.

Before the heart attack, we had resigned ourselves to not going because of the expense. We looked at things differently now, not in a morbid, now-or-never way, but in a positive, priorities-first way. We would scrimp elsewhere for what turned out to be the best adventure of our lives.

A heart attack strikes someone about every 43 seconds. It occurs when the blood flow that brings oxygen to the heart muscle is severely reduced

One of the best exercises—walking—requires only a good pair of shoes. The American Heart Association sponsors numerous walks to raise awareness of heart health.

Photo: American HEART ASSOCIATION

The doctors scheduled a second electrical cardioversion, which had similar results. Mike was back to regular rhythm for a short time, then another AFib episode. No more cardioversions, the doctor said. The body can only handle a few.

We have now learned to live with AFib. One of the many medicines Mike takes helps control it, but doesn't work all the time. When he is in AFib, Mike cannot work. He has no energy. He applies for short-term leave and we figure out how to pay or postpone the bills or some part of them. The occurrence of AFib is neither regular in timing or length. You just never know. I have never been one for uncertainty. I like to plan the use of my time and money.

This is now an impossibility. No sorrow here, though. The new reality is better—more acceptance of what I can change (very little when it comes to heart disease) and cannot change (most everything). It is out of my hands, in the hands of faith, God and Jesus in our case, and secondly in the hands of the experts. I've found that this is a much better place for big, scary things like congestive heart failure. Worrying does no good. It only robs you of what you have left, like a thief taking most of your valuables and then you voluntarily handing over what he didn't find.

I'm not perfect at this by any means. There are still periods of despair. We are thousands of dollars in debt. We have to ask to pay bills over time. We will owe the hospital forever. All of this is fact. If I mention it to Mike, he feels guilty. We both know it could have happened to either of us. Blame is not useful or fair. We kiss, makeup and go on, and do the same thing when discouragement clouds my vision again.



Mike now takes 12 medications each day and each is a tiny miracle. Most days Mike tells me that he feels better now than before the heart attack.

Could the heart attack have been avoided? That thought still haunts me. I haven't been able to vanquish it to the doesn't-matter-now stack of questions, which is where it belongs. Mike was having warning signs—just not the classic chest pain. I didn't know it but he had passed out several times. He was vomiting a lot, which I didn't know either. I did know that he was always short of breath and his kisses were always too short.

The shortness of breath led us to have him undergo several tests. He had an echocardiogram (which uses sound waves to create pictures of your heart's chambers, valves, walls and the blood vessels attached to your heart) and a nuclear cardiogram (an imaging test that uses special cameras and a radioactive substance called a tracer to create pictures of your heart). That doctor reported no sign of heart disease.

We relaxed about it. We shouldn't have. The doctor was wrong. Two months later Mike described the

pain in his chest "like he was being smacked with brass knuckles." He was having a heart attack. One artery was 100 percent blocked.

I am still mad about that, about paying doctors \$3,000 to misdiagnose the tests, but again I have had to let it go. Bad test results are a fact of life. He is alive and happy. Many others have suffered so much worse, whether a wrong diagnosis, an act of nature like the hurricanes that have devastated so many of late, or simply being somewhere at the wrong time like the innocents in the shootings at Las Vegas and New York and so many schools.

We've changed as many things as we have been able in the past year and one-half. We still have a long way to go. Although we know better, we still eat out at times. We haven't banished the butter and margarine entirely. We should. We get more exercise, but not enough. We are a work in progress. Mostly, though, we are people of gratitude. We are thankful for Amazon's foresight, for the doctors who care for Mike, and for the medications that allow us to keep on keeping on. We are feeding the good wolf.

Female vs. male hearts



Women aren't supposed to get heart disease.

That was the thinking years ago, and it still persists today in the diagnosis of heart disease, according to Dr. Gerald Fletcher, a cardiologist with Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville, Florida.

"Women will tell me, 'I don't feel right,'" Fletcher says. "They don't like to say they are experiencing chest pain. They are vague about the symptoms that brought them to the doctor's office. This is particularly true with the elderly population. The thinking that women don't get heart disease or have heart attacks is a holdover from that thinking years ago.

"Men, on the other hand, are more likely to say something like, 'I have discomfort in my chest.' They are more specific with their explanation of symptoms."

That common experience among physicians leaves Dr. Fletcher with a recommendation for all of us: Bring a family member with you to your appointment. This gives doctors a larger perspective about the person and the medical and emotional perspective the family has.

There is one other distinction doctors see, but this one crosses genders. This distinction is between deniers and complainers.

"A lot of people are deniers," Fletcher says. "They don't want to admit they have a medical issue. Others are complainers. They are at the doctor's office with every little ache."

Recent science has also shown some differences in warning signs.

The American Heart Association lists these warning signs for women:

- Uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain in the center of your chest. It lasts more than a few minutes or goes away and comes back.
- Pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach.
- Shortness of breath with or without chest discomfort.
- Breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness.
- As with men, women's most common heart attack symptom is chest pain or discomfort. But women are somewhat more likely than men to experience some of the other common symptoms, particularly shortness of breath, nausea/vomiting and back or jaw pain.

For men, the warning signs are:

- Chest discomfort—the most common sign of heart danger
- Nausea, indigestion, heartburn or stomach pain
- Pain that spreads to the arm
- Feel dizzy or lightheaded
- Throat or jaw pain
- Gets exhausted easily
- Snoring
- Sweating

If you have any of these signs, call 9-1-1 and get to a hospital right away.

Debra Gibson Isaacs, an award-winning writer and photographer based in Lexington, Kentucky, still savors the challenge of producing captivating journalism after more than 35 years.

