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PLUS

Illinois Bicentennial p. 26

St. Nicholas Landmark p. 30



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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 almost 189,000, the magazine informs cooperative consumer-members about issues affecting their electric cooperative and the quality of life in rural Illinois.

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Illinois Country Living

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New ISA strategic direction aids Illinois and its soybean producers

Illinois is the nation's top soybean-producing state. The Illinois Soybean Association (ISA) takes some credit for that achievement, as our programs traditionally have helped farmers produce more soybeans per acre at a lower cost. ISA's efforts offer the state benefits, too. The Illinois soybean crop adds approximately \$7.48 billion in economic impact, while the soybean value chain employs 115,000 Illinoisans that create \$849 million in state and local tax revenue.

Now, as today's soybean marketplace changes quickly, producers and Illinois residents must adapt to new, evolving policies and regulations, an uncertain trade environment, and a steady stream of innovation and technology that must be evaluated and put into use.

ISA is broadening its reach to address these challenges and opportunities. With a new strategic direction put into place this fall, ISA is stimulating people associated with agriculture to think differently and look at topics outside of the usual realm that could affect the way business is done. ISA has launched several new soybean checkoff program projects with a concentrated

focus on innovation, technology adoption and market growth, including:

- Looking at all angles of water management and positioning ISA to be at the center of water quality and water availability discussions.
- Successfully adopting technology and giving soybean producers direct exposure and training to the latest tools and advancements.
- Promoting B20 (20 percent biodiesel blended fuel) acceptance and defining new market development opportunities like the global maritime industry.
- Assessing Illinois transportation infrastructure needs and mapping out the landscape of 2030 so producers can better prepare for soybean transportation challenges ahead.
- Supporting greater containerized shipping options for soybeans and increasing Illinois producer profitability by capitalizing on this unique logistics advantage.
- Expanding the online IL SoyAdvisor program, particularly by including the latest tools and technologies

that can enhance yield potential and profitability.

- Participating in more global food protein discussions and positioning soybeans in the larger feeding-the-future discussions.

In addition to these soybean checkoff-funded efforts, ISA's policy and membership arm, Illinois Soybean Growers (ISG), is assessing the associated legislation and regulations. ISG represents the interests of 43,000 soybean producers on the issues that directly affect their profitability.

For example, ISG represents soybean producer interests in the ongoing trade war with China and the devastating impact of their retaliatory 25 percent tariff on U.S. soybeans. We are concerned about the long-lasting impact this will have on the Illinois soybean industry. When producers have free trade and market access, we are in a better position to grow exports and our economy.

While all Illinois soybean producers pay into the checkoff program, ISG's policy work is supported through membership and corporate sponsors. Any Illinois resident with an interest in policy issues is invited to become an ISG informational member. It's a free way to stay connected to all things soybean and see the impact on the state of Illinois. Learn more about ISA at the website ilsoy.org, and get details about ISG's advocacy efforts at VoiceforSoy.org.



Lynn Rohrscheib farms as part of a family operation that includes a custom application business in Fairmount, Ill. She has a degree in plant and soil sciences from Southern Illinois University Carbondale and is serving her second term as ISA chairwoman.



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Hurricane Michael recovery efforts

Linemen from Illinois electric cooperatives, who sent emergency help in light of Hurricane Florence in the Carolinas, were home little more than a week before the call for help from North Carolina was issued again – this time because of Hurricane Michael. What originally looked like a tropical storm rapidly turned into the worst hurricane to ever hit the Florida Panhandle. Its sustained wind and rains also caused power outages in Alabama, Georgia and both Carolinas.

The emergency work plan was activated and crews, line trucks and digger-derricks headed to North Carolina, an area still recovering from Hurricane Florence. Once

released, line crews traveled to West Florida Electric Cooperative to help rebuild their system. Tent cities were set up to house and feed the linemen who worked 18-hour shifts in the heat and humidity.

Electric transmission and distribution systems, which took years to construct, were wiped out in minutes by the force of Hurricane Michael's winds and storm surge. Thousands of broken poles and miles of line were on the ground leaving residents in the dark.

By the end of October, Illinois crews were released to return home, but the work continued with fresh crews from co-ops that live in closer proximity to the affected area. ♡

Photos courtesy of Corn Belt Energy



Higher winter heating costs predicted

According to the Energy Information Administration (EIA), it's likely going to cost you more to keep warm this winter.

“On average, EIA expects natural gas bills to rise by 5 percent, home heating oil by 20 percent, and electricity by 3 percent. However, expenditures for homes that use propane are expected to be about the same as last winter,” the EIA reported in its Winter Fuels Outlook.

“EIA forecasts that households heating primarily with electricity will spend an average of \$36 (3 percent) more this winter on their electricity bills. This increase in forecast

expenditures is a result of 1 percent higher consumption, including both heating and non-heating uses of electricity, and 2 percent higher residential electricity prices than last winter,” EIA said in the report, issued Oct. 10.

EIA also noted that this winter's mix of energy sources used to generate electricity is slightly different from last season. Winter's temperatures are expected to be roughly similar to last winter for most of the country, based on the most recent forecast from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. ♡

Source: Michael Kahn, NRECA



Permission to fly

Twenty-two cooperative employees recently completed the Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) certification course conducted by Southern Illinois University – Carbondale. The two-day course assisted individuals in gaining the Federal Aviation Regulation (FAR) part 107 UAS certification which allows them to legally fly drones for commercial purposes. All participants successfully passed the accompanying exam.

Cooperatives sending participants were: the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives (AIEC), Springfield; Coles-Moultrie Electric Cooperative, Mattoon; Corn Belt Energy Corporation, Bloomington; Dairyland Power Cooperative, La Crosse, Wis.; Egyptian Electric Cooperative Association, Murphysboro; Illinois Electric Cooperative, Winchester; M.J.M. Electric Cooperative, Inc., Carlinville; Monroe County Electric Co-Operative, Inc., Waterloo; Norris Electric Cooperative, Newton; Prairie Power, Inc., Springfield; Rock Energy Cooperative, Janesville, Wis.; Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative Co., Auburn; SouthEastern Illinois Electric Cooperative, Inc., Carrier Mills; and Spoon River Electric Cooperative, Canton.

In addition to the course, individuals wanting to receive hands-on experience flying a UAS attended a flying course conducted by Dan Gerard, AIEC chief technology officer. Held at the headquarters of SouthEastern Illinois Electric



Cooperative, Inc., participants spent the day practicing their flying using a flight simulator, micro drone and drones from AIEC and Southern Illinois Electric Cooperative.

Electric cooperatives across the country have found that the use of a UAS can help streamline inspection and identify necessary repair or the cause of an outage along miles of electric lines in a fraction of the time it takes to send a crew, ultimately helping to speed up restoration efforts. ⚡

Illinois K-12 high-speed internet connectivity rises to 96%

Ninety-six percent of K-12 school districts in Illinois can now access the internet at speeds of 100 kbps per second, a substantial improvement from 71 percent just three years ago.

High-speed connectivity ensures that students have access to more digital resources, which in turn expands learning opportunities. By making high-speed internet accessible, educators and students gain the benefits of greater interactivity, collaboration, engagement and personal instruction.

Illinois' digital advances were reported by the EducationSuperHighway which tracks progress toward K-12 connectivity across the U.S.

While Illinois has advanced its school digital resources, work remains. EducationSuperHighway reports that 407,093 students in 32 school districts across the state still need adequate bandwidth for digital learning. There are also 136 school campuses that lack scalable fiber-optic broadband connections. ⚡

Safety alert - product recalls

Cub Cadet has recalled 2018 Challenger utility vehicles (Model 37BV3BHK010) and 2018 RZT SX EFI zero-turn riding mowers (Model 17RWCBYS010) due to fire hazard. The fuel tank's neck can crack and cause fuel to leak, posing a fire hazard. Consumers should immediately stop using the recalled items and contact an authorized Cub Cadet dealer to arrange for a free repair. For more information call 888-848-6038 or go to www.cubcadet.com/



Certain models of 2017 **Eddie Bauer Fabric Infant Carriers** are being recalled due to risk of buckle breakage, making it a possible fall hazard for children. The black and gray model was sold exclusively at Target between December 2017 and August 2018 (Model EB00201) and has the words Eddie Bauer and First Adventure on the front. If you bought one, immediately stop using it and call Gold Inc. at 866-600-7205, email customerservice@goldbuginc.com for information about getting compensated for the carrier. ⚡



Don't be misled by false Medicare or Social Security ads

By Becky Whitlow, Social Security District Director, Springfield

Online and otherwise, there's a lot of information out there, and sometimes it's difficult to tell what sources are credible. With millions of people relying on Social Security, scammers target audiences who are looking for program and benefit information.