FINEST

Cooking

This month's recipes focus on low carb/diabetic-friendly selections. They may be low in carbohydrates, but certainly do not lack in flavor. Whether you are trying to eat fewer carbs to lose weight or want to eat healthier, give these a try.



Sugarless Pineapple Pie

Submitted by Shelia Moffitt
Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative

8 oz. reduced fat sour cream
1 sm. can crushed pineapple in juice
1 sm. instant sugar free vanilla pudding, dry
1 baked pie shell or graham cracker crust

Mix sour cream, crushed pineapple and dry pudding mix together. Pour into pie shell. Top with fat free whipped topping if desired.

Low Carb Chili Dog Casserole ^

1 lb. ground beef	1/4 t. pepper	1 T. tomato paste
2 cloves garlic, minced	1 t. salt	8 beef hotdogs, sliced
1 lg. green bell pepper, diced	1 T. sugar (or sugar substitute)	lengthwise and cut in half
3/4 of large onion, diced	1 c. tomato sauce	1 c. shredded cheddar cheese
4 t. chili powder	1 c. water	Diced onion for garnish

Combine ground beef, two-thirds of diced onions, peppers and garlic in frying pan and saute until ground beef is browned. Drain fat. Add spices, sugar, tomato sauce, tomato paste and water. Stir to combine and simmer for 30 minutes. Lay hotdogs on the bottom of a 7x9-inch casserole dish. Cover with chili. Spread cheese over chili and top with remaining onion. Bake at 400 degrees for about 15 to 20 minutes or until hot and bubbly.

Send us
your Recipes

We need recipes! Upcoming monthly topics include breads, Asian-inspired dishes and gluten-free recipes. Please email submissions to finestcooking@icl.coop or mail them to Finest Cooking c/o Illinois Country Living, P.O. Box 3787, Springfield, IL 62708. Please include your name, address, phone number (for questions), and the name of your electric cooperative. Recipes not included in the magazine can be found on our website at icl.coop/finestcooking.





Chicken Avocado Caprese Salad ^

Marinade:

1/4 c. balsamic vinegar
2 T. olive oil
2 t. brown sugar
1 t. minced garlic
1 t. dried basil
1 t. salt

Salad:

2 boneless, skinless chicken breasts
5 c. Romaine lettuce leaves
1 avocado, sliced
1 c. cherry or grape tomatoes, sliced
1/2 c. mini mozzarella cheese balls
1/4 c. basil leaves, thinly sliced
Salt and pepper to taste

Whisk marinade ingredients together to combine. Place chicken into a shallow dish and pour 4 tablespoons of marinade onto chicken and stir to evenly coat. Reserve remaining marinade to use as a dressing. Heat about 1 teaspoon of oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat and sear chicken on each side until golden, crispy and cooked through. Once chicken is cooked, set aside and allow to rest. Slice chicken into strips and prepare salad with lettuce, avocado slices, tomatoes, mozzarella balls and chicken. Top with basil strips; drizzle with remaining dressing; season with salt and pepper; serve. Makes 4 servings.

Almond Flour Dark Chocolate Chip Cookies

2 c. blanched almond flour (not almond meal)	6 T. unsalted butter, room temperature
1/2 t. sea salt	1/3 c. maple syrup or honey
1/2 t. baking soda	1 to 2 t. vanilla extract
	1/2 c. dark chocolate morsels

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Line baking sheets with parchment paper. Combine almond flour, salt and baking soda in a small bowl. Beat butter, syrup and vanilla until combined. Gradually beat in flour mixture. Stir in morsels. Drop dough by level tablespoons onto prepared baking sheets. Bake for 13-14 minutes or lightly golden around edge. Cool on baking sheets for 15 minutes; remove to wire racks to cool completely. Do not handle cookies for at least 15 minutes or they will break. Store in airtight container. Best when eaten within 2 days. Makes 20 cookies.



Potatoless Potato Salad ^

1 head cauliflower	1/4 c. vinegar
2 c. celery, diced	1/4 t. pepper
1 c. onion, diced	1 t. salt
4 hardboiled eggs, diced	2 t. sweetener, any kind
2 c. mayo	

Cut the cauliflower into florets and steam cook until tender. Combine cooked cauliflower, celery, onion and eggs and set aside. Mix mayo, vinegar, pepper, salt and sweetener together. Pour over cauliflower mixture and mix well.



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

 Visit www.icl.coop to see more Illinois Country Living recipes.

Orchids: An outstanding indoor plant

Last month we discussed unusual ways of growing indoor house plants in terrariums, dish gardens and string gardens but, in my opinion, there is no more beautiful indoor plant than the orchid.

I hear from many gardeners that they are scared to grow orchids but, in reality, they shouldn't be. Orchids are long-lasting flowering plants that make great houseplants and they're not that hard to grow.

First, let's explain the various orchid types that you could grow indoors:

◆ ***Phalaenopsis* species:** The moth orchid is really the most adapted for growing in your home. This orchid has long arching sprays of colorful flowers that begin flowering in winter or early spring and remain showy for several months. These require less light than some of the other orchids and flower in a variety of colors and patterns ranging from pink to white. Don't be confused by the new "blue" *Phalaenopsis* orchid. It is not really blue but simply has blue dye in the rooting media that is taken up by the plant.

◆ ***Cattleya* species:** Cattleyas are known for their use in corsages and for having a flower that can last from two to six weeks. They generally flower only once per year during the spring or fall. They require twice the amount of light of moth orchids to perform well in the home.

◆ ***Dendrobium* species:** Dendrobium orchids produce long, graceful sprays of flowers that are typically white, lavender or a combination of the two during the fall and winter. Flowers may remain open three to four weeks.

Growing requirements

Most orchids require the same temperature range as other houseplants. Daytime highs in the 70s, and nighttime lows of 55-65 degrees will keep orchids growing perfectly happily. A bright window with indirect sunlight all day is ideal.

In terms of watering, once a week is about right for most orchids. Overwatering is by far the easiest way to kill an orchid, so only water orchids once the potting media has dried out slightly. Orchids are typically planted in a well-drained media, like a bark mixture, that allows water to easily drain away. For many gardeners, a few ice cubes placed on top of the bark media once a week does the job well for many orchids.

Re-blooming orchids

Probably the most difficult aspect of growing orchids is getting them to re-bloom. Providing orchids with warmer temperatures during the day and cooler temperatures at night (about a 10-15 degree difference is ideal) helps to simulate seasonal cues that the plant needs to start blooming again. If the temperature in your home stays relatively consistent, you will likely have difficulty in re-blooming orchids.

I typically put my orchids out on my deck for the summer in a bright, but still slightly shaded location, so that they naturally get that fluctuation of night and day temperatures. Then before the temperature dips below 40 degrees, I bring them inside for the winter. The pots I brought inside this October were loaded with flower spikes starting!

Some resources will also suggest that during the month that you're trying to get the plant to re-bloom,



Phalaenopsis
species

you should restrict watering to just once every two weeks and allow the top 2 inches of growing medium to dry thoroughly before watering again.

Though a little extra manipulation is needed to get your orchids to rebloom, that moment of pure excitement when you realize a new flower is on its way is definitely worth it! 🌱



Candice Hart is a Horticulture Educator with University of Illinois Extension serving DeWitt, Macon and Piatt counties. She is also a Certified Floral Designer, Illinois Certified Professional Florist and is an award winning floral designer.

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Beardstown, IL 62618

Hoyer Outdoor
Equipment, Inc.
7402 Unionville Road
Brookport, IL 62910

JC&R Power Equipment
306 E Main St
Knoxville, IL 61448

Koehler Implement Co.
1481 N. State Hwy 94
Carthage, IL 62321

Leroy Farm & Lawn
Equipment
605 West Cedar
Leroy, IL 61752

Main Street Shop
1213 W. Main St
Fairfield, IL 62837

Marine Mower
& Saw Inc
204 East Division
Marine, IL 62061

Noonan True Value
801 N Grand Ave E.
Springfield, IL 62702

Performance Lawn
& Power
1311 W Main
Teutopolis, IL 62467

Pillar Equipment, Inc.
2001 5Th Street Ste 40
Silvis, IL 61282

Prescriptions Plus Ltd
765 True Value Dr
Lebanon, IL 62254

Quality Rental
210 South Belt East
Belleville, IL 62220

Ramsour Farm Supply
25518 St Rt 161
Centralia, IL 62801

Riedle, Inc.
17290 N. 1800Th St
Marshall, IL 62441

Scott Equipment
and Repair
105 State Route 34 E
Biggsville, IL 61418

Small Engine Specialty
2372 Washington Road
Washington, IL 61571

Small Engine Specialty
224 West Truitt Ave
Chillicothe, IL 61523

Smitty's Automotive Inc
36 St. Leos Rd
Ruma, IL 62278

Sparks And Sons, Inc.
5204 E 1050th Ave
Oblong, IL 62449

Sparta Equipment Sales
& Service
906 North Market St.
Sparta, IL 62286-1046

Sparta Equipment Sales
& Service
405 Elm St.
Okawville, IL 62271

Stanley Mower Repair
3593 N Meridian Rd
Olney, IL 62450

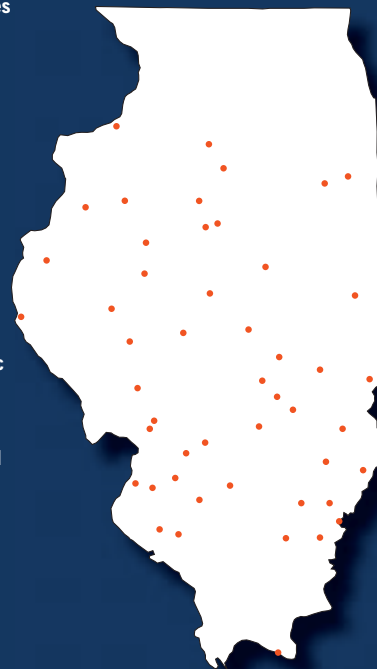
Stewardson Builders
Supply, Inc
1315 S. Hamilton
Sullivan, IL 61951

Stewardson Builders
Supply, Inc
408 N Cedar St
Shelbyville, IL 62565

Streator Farm Mart, Inc
400 N. Main Ave
Ladd, IL 61329

Up-N-Runnin' LLC
1920 East Mound Road
Decatur, IL 62526

Walt Schmid Repair
& Sales, Inc.
2324 Carol Street
Cahokia, IL 62206





HELP

during the most stressful time of life

By Elisa Cottrell

Nancy McDonald knew she needed help, but didn't know where to turn. Her aging parents were in a nursing home, and their savings was disappearing fast. They had lived a modest life, working hard to save, but it just wasn't going to be enough. It looked like the legacy that was so important for them to leave behind would be gone. McDonald shared her concerns with a co-worker who suggested she meet with an attorney she knew from church.

Through a very different scenario, Jennifer Johnson's grandparents had handled money wisely their entire lives. They didn't have any debt, avoided credit cards and saved for the future. Her grandmother peacefully passed away in her favorite chair,

gazing out the window. Her grandfather's decline, however, was much slower, beginning with chest pain and a quintuple bypass. During this time, Johnson's uncle and his estranged wife, who lived across the country, took turns asking for money every month. Johnson's mother had medical and financial powers of attorney for her grandfather, but in a desperate attempt to get money, Johnson's uncle started questioning every move her mother made. Soon, he and his wife moved into the family estate rent-free.