The law that addresses misleading Social Security and Medicare advertising prohibits people or non-government businesses from using words or emblems that mislead others. Their advertising can't lead people to believe that they represent, are somehow affiliated with, or endorsed or approved by Social Security or the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (Medicare).

People are often misled by advertisers who use the terms "Social Security" or "Medicare." Often, these companies offer Social Security services for a fee, even though the same services are available directly from Social Security free of charge. These services include getting:

- A corrected Social Security card showing a person's married name;
- A Social Security card to replace a lost card;
- A Social Security Statement; and
- A Social Security number for a child.

If you receive misleading information about Social Security, send the complete ad, including the envelope, to:

Office of the Inspector General Fraud Hotline
 Social Security Administration
 P.O. Box 17768
 Baltimore, MD 21235

You can learn more about how we combat fraudulent advertisers by reading our publication *What You Need to Know About Misleading Advertising* at www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/EN-05-10005.pdf.

You can also report Social Security fraud to the Office of the Inspector General at oig.ssa.gov/report.



Go Brighter and Greener with LED Lights

LED lighting products account for 60 percent of the holiday and seasonal lighting sold in the U.S. each year.

A 1,000-bulb strand of miniature, incandescent lights uses 408 watts of energy, while a 1,000-bulb strand of LED mini lights consumes 48 watts of energy.

Source: Underwriters Laboratories

Did you know?

The story of Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer was created by Robert L. May on assignment for the Chicago-based department store Montgomery Ward. In its first year of publication, the store distributed 2.4 million copies of the book. And the rest, as they say, is history.

“To you, it’s the perfect lift chair. To me, it’s the best sleep chair I’ve ever had.”

— J. Fitzgerald, VA



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This lift chair puts you safely on your feet!

And there’s more! The overstuffed, oversized biscuit style back and unique seat design will cradle you in comfort. Generously filled, wide armrests provide enhanced arm support when sitting or reclining. The high and low heat settings along with the multiple massage settings, can provide a soothing relaxation you might get at a spa – just imagine getting all that in a lift chair! It even has a battery backup in case of a power outage. Shipping charge includes white glove delivery. Professionals will deliver the chair to the exact spot in your home where you want it, unpack it, inspect it, test it, position it, and even carry the packaging away! You get your choice of fabrics and colors – **Call now!**

The Perfect Sleep Chair®

1-888-848-7420

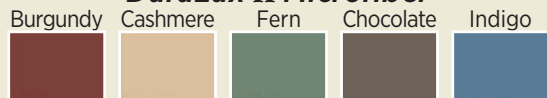
Please mention code 110442 when ordering.

Because each Perfect Sleep Chair is a custom-made bedding product, we can only accept returns on chairs that are damaged or defective.

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Keeping holiday goodies safe

This season of goodwill and giving thanks is also a festive celebration of food. Make this holiday feasting season a healthy one by keeping foods safe.

Delicious delights

During the holidays, there are lots of delicious foods to choose from. Some of these foods may contain raw or lightly-cooked eggs. Bacteria might be inside some raw eggs, but you can safely enjoy these foods by simply cooking raw eggs and egg-containing foods thoroughly.

Treat yourself to freshly-baked treats, but avoid taste testing raw cookie dough, cake batter or pie filling if they contain raw eggs.

If any of your holiday recipes call for raw or lightly-cooked eggs, you can:

- Make recipes that call for raw eggs safer by adding the eggs to the amount of liquid called for in the recipe, then heating the mixture thoroughly.
- Purchase pasteurized eggs. These eggs are heat-processed to kill harmful bacteria. They can be found in some supermarkets and are labeled “pasteurized.” Here are several types consumers can buy:
 - Fresh, pasteurized eggs in the shell (found in the refrigerator section)
 - Liquid, pasteurized egg products (found in the refrigerator section)
 - Frozen, pasteurized egg products (found in the frozen food section)
 - Powdered egg whites (found in the baking section)

‘Tis the season to chill!

Bacteria can multiply quickly in moist desserts that contain dairy products. Cold temperatures keep most harmful bacteria from multiplying, so keep these foods refrigerated:



- Cream pies, cakes with whipped-cream and cream cheese frostings, and other creamy desserts
 - Cold pasta dishes with meat, poultry, seafood or dairy
 - Quiches and souffles, especially if you aren't serving them immediately
- Reheat them to 165 degrees Fahrenheit before serving. Use a food thermometer to check.

The joy of giving and receiving food safely

How can you be sure that food arrives safely during holiday shipping? The key is careful planning. Here are tips when mailing perishable food gifts:

- Make sure the food is frozen solid or refrigerator cold.
- Use an insulated cooler or a heavy corrugated box packed with a frozen gel-pack or purchase dry ice for keeping food cold.
- Alert the recipient ahead of time and set a mutually-agreeable delivery date.
- Properly label the package on the outside, “Perishable - Keep

Refrigerated.” Provide a complete mailing address and phone number to ensure proper delivery.

- Ship your package by overnight delivery.

When you send food via a mail-order company, be sure to specify overnight delivery and request that the company supply a frozen gel-pack or dry ice in the packaging. This will help ensure that the food will arrive at your destination firm and refrigerator cold.

Here are tips if you receive perishable food gifts:

- Open the package upon arrival.
- Make sure the food is still refrigerator cold.
- Immediately refrigerate or freeze the food.
- If perishable food doesn't arrive cold, don't eat it and notify the shipper immediately.

Note: Remember, it's the shipper's responsibility to deliver perishable foods on time, but it's the customer's responsibility to have someone at home to receive the package. 📞

Source: www.fda.gov

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Electricity grows cleaner

By Pat Keegan and Brad Thiessen

Dear Pat: We're considering buying an electric vehicle and switching from a propane furnace to a heat pump. We care about the environment and are wondering if using more electricity would be beneficial. — *Jason and Chelsea*

Dear Jason and Chelsea: The decisions about how to heat your home and how to fuel your transportation needs are among the most important environmental decisions you can make. There are many changes happening in the energy sector, and with electric co-ops in particular, that are making electricity cleaner.

Decades ago, coal was the preferred fuel for electricity generation. As investments in environmental upgrades took hold, the energy industry increased the use of low sulfur coal and found ways to clean the coal and burn it more efficiently. Scrubbers were installed in coal plants to reduce sulfur emissions, but even after these improvements were made, natural gas turbines were still considered environmentally preferable to coal plants. In 1990, utilities depended on coal to generate more than half of their electricity, but by 2016, that dropped to less than one third.

In recent years, solar and wind generation have taken off and now provide more than 8 percent of utility energy generation. Electric co-ops have installed solar at a record pace with solar capacity growing more than four times since 2015. Electric co-ops have pioneered community solar programs, where members subscribe to a community project and the co-op installs a large array that is much less costly per kilowatt than smaller rooftop projects. Nearly 200 co-ops offered community solar programs in 2017, and more than 500 co-ops across the country use electricity generated by wind power.

These statistics are national, but the environmental impacts of electricity depend upon where you live and where your electric co-op purchases electricity. Many co-ops publish this information on their website or in their annual reports on

the sources of electric generation. Some include information on carbon emissions.

With all that in the back of your mind, let's get to the decisions you are looking to make: home heating and vehicle purchase.

The heat pump you're considering is a good option. Heat pumps are about 1.5 times more efficient than they were in the 1970s, and they're functioning better in colder temperatures. Heat pumps take care of your cooling needs as well, and can do so with about half the energy they required in 1990. The best choice for home heating and cooling depends on climate. In more extreme climates, you'll need more heating or cooling capacity and can justify splurging for more energy efficient models.

As our energy supply becomes cleaner, electric vehicles are becoming a better environmental choice across the country. The environmental advantage depends on how electricity is generated in different locations, and there are other factors to consider when looking at an electric vehicle. The fuel cost of an electric vehicle is, on average, half as much per mile as a gasoline vehicle. Electric vehicles generally require less maintenance, but the batteries eventually need replaced. Battery costs are dropping, but potential buyers should note this will still be a hefty bill. Electric vehicles cost more upfront than their gas counterparts, but the cost is coming down with every new model.

As you make your decision on a heating system and new vehicle, remember there are other things you can do to reduce the environmental impact of your energy use. Insulate and seal the air leaks in your home. Set the thermostat a little lower in the winter and a little higher in the summer. Also, check with your local electric co-op to see if they offer a community solar program or additional energy-saving tips.

I hope these ideas help you make your decision.



The network of electric vehicle charging stations is growing rapidly.



Improvements in the technology and state sponsored renewable energy requirements have encouraged the development of wind generation.

This column was co-written by Pat Keegan and Brad Thiessen of Collaborative Efficiency. For more information on how electricity is growing cleaner, heat pumps and electric vehicles, please visit: www.collaborativeefficiency.com/energytips.



The gifts we take for granted

Sometimes gifts we give aren't wrapped in paper and bows. Because of help from Illinois Touchstone Energy cooperative line personnel, co-op members in the southern states have received light and hope in the aftermath of recent hurricanes.

This holiday season, give thanks for the things we take for granted – family, friends and those who keep the lights on.



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First Place

South Carolina Sauce

*Submitted by Donna Roper,
Clinton County Electric Cooperative, Inc.*

2/3 c. yellow mustard	1 t. white pepper
1/2 c. white sugar	1/4 t. cayenne pepper
1/4 c. light brown sugar	4-5 drops Tabasco sauce
1 c. cider vinegar	1/2 t. soy sauce
2 T. chili powder	2 T. butter
1 t. black pepper	

Combine all ingredients except soy sauce and butter in saucepan. Simmer 10 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in soy sauce and butter. Refrigerate when cooled. Use as a basting sauce for barbecued meat or as a condiment when serving grilled pork, beef or chicken.

Note: My family uses it for every kind of meat and for French fries or onion rings. I usually gift this to a man or family and add meat with the gift. I put it in a glass jar with a ribbon on it. It's something different and I have gotten many requests after they try it.

The scent of pine permeates your home from your fresh tree. You've built a crackling fire and have a fragrant mug of spiced cider in hand as you settle into your favorite chair. The sparkling lights from the tree and the soft glow from the fire are putting you in the holiday mood. Now it's time to prepare your gift list. What can you possibly give someone that has everything?

Homemade gifts from your kitchen may be just what you are looking for when it comes to showing how much you love and appreciate others. This Christmas consider giving one of these tried and true food gift recipes submitted by our readers.

There are a wide range of flavors and scents from the tangy and savory South Carolina Sauce to the spicy sweet aroma of the Chipotle and Rosemary Roasted Nuts and the savory Cranberry Apple Chutney. All three winners in our holiday food gift contest.

Be sure to take a look at our top 10 recipes for 2018. They include such delectable items as Gingerbread Biscotti, Coconut Crunch Cookie Mix, Peanut Brittle and Caramel Apple Jam. Enjoy these and all of those submitted by visiting our website at icl.coop/foodgifts. We're sure you'll find your own winners. Before you know it, your gift list will be filled!



Second Place

Chipotle and Rosemary Roasted Nuts

Submitted by Carla Mueeting, Corn Belt Energy Corporation

2 T. olive oil	1/4 c. light brown sugar, lightly packed
2 c. whole cashews (9 oz.)	3 T. orange juice
2 c. walnut halves (7 oz.)	2 t. ground chipotle powder
2 c. pecan halves (7 oz.)	4 T. fresh rosemary leaves, minced and divided
2 c. whole almonds (12 oz.)	2 t. salt, divided
1/3 c. pure maple syrup	

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Generously brush a large sheet pan with olive oil. Gently combine the first 9 ingredients in mixing bowl, tossing to coat nuts evenly. Add 2 T. rosemary and 1 t. salt and toss again. Spread the nut mixture on prepared sheet pan and roast for 25 minutes, stirring twice until nuts are glazed and golden brown. Remove from oven and sprinkle with 1 t. salt and remaining rosemary. Toss well and set aside at room temperature, stirring occasionally to prevent sticking while mixture cools. Taste for seasoning. Serve warm or let cool completely and store in airtight decorative containers.



Third Place

Cranberry Apple Chutney

Submitted by Marilyn Johnson, Corn Belt Energy Corporation

1 – 12 oz. bag fresh or frozen cranberries	1 t. minced garlic
1/4 c. water	1 t. salt
2 lg. apples, cored and chopped	3/4 t. ground allspice
1-1/2 c. sugar	1/4 t. ground cinnamon
2/3 c. finely chopped onion	1/8 t. ground cloves
2/3 c. golden raisins	2/3 c. dark corn syrup
2 t. minced fresh ginger	1/3 c. cider vinegar
	2/3 c. chopped pecans

Combine first 12 ingredients in large saucepan. Bring to boil over medium-high heat. Reduce heat; cover, stirring occasionally, for 15 minutes. Add corn syrup, vinegar and pecans. Cook uncovered for 15 minutes, stirring frequently. Yield: 4-5 half pint jars.

♥ Coconut Crunch Cookie Mix

Submitted by: Emily Elder, Norris Electric Cooperative

1 c. cornflakes, crushed	1/2 c. granulated sugar
1/2 c. rolled oats, quick cooking	1/4 t. salt
1-1/4 c. all-purpose flour	1-1/4 c. flaked coconut
1 t. baking powder	1/2 c. pecans or hazelnuts, chopped
1 t. baking soda	
3/4 c. brown sugar, packed	

In a large mouth quart jar, layer granulated sugar, nuts, coconut and crushed cornflakes and press down to compact. Add brown sugar and press down, then add oats. In a bowl, combine flour, baking soda, baking powder and salt. Add flour mixture to jar. Fasten lid; attach below directions for making cookies to jar. To make cookies: preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a mixing bowl, stir together contents of jar. Add 1/2 c. softened butter, 1 lightly beaten egg and 1 t. vanilla. Mix until well combined. Shape dough into 1-inch balls. Place 2 inches apart on ungreased cookie sheet. Bake for 10 to 12 minutes until edges are light brown. Cool 2 minutes and transfer cookies to wire rack and let cool. Makes 36 cookies.



♥ Blessed Bread

Submitted by: Kathy Young, Jo-Carroll Energy, Inc.

1/2 c. butter, melted	2 c. flour
1 c. sugar	2-1/2 t. baking powder
1/2 t. salt	3 bananas, mashed
2 eggs	1/4 c. chopped walnuts (optional)
1/4 c. maraschino cherries, drained and chopped	1/2 c. milk chocolate chips

Beat eggs with fork until thick and well beaten. Blend in bananas, melted butter, nuts, cherries and chocolate chips. In separate bowl, add and mix the dry ingredients. Make a well in center of dry ingredients and add wet ingredients and mix. Stir only to moisten dry ingredients. Spray small loaf pans (I use the foil type ones). Divide the batter between 3-4 loaves. Bake at 350 degrees for 35-40 minutes or until knife comes out clean. Cool. *Note: I wrap them in brown craft paper and tie with a burlap ribbon with a small "cross." It's blessed bread because I had the salt blessed. Moist and delicious.*



WE NEED RECIPES! Upcoming monthly topics include recipes using potatoes, maple syrup and pie. 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.