These types of situations unfold every day, with families struggling to care for aging loved ones, pay for that care and salvage a legacy to leave behind. Family farms are lost, and family relationships are broken under the stress of difficult decisions and a lack of effective planning.

When McDonald walked into the offices of Edwards Group LLC: Estate Planning & Elder Law in Springfield, she wasn't sure what to expect. The team of elder law professionals was able to alleviate her stress by helping her apply for benefits to help pay for her parents' nursing care, protect a portion of their life savings, and smooth

out the wrinkles that frequently pop up in the last decade of life.

Life care planning is a new and emerging area of practice. This type of planning encompasses more than funeral arrangements and wills. David Edwards, an attorney with the group, says, “Each stage has its own unique goals and challenges. Some families may skip stages; others may move forward and back as health improves or declines.”

Identifying which stage you and your parents are in can help you know what steps need taken to reduce stress, preserve hard-earned life savings and keep property in the family.

Stage #1: Healthy, but looking ahead for maximum benefit.

People are still completely independent – living on their own, driving, handling finances, volunteering and maybe even still working. They are likely 10-15 years away from needing care.

What to do in this stage: Keep your estate plan updated, including your will and powers of attorney. Review asset titling and beneficiary designations. Consider a “nest egg trust” for future asset protection. Also, consider creating a revocable living trust.

Stage #2: Not as young as you used to be.

People continue to experience independence – driving, shopping and paying their own bills. But they also start to lean more on family for help or decision-making. Increased health concerns can also start popping up.

What to do in this stage: Keep your estate plan updated, including your will and powers of attorney. Consider a “nest egg trust” for future asset protection. Be aware of upcoming care needs that may affect legal and financial options.

Stage #3: Needing additional help.

Memory may be fading. Often, people will need help with meals and house-

work, or have already moved into an independent living facility. Driving will also become an issue as people limit driving to daytime or may have stopped driving altogether.

What to do in this stage: Plan for looming care needs. They may qualify for veteran’s benefits. It’s vitally important at this point to plan ahead for possible Medicaid benefits.

Stage #4: Declining, but still at home.

Substantial assistance is needed if loved ones are still at home. They are no longer driving. They need daily assistance like dressing, getting up, eating – maybe even using the bathroom or bathing.

What to do in this stage: Plan for impending care needs. Explore all options for assistance, including veteran’s benefits and Medicaid benefits. Make sure finances are managed well, bills are paid on time and someone is acting as an advocate, so seniors aren’t taken advantage of by others.

Stage #5: Declining and in assisted living or the hospital.

Caring for loved ones becomes too much for the family, and the agonizing choice to seek outside help is taking place. Loved ones may be in and out of the hospital with serious health issues at this point. There are concerns that those with quickly declining health will require a higher level of care very soon.

What to do in this stage: Review veterans’ benefit options. Consider a financial plan – will income be enough to cover monthly expenses? How long will assets last? Contact an experienced elder law attorney for help with nursing home and Medicaid qualification.

Stage #6: In crisis, either in the hospital or nursing home.

Hospital stays and rehab can be common. Loved ones are not likely to return home. Without advanced

planning, the family is in crisis mode scrambling to gather resources to pay for care and find a suitable place for their loved one to receive care.

What to do in this stage: Immediately engage in crisis planning to help maximize veteran or Medicaid benefits while protecting assets. It is rarely “too late” to do anything.

As Johnson’s grandfather continued to slowly decline, eventually developing Alzheimer’s, his life savings dwindled. After his death, the relationship between Johnson’s mother and her brother deteriorated even further with Johnson’s uncle taking her mother to court, challenging her executorship and keeping the estate in probate for years. Eventually, all remaining money went to attorneys, and the special family land Johnson’s grandfather had bought after returning from World War II was sold for a fraction of its worth. Johnson’s mother and her brother no longer have a relationship. Much of this sad situation could have been alleviated with assistance from an elder law firm.

McDonald can’t say enough about the help she received from the estate planning attorneys and elder law benefit coordinators, “They helped me through the most stressful time of my life. I could not believe the amount of time it took to gather all the paperwork we needed. It takes an emotional toll. It was huge having someone there every step of the way.” Through planning, she was able to save some of the legacy that was so important to her parents. She was also able to pay for their care and create a plan that could anticipate future problems, eliminating considerable stress. She wants everyone to know, “There is help out there. There are things you can do to make this difficult time in life easier. And the sooner you start planning, the better it will be.”

Edwards Group is solely dedicated to estate planning and the issues people face in each stage of life.

Internet is down!

Have you ever wondered what would happen if the internet went down? If connectivity to our devices was no longer available? I don't think we realize how much we depend on internet connectivity. We take for granted this instant access, always on, always connected lifestyle that works seamlessly in the background to make everyday transactions happen without thought.

Let's think for a moment what services rely on the internet. Most people today do not have a landline phone and either use Voice over IP (VOIP) or cell phones, both of which rely on the internet for back end communications. ATM machines and point of sale devices also rely on the internet. Students who take online courses rely on the internet for classroom discussions and turning in homework. 911 systems and first responders even rely on the internet. Weather reports could be hindered, and access to law enforcement databases could go down. It may seem like I am painting a picture of a hypothetical doomsday scenario, but this is exactly what happened to Arizona residents in 2015.

On Feb. 26, 2015 Flagstaff's 69,000 residents experienced disruptions or outages with all the systems I previously mentioned. Computers and cell phones were knocked out of service, ATMs stopped working, 911 systems were disrupted, and businesses were unable to process credit card transactions. This was because a vandal apparently cut through a fiber-optic internet cable buried under the desert. At Flagstaff City Hall, employees were unable to make or receive calls at their desks. The city relied on the Arizona Department of Public Safety for help in dispatching police and firefighters.

In Prescott Valley, about 75 miles north of Phoenix, authorities said 911 service was being supplemented with hand-held radios and alternate phone



numbers. Weather reports from the region couldn't reach anyone. During evening newscasts, Phoenix TV stations showed blank spaces on their weather maps where local temperatures would normally appear. This outage only lasted for a period of 12 to 15 hours before services were restored.


One Arizona resident that identifies himself online as Splorinstuff said, "Banks shut their doors and dropped their bars for protection, grocery stores told people not to come in unless they showed cash at the door. People were running all over trying to get money and supplies... Financial loss starts to seem relatively insignificant to the other effects." Ultimately it did not ensue panic among the general population. Imagine what might happen if this occurs for a much longer period affecting half or even a quarter of the U.S.

Some experts speculate that financial recession would be eminent in the wake of a widespread internet outage. Systems like streetlights would eventually go down, hospitals would be operating in limp mode, essential things like grocery supply would be hindered because supply warehouses depend on the internet for shipping and filling orders. Probably one of the scariest things for some is we would have to talk to each other in real life. But considering all this, I think the bigger question is, could a widespread internet outage really happen?

I'm not going to say that it can't happen, but I do believe it is highly unlikely. The internet is a mesh of interconnected servers with a lot of

redundancy and fault tolerance built in. Sure, it's possible that a small portion or a geographical area can and probably will experience an internet outage in the future, but the likelihood of the entire internet going down is slim. Electromagnetic pulse (EMP) is one scenario that I can think of that has the potential of bringing the entire internet down. Science says it is theoretically possible for a solar flare to create an EMP that would be large enough to fry all electronic equipment.

Any event that could bring down the entire internet would likely have consequences that far overshadow the inconvenience of not being able to get on Facebook. Such an event would likely set us back 25 years or more from a technology standpoint. However, technology professionals are always working to create a more robust internet infrastructure to decrease the likelihood of a widespread internet outage. It is, after all, a piece of our nations critical infrastructure.

I would like to take a moment and thank Fran Matthews, a Menard Electric member, for suggesting the topic for this month's Powered Up. 

Comment on this column

Visit icl.coop and click on Powered Up to respond. Your response might even be included in a future column.



Dan Gerard, CISSP, is the Chief Technology Officer for the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives in Springfield.

— NOMINATE A FATHER FOR —



2016 recipient Jon Lang

Illinois
Country Living 

Father ^{of the} Year 
2018

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 cbradford@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 edition of Illinois Country Living magazine.

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



What will the Illinois Country Father of the Year win?

\$100 GIFT CERTIFICATE AND OTHER PRIZES

His Name			
Address	City	State	Zip
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 March 9, 2018

Colten Bradford, Illinois Country Living • P.O. Box 3787, Springfield, IL 62708-3787 • cbradford@aiec.coop



Recognize **THE BEST** in Illinois.

Nominate your favorite businesses or locations

Nominations are now open! Vote for your favorite local places to dine, shop, travel and do business in Illinois. The 2018 Best of Illinois Readers' Choice Awards will include nominations for three regions – Northern, Central and Southern Illinois. Readers can cast nominations for all three regions and 40 categories. Please include the city for each nomination. National franchises are not accepted.



Official Rules

No purchase necessary. One entry per household. Online ballots must be submitted by February 28, 2018. To be eligible for the drawing, ballots must have a vote in at least fifteen categories. You can cast votes in any or all regions. Drawing to be held by March 15, 2018. Must be at least 18 years old to win. Winners will be notified in the April edition of Illinois Country Living magazine. Electric cooperative employees and their immediate families are not eligible for the prize giveaways.

How to enter

Visit www.icl.coop/bestofillinois to cast your vote.

Prize Package

Winners will be chosen randomly from a drawing of entries received. Three grand prizes will be awarded (one each from Northern, Central and Southern Illinois) to receive a \$100 Visa Gift Card.

WHAT'S HOT?

The way you get most of your electricity.

Here are the basics on one of the most important forces in your everyday life.

By Paul Wesslund

We depend on electricity 24/7, but have you ever wondered how it's made, or where it comes from?

To understand the basics of something so important to modern life, think about steam from a teakettle and those magnets stuck to your refrigerator door.

Magnetic metals in nature attract each other because parts of the atoms that make up those metals want to match up with others. Those restless atomic particles are called electrons—and that's where we get the word "electricity."

In the early 1800s, a scientist in England named Michael Faraday noticed that when he rotated a metal disk through the middle of a horseshoe-shaped magnet, he could get electrons to flow together in an electric current.

Engineers soon took over and made Faraday's process really complicated. And really useful. Today, nearly all our electricity comes from turbines that spin a magnet inside a coil of wires.

One way to turn those turbines is by heating liquid into steam that forces the turbine to spin, using the same principle that makes a teakettle sing. When you boil water on your stove, that liquid expands more than 1,000 times as it vaporizes. If you've ever had your hand burned near boiling water, you've felt the power that steam produces.

The use of heat to spin a turbine generates more than 80 percent of our electricity using either coal, natural gas or nuclear power.

COAL

Coal is dug from the ground, either near the surface, or from deep underground mines, then is shipped to power plants, often by train.

At the power plant site, the coal is stored in large piles on the ground until it is ready to be burned. The coal chunks are crushed into smaller pieces, or even a powder, that is burned in a furnace.