◀ Gingerbread Biscotti

Submitted by: *Anna Guo, Corn Belt Energy Corporation*

84g (3 oz.) unsalted butter, softened	Pinch of ground cloves
90g (3 oz.) sugar	1/2 t. salt
1/2 t. cinnamon	4 T. molasses
1/2 t. ground ginger	2 eggs
1/2 t. ground allspice	1-1/2 t. baking powder
1/4 t. ground nutmeg	240g (8.5 oz.) all-purpose flour
	86g (3 oz.) white chocolate

Preheat oven to 350 degrees and line two baking sheets with parchment paper. In a medium bowl, beat together the butter, sugar, spices, salt and baking powder until light and creamy. Add the eggs and molasses and beat to combine. The mixture may appear curdled. Turn your mixer to low speed and gradually add the flour, forming a wet, sticky dough. Divide the dough into two equal portions and transfer to respective baking sheets. Form each portion into a 9-1/2"x2" log, about 3/4-inch tall. Smooth any lumps on the top or sides. Bake for 25 minutes. Remove from oven. Reduce oven temperature to 325 degrees. Let the biscotti cool for 5 minutes before gently using a serrated knife to slice each log crosswise into 1/2" to 3/4" slices. Alternatively, you can slice the biscotti on a diagonal for longer pieces. Lay the slices cut side down on the baking sheet and return to oven for 15-20 minutes or until crispy. The centers of the biscotti will still be slightly soft in the middle but will harden as they cool. Remove the biscotti from the baking sheet and place on a cooling rack. Once biscotti are cooled, dip one side into melted chocolate. Let the excess drip off. Place the dipped biscotti back onto the baking sheets and let the chocolate harden. Store the biscotti in an airtight container for up to 2 weeks. They are best dipped into coffee as a dessert or snack.

Golden Granola

Submitted by: *Brenda McCoy, Norris Electric Cooperative*

18 oz. box old-fashioned oats	1-1/2 sticks (12 T.) unsalted butter
8 oz. sliced almonds	1/2 c. honey
1 c. dried apricots, chopped	1 t. ground cinnamon
1 c. dried cranberries or cherries	1/2 t. salt
1 c. light brown sugar	

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a large bowl, stir together oats, almonds, apricots, cranberries (or cherries) and brown sugar. In a small saucepan over medium heat, melt butter and stir in honey, cinnamon and salt. Pour over oat mixture and toss to combine thoroughly. Spread granola onto a parchment-lined baking sheet and bake, stirring occasionally, until oats are toasted and sugar begins to caramelize, approximately 35-40 minutes. Cool completely. Transfer to an airtight container. Yield: 15 cups.

Caramel Apple Jam ▶

Submitted by: *Susan Bertelsen, Spoon River Electric Cooperative*

6 c. peeled and diced Granny Smith or Gala apples	3 c. sugar
1/2 c. water	2 c. packed brown sugar
1/2 t. butter	1/2 t. cinnamon
1 pkg. powdered fruit pectin	1/4 t. nutmeg

Mix apples, water and butter in a heavy pot. Cook over low heat, stirring frequently until apples are soft but not mushy. Stir in pectin. Bring to a full boil, stirring constantly. Add sugars, cinnamon and nutmeg. Return to rolling boil, stirring constantly for 1 minute. Remove from heat; skim off foam. Pour into jelly jars leaving 1/4-inch headspace. Process in a hot water bath for 10 minutes. Yield: 7 half pint jars.



Holiday Bean Soup Mix >

Submitted by: Carolyn Allen,
Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative Co.

1/2 c. dry kidney beans	2 T. chicken bouillon granules
1/2 c. split green peas	2 t. dried minced onion
1/2 c. dry black beans	1/2 t. dried parsley flakes
1/2 c. red lentils	4 T. brown sugar
1/2 c. dry red beans	1-1/2 t. salt
1/2 c. dry red beans	1/2 t. pepper
Seasoning packet:	1/2 t. garlic powder
1 T. dried green pepper flakes	1/2 t. celery seed

Layer the ingredients in the order given in a wide-mouth 1-quart canning jar. Mix and place the seasonings in a small plastic bag. Place on top of the peas. To prepare you need 1 jar holiday bean soup mix, 2-14.5 oz. cans stewed tomatoes and 1 t. liquid smoke (optional). Remove seasoning bag from soup mix and set aside. Rinse beans and place in a large soup pot. Pour 4 cups boiling water over beans, cover and let soak overnight. Drain water, add 6 cups fresh water. Cover and bring to a boil over high heat, stirring occasionally. Reduce heat to low and simmer 1 to 1-1/2 hours. Add tomatoes, seasoning mix and liquid smoke. Cover and simmer 30 minutes. Uncover and continue to simmer about 1 hour longer or until soup thickens.

Peanut Brittle >

Submitted by: JoAnn Lynch,
Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative

3 c. sugar	1 t. vanilla
1/2 c. water	1 t. salt
1 c. white corn syrup	1-1/2 rounded teaspoons
2 c. raw peanuts	baking soda
1/2 stick oleo or butter	

Mix and cook sugar, syrup and water until it reaches the hard ball stage (260 degrees). Add peanuts, salt, oleo and vanilla and cook until peanuts look and taste done and the syrup will be a little brown (300 degrees) about 15 minutes. Turn the stove off and add the soda quickly, stirring vigorously and pour as thin as you can onto well buttered or sprayed cooking sheets. Run a couple of heavy knives under each side to loosen and pull on the edges to get as thin as you can. It cools fast, so you must work quickly. *Note: I use insulated cookie sheets, usually 2 big ones. The candy stays warmer and I can pull it thinner. Easier to eat for older folks when a bit thinner.*

To view all submitted recipes go to www.icl.coop/foodgifts



Recipes prepared, tasted and photographed by Illinois Country Living staff. 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.



Eye Doctor Helps Illinois Legally Blind To See

High Technology For Low Vision Patients Allows Many To Drive Again



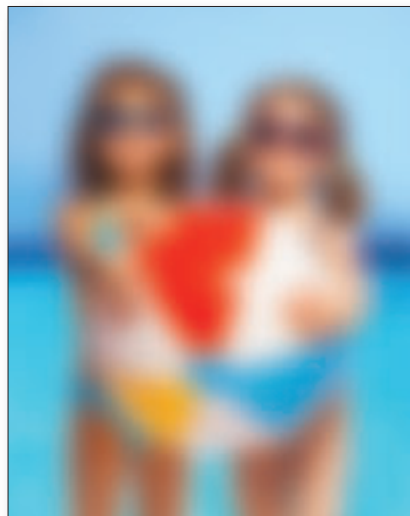
For many patients with macular degeneration and other vision-related conditions, the loss of central visual detail also signals the end to one of the last bastions of independence: driving. A Mascoutah optometrist, Dr. Marianne McDaniel, is using miniaturized telescopes that are mounted in glasses to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



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

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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Forcing paperwhite bulbs indoors for winter

Many gardeners plant a multitude of bulbs outdoors in the fall, but flowering bulbs of all kinds can also be forced indoors to create a beautiful and long-lasting flower display for your home.

The term forcing refers to a technique that imitates the environmental conditions that bulbs encounter outdoors, thereby tricking them into flowering earlier. Essentially, it allows you to bring the outdoor beauty of spring flowering bulbs indoors!

The key to success is to closely imitate the outdoor environmental conditions. This means that most flowering bulbs need a cold treatment before they will initiate a flower, which applies to most of our spring flowering bulbs in Illinois like tulips, daffodils, hyacinth and others. Outdoors, we plant these bulbs in the fall so that they get the cold temperatures of winter and then flower for us the following spring. This can easily be replicated indoors by placing bulbs in the refrigerator

or in a cool garage or basement for a period of time.

Luckily, there are other bulbs that do not need a cold treatment in order to flower, making the process of forcing much simpler. Paperwhite narcissus (*Narcissus papyraceus*) is an example of one of those. Their prolific white blooms and ease of growth make paperwhites an excellent choice for holiday décor.

Planting

The unique thing about forcing bulbs is that they can be planted in containers with or without drainage since they are only going to be in the container for a short period of time. I personally love the look of paperwhites forced in shallow clear containers with decorative stones.