The heat from that combustion is used to turn liquid into the steam in a furnace/boiler that spins the steam turbine/generator producing electricity.

Large transformers at the plant boost the voltage of the electricity (while lowering the current and minimizing line loss potential) for shipment across the country through tall transmission lines. As it gets closer to where it



will be used, a substation of transformers reduces the voltage to a level that can be safely delivered to a smaller transformer on the utility pole

or pad mounted transformer in your yard, decreasing the voltage further for use in your home.

As simple as that process sounds, each step is extremely complicated in order to make it as efficient and safe as possible. The furnace burns the coal up to 3,000 degrees Fahrenheit, and the steam it produces gets hotter than 1,000 degrees. Coal contains harmful elements that get captured and removed through sophisticated pollution controls. That environmental equipment can cost as much as the power plant itself.

Coal plants produce about a third of the nation's electricity.

NATURAL GAS

Ancient plants and animals that died long ago turned into coal, oil and natural gas—that's why all three are called fossil fuels.

Like coal, natural gas comes from the ground, and it can burn in a way that can drive a steam turbine or a natural gas-fired combustion turbine. Unlike coal, you can't hold it in your hand—it's a colorless gas, like air, and has to be transported by pipeline. Natural gas can also be piped directly into homes where it can be burned in water heaters and stoves.

In a natural gas power plant, specially-designed combustion turbines burn the gas to make them spin, generating the electricity. The way natural gas turbines work is similar to a jet engine, and in fact they are a large,



complicated version of what you see hanging on airplane wings.

Natural gas electric generation has advantages over coal: The plants are simpler, cheaper to build, require less staff and can be shut down and powered up more quickly. Natural gas doesn't contain as many pollutants as coal, so fewer environmental controls are needed. Natural gas burning also produces less greenhouse gas. In the past, natural gas was more expensive than coal—until the 1990s when fracking and other new drilling techniques flooded the market. Natural gas prices dropped dramatically and many utilities are using it to replace coal generation.

Natural gas plants now produce about a third of the nation's electricity, about the same as coal.

DID YOU KNOW?

More than 80 percent of the nation's electricity is generated by coal, natural gas and nuclear energy. These three energy sources utilize heat (in different ways), which ultimately causes a large turbine to spin. The spinning motion creates the electricity, which is then routed over transmission lines, and eventually delivered to your home.



30.4%
generated by coal.



33.8%
generated by
natural gas.



19.7%
generated by
nuclear energy.

Source: Energy Information Administration

NUCLEAR

A nuclear power plant works basically the same as a coal plant—making steam to spin a turbine and generator.

The difference is that instead of burning coal, heat from a nuclear reactor heats the liquid into steam.

The basic fuel for a nuclear power plant is uranium, which is mined from the ground. It must then be formulated into expensive and complex fuel components for utility use.

A little uranium can last a long time, making it a promising, incredibly cheap power source. And it produces none of the pollution or greenhouse gas that comes from burning coal or natural gas. But the concentrated radioactivity in the nuclear reactor is potentially so dangerous that complex, expensive safety measures need to be part of



any nuclear plant. Highly technical control systems need to be in place to slow or shut down the level of heat produced, and the nuclear

reactor needs to be inside a strong containment building to keep radioactivity out of the atmosphere in the event of a low-probability accident in the reactor core.

Another controversy still has not been solved—how to dispose of the spent nuclear fuel, which can stay radioactive for millions of years before the radioactivity is brought down to naturally occurring radioactivity in the environment. Most of the spent fuel is currently stored in pools of water and dry storage casks at the site of the nuclear plant.

Nuclear power generates about one-fifth of the nation's electricity.

Coal and nuclear power plants are often referred to as “baseload,” meaning that since we want electricity to be available all the time, those plants are well suited to run all the time. Natural gas has long been considered a fuel for “peak load,” meaning it is used for times of especially high electricity use. But with the drop in natural gas prices, it has become base load for the nation's electric grid.

Heat produced by coal, natural gas and nuclear power generates about 80 percent of our electricity. The rest comes mainly from hydroelectricity, solar and wind.

Paul Wesslund writes on cooperative issues for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the Arlington, Va.-based service arm of the nation's 900-plus consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives.



Restaurant manager Jim West, server Doriana O'Connell, and co-owner Eric Van Gundy.



Evandy's Boatel

By Valerie Cheatham

On the sandy banks of the Illinois River, in the tiny village of Naples (pop. 124), sits an establishment that folks near and far eagerly awaited. Evandy's Boatel opened in November 2012, but the story doesn't begin there.

Folks from the area fondly remember The Boatel, which sat on the same spot but closed after a disastrous fire in 1991. The Boatel derived its name because you could pull your boat up to the dock and get a bite to eat and a room for the night. It was well-known for its food, and patrons were devastated when it was destroyed. Almost 20 years later, they were filled with anticipation when word spread that the old vacant site had been purchased by local residents Eric Van Gundy and Charlie and Nancy Evans.

Van Gundy says he would be approached by residents, from as far away as Jacksonville, asking if he was going to resurrect The Boatel. "There was nothing here except covered up ruins and a bunch of brush," he explains. "Everyone was just dying to have the restaurant back. I talked to Charlie and Nancy about it, and they told me to go for it."

It was a long process to get the required permits to build. "We found out it was a one-shot deal," says Van Gundy. "The permit was filed on Dec. 19 and was almost rejected because the law changed on Jan. 1. We didn't know that had we waited a few short weeks, it would have been thrown away, and this would be nothing but a pile of dirt.

"It was made adamantly clear to us that we had one chance to build and no changes could be made later," Van Gundy recalls. "They told us we had better get what we wanted the first time because we couldn't enlarge it later. Luckily, we had gone

large on the square footage on the application."

Evandy's Boatel is almost twice as big as the original and was designed with large windows to enable diners to have a view of the river from almost any table in the restaurant. As you enter the restaurant, you are drawn in by the view of the river and the magnificent double-sided stone fireplace that sits in the center of the dining room. It runs from the floor to the high, peaked ceiling, and all supporting columns around the room feature the same stone. Booths on the back side of the dining room are elevated slightly to help diners take advantage of the view.

The restaurant sits high above the river, which was one of the requirements for the new construction. The rebuild required the approval of many federal and state agencies just to construct it on the river side of the levee. The floor of the structure had to be above the 100-year flood plain which required it to be built on 27 steel pilings, 14 inches in diameter driven 50 feet into the ground. Even with that elevation, floods in the past couple of years got high enough to cover the patio and parking lots, but not enter the building.

Restaurant manager Jim West says when he first saw the restaurant he was blown away by the attention to detail. "I think it's a premiere place in Illinois," he remarks.

About 50 percent of their employees have been with Evandy's since it opened its doors. Van Gundy says that he had two guys that were extremely talented in the kitchen and helped experiment with recipes and develop their own blend of seasonings, one which is used on the steaks. The blend on the fish is unique as well. "We didn't want to copy anyone,"

he explains. “You’ll find things that are familiar to you, but maybe with just a little bit different flavor or twist on it.”

Evandy’s menu has some of the old Boatel favorites including hush puppies and catfish fritters. The original hush puppy recipe was obtained from an earlier owner and is still one of the most popular items. The crunchy golden-brown coating gives way to a soft bready interior with a light onion flavor.

Additionally, catfish and buffalo remain their most popular items, which makes sense considering their vicinity to the river. “Fish on the river seems to be the big thing,” says Van Gundy. “Our catfish fritters are our best seller, but we are becoming well-known for our steaks as well.”

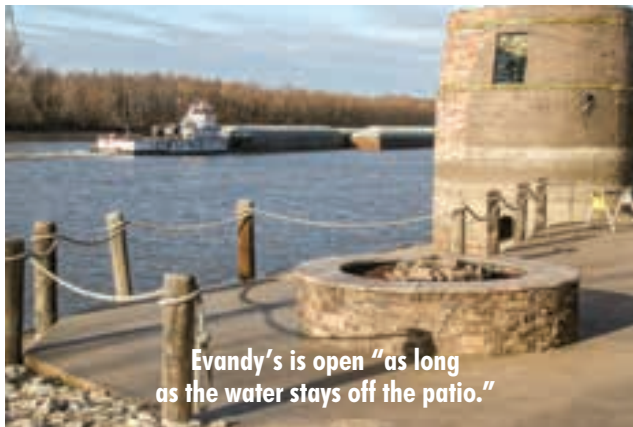
Van Gundy hand-cuts the 12-ounce ribeyes and New York strips, along with the 6- or 10-ounce filets, from 150 to 200 pounds of high quality beef each week, and each is seasoned and grilled to perfection. “We know if the person driving all the way out here doesn’t get a good steak, they’re not going to be in any hurry to come back, but they’ll be back if it’s good,” he remarks. “Some folks come from as far as Peoria, Springfield and St. Louis.”

Almost everything at Evandy’s is made from scratch from their well-known hush puppies and catfish or buffalo fritters to the clam chowder, crab cakes, frog legs and lobster mac and cheese.”

Lunch includes such items as a prime rib steak sandwich or catfish fritters for \$8, burgers or horseshoes that range from \$7-\$11, and soups or salads. At dinner, steaks range from \$19 for a ribeye to \$27 for the 10-ounce filet, a golden-brown whole catfish for \$16, two French-cut pork chops for \$16, and with a variety of other seafood, pasta and chicken. The kid’s menu varies from \$3-\$5 and includes catfish tenders, chicken tenders and other kid-friendly foods.

From May to October, you can find entertainment on the patio that features bands from as far as St. Louis. Special weekends may include a memorial motorcycle ride or car cruise. “As long as the water stays off our patio, we are busy every Saturday and Sunday during the summertime,” Van Gundy points out.

Whether you are taking a lazy Sunday drive or cruising down the Illinois River, make a stop into Evandy’s, you’ll be glad you did.



Evandy’s is open “as long as the water stays off the patio.”



Made from scratch hush puppies

Evandy’s Boatel
100 Bob Michael St., Naples

217-754-3700

Hours:

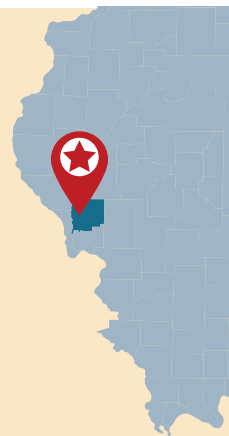
Tues.-Sat. – 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Sun. – 11 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Closed Mondays

Credit cards are accepted.

www.evandysboatel.com



CORRECTION: We inadvertently printed the wrong address for Gallagher’s last month. The correct street address is 114 W. Mill, Waterloo. We apologize for any confusion.

Coyotes with your bow

The air I inhaled as I crossed the frozen field felt like cockleburrs inside my nose. Thankfully I had dressed for the brutal conditions that February morning. What great desire would push a man into these harsh conditions? Was it heavy-beamed midwestern bucks? That would surely do it, but on this day I had coyotes on my mind.

This wild canine has seen huge increases in both its range and population. Today they are flourishing and often causing problems for farmers and ranchers. In fact, we are bordering on an overpopulation issue which is causing this otherwise wild creature to become a crossbred pest.