To plant in a container without drainage, select a 3- to 4-inch deep decorative container that does not have drainage holes. Place 1 to 2 inches of washed gravel or stones in the bottom of the container and carefully place the bulbs on the gravel or

stones. Bulbs can be placed as close as desired. Next, place enough gravel or stones over or around the bulbs to hold them in place.

To use a pot that has drainage, again select one that is 3 to 4 inches deep, and plant the bulbs in a well-drained potting mix with the tops of the bulbs even or slightly below the rim of the pot.

Watering

In a container with no drainage holes, add just enough water to bring it to base of the bulbs and maintain it at this level through the life of the planting. Do not immerse the bulbs in water, only the basal plate of the bulb where the roots originate should be in water. In a container with drainage, simply water the soil thoroughly after planting and keep it moist thereafter.

Lighting

Paperwhites will flower under any light conditions. For best results, begin by placing the bulbs in a window area with a southern exposure. When the plants begin to flower, remove them from direct sunlight and place plants in the home's coolest area. This helps to prolong flowering.

If you pot up paperwhite narcissus bulbs every 10 days or so starting in the fall, you can have a succession of blooms all through the winter. These forced bulbs make a great decoration for your own home or a great gift for the holidays. They do have a bit of an odor though, so choose your locations in the house strategically. 💡



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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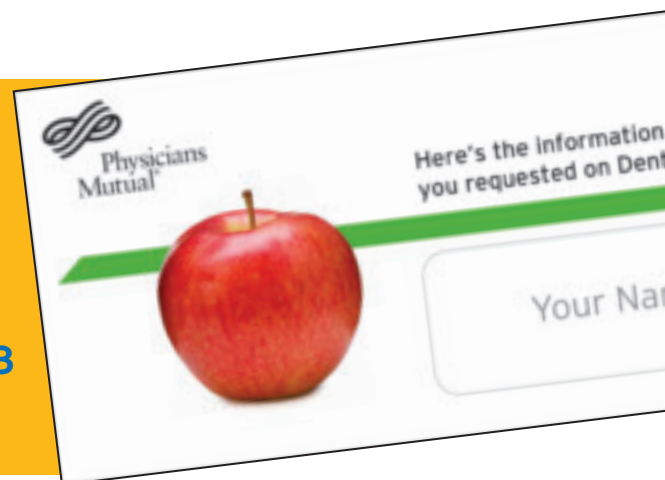
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Small heaters can lead to **BIGGER BILLS**

By Derrill Holly

During winter, for many of us, comfort at home means heat.

While a good central heating system is designed to meet whole house needs, sometimes consumers turn to space heaters for additional warmth. Some people use one to boost temperatures for a single room where the available heat is inadequate, but their widespread use, over extended periods, can boost winter heating bills.

“In some cases, small space heaters can be less expensive to use if you only want to heat one room or supplement inadequate heating in one room,” according to analysts at the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). “However, a space heater is not necessarily an economical source of long-term warmth. It is not an alternative to a whole-home heating system.”

Right type for the job

According to DOE, two types of space heaters are generally available for the residential market.

Most can deliver between 10,000 Btu and 40,000 Btu of heat per hour and commonly run on electricity, propane, natural gas or kerosene. Wood and pellet stoves are also increasingly available for many applications. Convective heating circulates air within an enclosed space, while radiant heating transfers warming energy directly to objects or people within close proximity to its source.

If central heating is unavailable or inadequate, a convective heating unit can distribute heat relatively evenly throughout an enclosed space. For garages, workshops, workout rooms or laundry areas, used for a few hours a day or each week, a convective heater could be a good fit.

Many convective electric heaters contain some type of sealed heat transfer liquid. They allow heat generated by the devices to store energy as heat, so



⚠ *Never place a space heater close to flammable materials.*



they cycle less while providing consistent performance.

Radiant electric heaters typically include infrared heating elements. Nearby surfaces, including people absorb the heat. Air in immediate proximity to the unit's enclosure or cabinetry also aids in the transfer of conductive warmth.

Safe not sorry

Space heaters get seasonal use, but they are responsible for 25,000 residential fires a year, according to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, which pegs the annual mortality rate at 300 a year. Burn injuries associated with surface contacts with room heaters send about 6,000 people to emergency rooms every year, and most of those incidents don't result in fires.

Because the devices are designed to give off heat, they should always be set in locations clear of all flammable materials and out of reach of small children, pets or anyone with impaired mobility.

In recent years, many space heaters have been designed with tip-over safety features, which automatically shut off the power source in the event the unit tilts beyond its upright position.

Because space heaters are designed specifically to produce heat, they should be plugged directly into a wall whenever possible. If an extension cord is used, it should be heavy duty, and made of 14-gauge wire or larger.

Given a choice between high, medium and low, or an adjustable thermostat, choose the latter. A unit that heats your space to the desired

temperature will cycle less, saving you energy, and never overheat the room.

And buy the right size heater for the right size space—too small and the warming results could be disappointing, too large or powerful and you'll be uncomfortable. Any time you open doors or windows to vent away warm air, you are wasting energy you've already consumed to produce heat.

Getting more for less

"Space heaters are not the ideal solution for heating homes," said Brian Sloboda, a senior program manager for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. "For every unit of electricity that is consumed by these devices, they produce one unit of heat."

While adding several space heaters to supplement your central heating system is also likely to drive up your energy costs, selective use can help you save money.

According to analysts at the Environmental Protection Agency, the key is using space heaters in smaller rooms that are occupied infrequently, in conjunction with lower thermostat settings on your central system.

Lowering thermostat settings from 70 to 65 degrees and using a thermostat-controlled space heater to heat 10 percent of a home's conditioned floor space will save a heat pump user \$67 a year. But the EPA cautions that space heaters are most efficient when used in small spaces for limited periods and can actually waste energy if consumers try to heat too much area with the devices.

There are currently no space heaters among the EPA's list of ENERGY STAR®-rated products. Agency officials said they have evaluated several models but have no plans to include such products in the labeling program in the near future.

Still, high-end space heaters are heavily marketed during the autumn and winter months.

"Most of these units are very similar in design, but the cabinetry or packaging, are major selling points," said Sloboda. "Consumers should consider the wide range of heaters available, and their own taste in features and design before buying one."

An energy expert can help determine if a space heater is right for your home.

"They may suggest other alternatives, like sealing air leaks, adding insulation or tuning up your heating system so it operates more efficiently," said Sloboda. "Those are just a few of the options that won't increase your overall energy use."

Derrill Holly writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives. From growing suburbs to remote farming communities, electric co-ops serve as engines of economic development for 42 million Americans across 56 percent of the nation's landscape.

SMART TIPS

SPACE HEATER SAFETY

Space heaters can be a cost effective option when heating no more than one or two small areas.

-  Review and follow all manufacturer directions.
-  Place them out of high-traffic areas and on a hard, level floor surface.
-  Keep them at least 3 feet away from flammable items.
-  Plug them directly into outlets. Avoid using an extension cord.
-  Turn them off before you leave the room or go to sleep.

Learn more at: [Safe Electricity.org](https://www.SafeElectricity.org)

Tech trend to watch: blockchain

We are living in the age where the pace of innovation and disruption is getting faster and faster. As a result, keeping up with the latest-and-greatest technologies is becoming increasingly difficult, not to mention expensive. It seems that as soon as we upgrade our smartphone, a new model with a bigger screen and cooler features is released.

One word that comes with a lot of hype and confusion is “blockchain.” Because this technology is completely digital, thereby intangible, it’s tough to truly grasp exactly what it is.

Electric cooperatives know that with any new technology, we have to view it from every angle and consider how it will ultimately improve our services. With blockchain, that means recognizing its potential and limitations, both for Illinois’ electric co-ops and the energy industry as a whole. It also means asking whether blockchain truly benefits our consumer-members.

Let’s take a look at how blockchain works.