Not everyone realizes that the coyote and domestic dog have begun to interbreed. Whether pure bred or mixed, the coyote needs to be hunted as it is the only current means of controlling their populations.

Coyotes will either have a home range or travel aimlessly in search of food and companionship. Some experts say that marauding coyotes do the most stock damage. Estimates in 2014 show coyotes killed almost 285,000 sheep, lambs and goats in the U.S. That is a more than \$13-million loss, and doesn't account for pork and beef.

Coyotes will eat virtually anything and tend to take the path of least resistance. They will go after mice on dry ground, but if the snow is deep then deer are easier. Penned livestock are easy pickings. These scavenger/predators will even eat the pet food off your patio and then eat your pet.

Few animals today are as controversial, and generate more anger from hunters, farmers and ranchers. What I have discovered is that these instinctive and opportunistic canines are a first-rate and thrilling challenge for bowhunters.

That is one reason why I could not help but be excited as I made my way across the field to the hill where

I would set-up and wait for daylight. At dawn I began a calling sequence. I have a special routine for coyotes, and in the month of January I usually do not vary the sequence very much. I begin at daylight with a half-minute of howling. This alerts the coyotes in the area that another dog has trespassed into their territory, which is often enough to bring them into bow range.

I then follow the howls with a full minute of the squeals of a wounded rabbit and watch for movement. If nothing shows within a couple of minutes, I squeal some more. Staying in one spot for more than 10-15 minutes is usually not productive. In most cases, if coyotes are in the area, they will come in fast. Many times, I have had shooting opportunities within 60 seconds of my first calling sequence.

This February morning, I modified my plan slightly. Calling coyotes is more difficult in February because it is the breeding season for these wild canines. I use this to my advantage as I play their territorial instincts against them. Now when I howl, I do not follow with rabbit squeals immediately.

During the breeding season a mature coyote is very aggressive toward outsiders, and a big male will often come directly to a howling intruder. His instinct is to challenge any other males and to breed any females.

If a couple of howling sequences fails to produce an angry male, I use the rabbit squealer. Hungry coyotes of either sex, at any time of year, have good reason to investigate this call. I produced an opening sequence of howls, hoping to grab the attention of unsuspecting coyotes and trigger an aggressive reaction from breeding-ready males.



Cold, snowy days are ideal for howling-in a big coyote. (Photo by Mike Roux)

Less than two minutes from my first howl, a coyote appeared in a brushy fencerow about 75 yards west of me. The beautiful, heavily furred coyote stood motionless and scanned the field for movement and, raising his nose, tested the wind. He turned and headed toward me, using the brush in the fencerow for concealment.

He stopped 30 yards away and I could see only his tail through the brown switch grass. The big male made a quick lateral jump out of the fencerow and trotted out into the field, 15 yards from me and my cedar tree blind. I followed him with my sight, and the split-second after he stopped; my arrow was in the air.

Coyotes are nervous animals with keen senses and you must be at the top of your archery game to put a broad-head into one. ♡



Mike Roux is a former Illinois Outdoor Writer of the Year and is the Midwest Regional Director of Outdoor Ministry for the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. Check out his web site at www.mikeroux.com.

Both of these devices create hot air but which uses less power?



Hair Dryer
1,500 watts



**7 Series
Geothermal Heat Pump**
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Fulton Mason Eagle Day



WHEN: February 3, 2018, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

WHERE: Various locations in Lewistown and Havana

COST: Free

CONTACT: 309-547-3721 or www.experienceemiquon.com

Activities include live raptor programs, hands-on activities and crafts for kids, and bird watching. A variety of programs will be available at Dickson Mounds Museum, 10956 N. Dickson Mounds Rd., Lewistown; Emiquon Preserve, off Route 97/78, Lewistown; Havana Park District's Nature Center, 416 N. Schrader Street, Havana; and the U.S. Wildlife Services-Chautauqua National Wildlife Refuge, 19031 E. CR 2110N, Havana. Go to the website for list of activities and times.



Rockford Boat, Vacation & Fishing Show



WHEN: February 16-18, 2018, see website for daily times

WHERE: Indoor Sports Center, 8800 E. Riverside Blvd., Loves Park

COST: Adults (12 & over) \$6 for one-day pass or \$10 for three-day pass; children under 12 are free; free parking

CONTACT: 815-997-1744 or www.rockfordboatshow.com

See new 2018 boats, boating equipment, motors and trailers at the 47th annual show. The show will have representatives on hand to answer questions and fishermen will have their choice of the latest tackle, guides, charters, etc. Bring the entire family and let them catch a fish in the trout pond, check out the Hawg Trough aquarium filled with fish, and bring them by the United States Power Squadrons and U.S. Coast Guard booths to learn about boating safety.



Maple Syrup Festival



WHEN: February 24-25, 2018, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

WHERE: Touch of Nature Environmental Center, 1206 Touch of Nature Rd., Makanda

COST: Free entry, register for pancake breakfast

CONTACT: 618-453-1121 or www.ton.siu.edu and go to events.

Event includes two full days of family fun including maple syrup demonstrations, tree identification hikes, blacksmith demonstrations, lumberjack demonstrations, a portable climbing wall, live music, vendors and artisans. Register for the pancake breakfast on the website. Cost is \$12 for ages 13 and over; \$6 ages 6-12, and free for those 5 and under.

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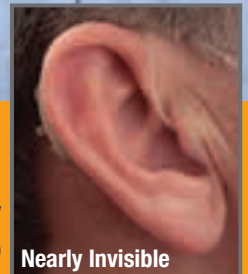
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