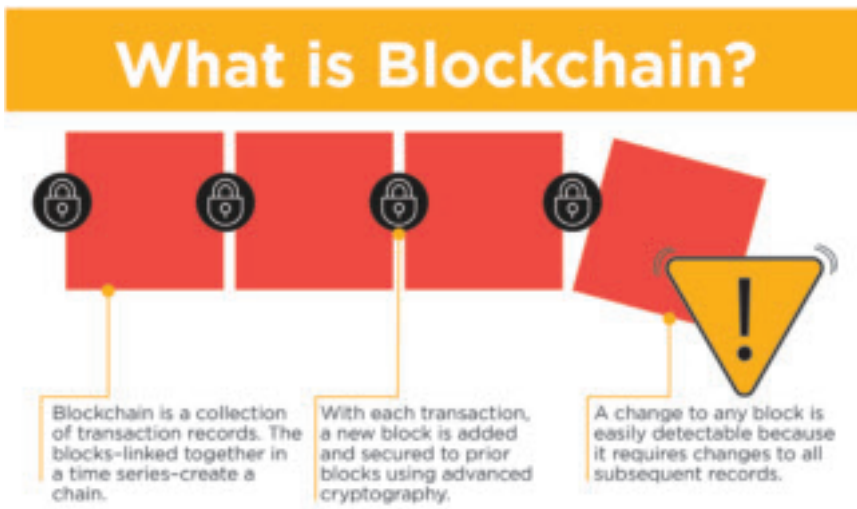
What is blockchain, exactly?

In simplest terms, blockchain is a digital, shared ledger that records transactions between buyers and sellers. The transaction records, or blocks, are linked together in a time series, or chain. When a new transaction is completed, a new block is added to the chain.

Electric co-ops make numerous transactions, such as billing, contracting with vendors and purchasing power on a daily basis, and even though we have secure, well-functioning systems already in place to handle these types of transactions, some see this as a potential application for blockchain and electric utilities.

What makes blockchain unique?

What makes blockchain technology so unique is that when a transaction takes place, it’s recorded on a network



of computers, also known as nodes. The chain is shared and synchronized among all participating nodes in the blockchain network, making it very difficult to alter the chain without the interference being detected.

Another important characteristic of blockchain is that it’s decentral-ized. As noted before, a blockchain is distributed across the systems of all participating parties, rather than residing within a single institution, like a bank. This particular feature is why some consider the technology disruptive. Someone in Arkansas can send money to someone in Japan directly, without needing to go through a third party. This feature makes it transparent and eliminates the need for the trusted third party.


What are some real-life examples and applications of blockchain technology?

Currently, blockchain works best when the product being bought or sold is virtual rather than physical. If the transaction involves a material product, whether it be a new home thermostat or a jumbo jet, some trust agent is usually required to certify that the physical transfer actually takes place.

Eventually this technology may even start to intersect with areas of your life when recordkeeping and

processing requires security, efficiency and connectivity. In the coming years, experts see potential for blockchain technology in the fields of healthcare, supply-chain management, finance and lending, and more. Blockchain could even change the way we prove our identity, as well as issue and maintain birth, wedding and death certificates.

Blockchain, like all software, is a means to an end that will provide different solutions to different needs, and determining its impact starts with understanding what the technology is and how it works.

Time will tell if blockchain proves useful for electric utilities in the future, but for now, we’re viewing this as a technology trend to watch. Our top priority will always be to provide our consumer-members with the safe, reliable and affordable energy they depend on. 

 [Comment on this column](#)

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



Kaley Lockwood writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives.



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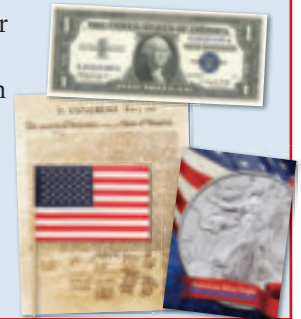
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Illinois Bicentennial

A birthday deserving celebration

By Les O'Dell

The year was 1818. James Monroe was in his first term as the fifth president of the United States. The first Farmers' Almanac had just been published and Silent Night was about to be performed for the very first time. Blue jeans, the telegraph and the electric light had not been invented. John Deere was still almost two decades away from the innovation of the steel plow.

Congress had adopted the Flag Act, designating the nation's banner to consist of 13 stripes alternating red and white and requiring a white star for each state in the union. On Dec. 3, one more star would be necessary as Illinois became the 21st state.

In the 200 years since, the state has become a leader in agriculture, industry and business. It has produced four presidents, countless

inventions and innovations, and has become a center for culture, entertainment and transportation. All told, Illinoisans have had much to celebrate during the state's bicentennial observation throughout the year.

"Illinois is such a diverse state, such an accomplished state, that this 200th birthday gives us some perspective and opportunity to celebrate," explains Alan Lowe, executive director of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield. "I think we all can get wrapped up in daily life, and this has been a chance to step back and realize that this is a great state

with an awesome story and so much potential to do even more in the future."



Lowe is part of the 57-member Illinois Bicentennial Commission, a group of governmental, civic, business and other leaders appointed by Gov. Bruce Rauner to oversee programs and events as part of the bicentennial celebration.

"There has been a huge listing of events and programs all around the state, and the bicentennial has meant many different things for people all across the state," he adds.

Many of the events have been statewide undertakings ranging from

an online poll to select the state's top 200 people, places and things to local events such as historical presentations and restoration projects.

"This has given all of us a chance to be proud of our communities – our broader state community as well as our specific local communities – by celebrating the talented people and the great moments in history that have moved our society forward and have made positive impacts," Dixon Mayor Liandro Arellano, Jr. says. "When you are looking around and you are taking stock of where you live, you want to have pride. This 200th birthday party is an opportunity to do exactly that – to have people become more passionate supporters of their specific region and the state as a whole."

Arellano says the bicentennial really has been a statewide celebration that has touched all areas and aspects of the state.

"This has been a great time to point out to people what's great about Illinois," he continues. "Here's what Chicago has done for the state and for the nation over the years; here's what northern Illinois has done and here's what southern Illinois has done. Here's the presidents we've produced and other people who have changed things."

Brad Cole, executive director of the Illinois Municipal League which represents all 1,298 cities, villages and towns in the state, says communities and residents statewide have worked to make the celebration special.

"It's really been the coming together of everybody throughout the state to focus on good things in their area which has been notable for me," he says. "Maybe a community has just mentioned the bicentennial at their local events or perhaps they've done something special. I think of a penny drive by school children to help purchase an Abraham Lincoln artifact to be contributed to the presidential museum. There have been those types of stories all around where small towns and big cities all

have done what they could to help recognize the anniversary."

Arellano adds that the bicentennial celebration – an obvious "feel good" observation – came at the right time for the state.

"The bicentennial has been an opportunity to let a new generation know and to remind the older generations of some of the great things that maybe we've missed or forgotten about," he explains. "For me, it has been a way to provide a counterpoint to some of the negativity that we've seen over the past few years. We found ourselves in an era in Illinois where there was a lot of financial and political stress, and this was an opportunity to push back and remind people what is great about our state. Yes, we need to tackle Illinois' problems, and they have been very serious, but we shouldn't forget what makes us want to tackle them. It is motivation for keeping our state great. We have lots to be proud of."

For Illinois Supreme Court historian John Lupton, who remembers as a child being in awe that Lincoln practiced law in his hometown of Shelbyville, the bicentennial observation not only has fueled his passion for accounts of the Prairie State, but he says the celebration has served to find common ground.

"The history of Illinois is the history of everything," he points out. "It's family histories, it's social history, economic history, it's agricultural history and more. Illinois has frequently been called a kind of microcosm of the entire country. It's all happened here."

He continues, "There is so much history in Illinois, it's hard to focus on all of it in one year. For me, the big take-away is to keep reading about the state's history and learning more."

Much of the focus during the bicentennial has been on President Abraham Lincoln, arguably the state's most loved native son, but other notable figures have been given their due, especially Presidents Ulysses S. Grant, Ronald Reagan and Barack Obama.

"It's pretty amazing that Illinois has raised four men to the presidency," Lowe explains. "These are not just presidents, they are really consequential presidents. We've been talking about their stories, noting how their background in Illinois helped create the leaders they became."

"I think we all started off looking at President Lincoln," explains Duane Noland, president/CEO of the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives and a former state representative. "People were celebrating their Lincoln connections, but began



to also embrace the connection to their forefathers. No matter where you are in Illinois, you have a history you can embrace and celebrate. The bicentennial is a good time to celebrate those successes and the great things that makes each of our communities what it is as well as to tie those together.”

Public libraries across the state have held special presentations about local and Illinois history, photo contests and art exhibits have highlighted achievements and locales, and even corn mazes throughout the states have been designed with bicentennial themes.

“There have been so many things, it’s almost impossible to summarize or even list everything that’s been going on across the state,” Lowe adds. “There have been folks all over finding different ways to celebrate this big birthday.”

Mayor Arellano says the local celebrations have been both valuable and educational.

“I’ve learned a few things I didn’t know about my own community of Dixon,” he admits. “I’ve discovered things that make me proud, and I think that has been the goal of the entire year: to make us realize why our own community is great and what makes Illinois great. At the same time, one of the biggest positive things coming out of the bicentennial is gaining more of an appreciation for other parts of the state. For example, some who live in the Chicago area don’t necessarily think about downstate Illinois as much, so this has been an opportunity to learn about some of the great things that happened and are happening in other parts of the state and vice versa.”

Arellano adds that the bicentennial has been a way of trying to unite the state.

“We’re really on the same team. We should be celebrating each other. The fun thing for me has been seeing people from different areas of the state instead of amplifying their differences, they are amplifying the unity, and I think that was needed.”

Cole adds that it is a birthday deserving of celebration.

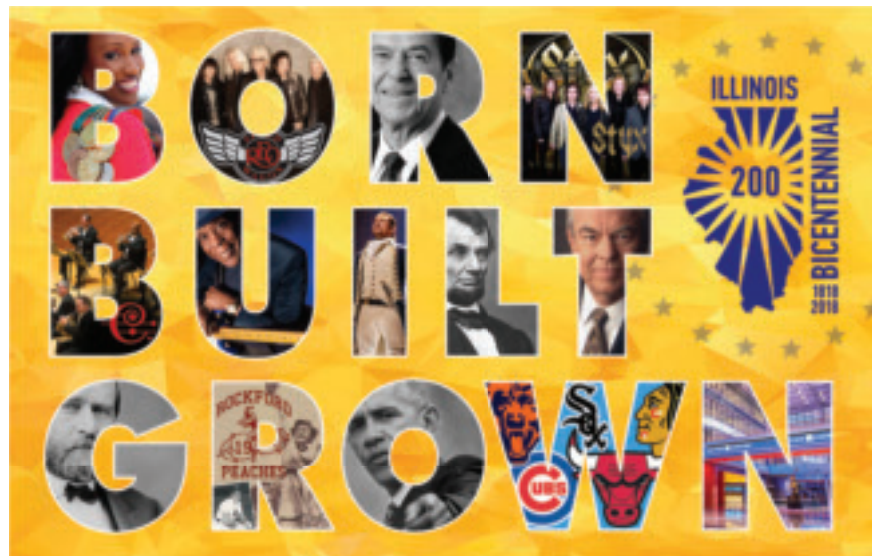
“Two hundred years is a big deal. Our state had quite a celebration for the

centennial, and so 200 years is a great time to reflect on things that are built, born or grown in Illinois. It’s been great to highlight many of the great people, places and things of Illinois whether it’s the arts or humanities, science or industry, and sports or culture,” he says.

Although the Illinois bicentennial observation comes to a close as the calendar turns to 2019, Arellano and

other members of the commission hopes the spirit continues.

“I’m trying to make the bicentennial an opportunity to remind people that we should be recognizing and celebrating a little more regularly,” he urges. “My hope is that we all have found some new knowledge and that we’ve all become a little bit more proud of Illinois.”



Illinois' Top 200

As part of the bicentennial observation, the state’s bicentennial commission and the State Journal-Register newspaper held a series of online polls asking Illinoisans to rank people, places and things from throughout the state’s 200 years. Ten selections will be made in each of 20 categories – the Illinois Top 200. Among them:

Top Musicians:

1. REO Speedwagon (rock band, Champaign)
2. Alison Krauss (bluegrass, Decatur)
3. Nat King Cole (jazz, Chicago)

Top Scientists:

1. Enrico Fermi (nuclear scientist)
2. James Watson (DNA researcher)
3. R. Buckminster Fuller (architect and futurist)

Top Buildings:

1. Wrigley Field (Chicago)
2. Dana-Thomas House (Springfield)
3. Baha’i House of Worship (Wilmette)

Top Businesses:

1. Archer Daniels Midland (Decatur)
2. Deere & Co. (Moline)
3. Caterpillar (Peoria)

Top Inventions and Innovations:

1. John Deere’s Steel Plow (1837)
2. Cellular telephone invented by Motorola (1973)
3. Birth Control Pill (1952)

Top Heartbreaking Moments:

1. Assassination of President Abraham Lincoln
2. Great Chicago Fire of 1871
3. Tri-State Tornado of 1925

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Taste of the Prairie

Lunchtime diners nestle around the fireplace. The table to the far right has view of the Mississippi River. The pub is filled with historic pieces from the former hotel, bicycles and repurposed vintage furniture. The menu is just as eclectic.



St. Nicholas Landmark

By Karen Binder

A first visit to the St. Nicholas Landmark reveals all kinds of surprises.

One of Chester's oldest buildings with history dating back to 1829, the Landmark features the original stonework floor, an antique bicycle that beckons to the founders of the St. Nicholas Brewery, a stained-glass work of a riverboat and lighted case filled with historic flotsam from another era.

Most recently renovated in 2017, the first floor has a large dining room and bar, but it doesn't end there. Go upstairs and discover a second dining room with an amazing view of the mighty Mississippi.

On the weekends, there's downstairs seating either by the stone walls, fireplace or at the bar, or head upstairs to snag one of the tables overlooking the river. Every seat is a good one.

Next comes the beer menu. There are under a dozen selections and if you're not sure, just ask the server what pairs best with the food.

Speaking of the food, it's certainly worthy of a trip – with beer or not. While the regular menu offers an array of sandwiches, appetizers and other expected pub fare, there are menu specials and some menu surprises (think baked olives topped with bleu cheese, bacon-topped Brussels sprouts, an upriver version of a shrimp po' boy sandwich or the king of their burgers, the Southern Delight with its burger topped off with a giant onion ring, pickle slices and a steak knife spearing it all together).

Sunday brunches are another great surprise and tend to fill up the parking lot. It's because diners are lining up to enjoy one of four brunch options: the basic brunch for



The Mississippi River provides a constantly changing view from the historic St. Nicholas Landmark. Originally operated as a hotel, the folks with St. Nicholas Brewery in Du Quoin remodeled the space and opened it last spring as a pub serving its local beer and pub fare.

Baked olives rest in zesty pesto and are topped with bleu cheese.



You cannot be by the river without a fried catfish dinner.



\$9.99, a kid brunch for \$5, a deluxe brunch that includes prime rib for \$15.99, and the bottomless brunch featuring bottomless Bloody Mary's, mimosas and prime rib.

Not to forget the beer, Brewmaster Paul Plett has created four "flagship" beers: 7*11 Blonde Ale, Cadence Porter, Peloton Pale Ale and Scotch Strong Ale. Watch for such seasonal offerings as Barleywine and Belgian White.

Keep in mind that the brewery is in Du Quoin.

If food and drink aren't enough, there's plenty of local history to feast on. The Landmark was built in 1829, allegedly attracting such folks as Mark Twain and Charles Dickens. Over the centuries, the building has been used as a buggy shop, bakery, grocery, candy store and restaurant.

The people behind the St. Nicholas Brewing Co. bought it in 2017, worked on renovations and opened in July 2018.

Tip: Check out their active Facebook page to learn about dinner specials, brewery notes, events and more.

A perfect amount of shrimp crowns this po' boy sandwich.



Just in case it takes more than two hands, a handy steak knife holds together the Southern Delight Burger.



St. Nicholas Landmark

Located:

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Phone:

618-826-7150

Hours:

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Closed Mondays.

Website: www.stnicholasbrewco.com



The thick and thin of it

By *Patty Gillespie*

“That about covers it. So, let me ask you this. How many of you are feeling overwhelmed?” I raised my hand. Oops! Not another hand was in the air.

I was standing next to my husband, the one woman at a well-attended forestry workshop on a December day in the middle of a bottomland field which had been converted from raising row-crops to growing trees about 15 years prior. Beautiful young burr oaks and other *Quercus* species of 3- to 5-inch diameter were plentiful, but so were cottonwood, sycamore, ash, hackberry, autumn olive, etc. The stand of trees was dog-hair thick – the perfect place for talking about thinning!

And, let me tell you, I know about thinning. Thinning as in my husband’s hair? Oh, I would never make such a crack – not me. I’m talking about thinning in terms of the removal of trees detrimental to the growth of valuable trees. I have been working at that task for several years now, my family owning and managing nearly 400 acres of woodlands.

I think of valuable trees as those that provide food and shelter for wildlife or just simply make me want to hug them.

Yes, I like trees, but there are certain woody species I perceive as undesirable, two of which are bush honeysuckle and autumn olive. These two non-native woody species grow rapidly and spread expansively. By foliating or leafing-out early, they cast shade upon the forest floor, thereby preventing woodland wildflowers and saplings from gathering sunlight at the most opportune moment – springtime. If left unchecked, these highly invasive species dominate and create a monoculture. A healthy forest is a place of diversity where sunlight dapples, bluebells blossom, squirrels scamper, box turtles mosey, bobcats pad, wild turkeys roost and orioles nest.

Another nemesis of mine is the fast-growing, ever-encroaching honey



locust; its sole purpose is to puncture my precious skin with its 2-inch needle-sharp thorns.

Prior to the workshop, on a lovely autumn day, I had set out to work on my own bottomland tree planting. Strapped around my waist was Excalibur in its scabbard. I see thriving young trees (oaks, pecans, ash and walnuts). Yet, I’m not about to let my guard down.

Sure enough, eight feet to my right stands a huge multi-stemmed, thorn-laden shrub—autumn olive. Low leaning branches radiate from its several central trunks. I approach, drop and crawl under. I remove my blade from its scabbard and begin sawing, putting the most muscle into the pulling of my thin and narrow 14-inch saw. Back and forth the saw goes, making slow progress through thick trunks. Forty minutes later, I crawl out from under the jumble of severed limbs, grab my herbicide sprayer, coat the stumps, reach back to retrieve my impaled hat, receive yet another scratch and utter a rather unladylike word. Then I wipe the sweat from my brow using the sleeve of my coveralls, walk about 20 feet and spy another.

Please consider the huge amount of effort I just described, and the

constant march of ever-emerging undesirables. Surely, you can see that my admission in front of all those men was not one of wimpiness!

Did you just say, “Duh, use a chainsaw!” Truth be told, I have difficulty pull-starting a chainsaw. Lugging those heavy gas-powered saws is a chore. They emit fumes, and they’re loud.

Sometime after that workshop, there was a battery-powered chainsaw under the Christmas tree, a gift to me from my sweet, perceptive husband. Last weekend, outfitted in chaps, helmet, shield and gloves, I was taught chainsaw safety. “This saw looks small and toy-like, but it is as dangerous as my chainsaw,” my husband said. “Always remember to set the chain brake between cuts.”

Remembering advice from the workshop about considering one’s own goal for the forest when thinning, we discussed which trees to fell. My husband said, “This one is crowding the oak and over-topping it, which will delay the oak’s acorn production. Let’s cut this locust.”

I said, “Oh, yeah, let me do it!” Discerning an appropriate fall zone, I began the cut. Zing. Crash.

Now I raise my hand, but I’m holding the battery-powered chainsaw. ♡

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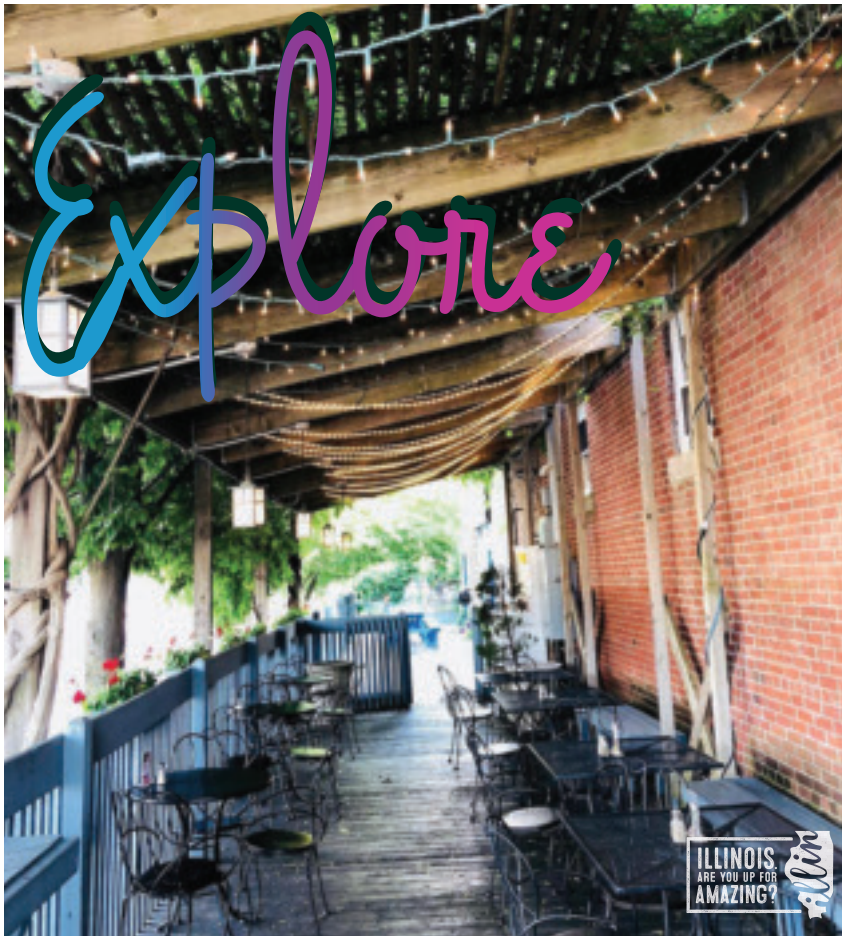
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Winter wonderland

1 Rose Anne Bense

Monroe County Electric Co-Operative
Visiting cardinal on a snowy day

2 MaryJane Boes

Coles-Moultrie Electric Cooperative
Doe in snow at Walnut Point State Park, Oakland, Ill.

3 Becky Litton

EnerStar Electric Cooperative
Pepper checking out the snow.

4 Angela Julian

EnerStar Electric Cooperative
The white horses were the perfect addition to this winter wonderland.

5 Kathleen Hanners

Shelby Electric Cooperative
Frozen rose

6 Lisa Yates

Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative
Early spring in east central Illinois!

**photo descriptions have been edited for clarity and space*

Upcoming themes

February – Reflections

March – Going green

April – On the farm

May – Butterflies and flowers

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Please include high-quality digital files or an original we can scan. When submitting, include details about the photo, artist's name and the co-op name.

If you would like us to return your work, include a self-addressed, stamped envelope. We are not responsible for photos lost in the mail.

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Correction: The woodpecker featured in last month's Snapshots was mislabeled. It was a pileated woodpecker, not a red-headed woodpecker. We apologize for any confusion.





Light up the holiday season *safely.*

Holiday lighting safety tips:

Before hanging holiday lights outside, look out for overhead power lines. Never throw light strands into trees near power lines.

Inspect all the lights you plan on using. Make sure the wires are in good condition—not cracked, brittle, or frayed. The sockets should not be damaged, and no light bulbs should be missing.

Check that all light strands are certified and rated for the conditions in which they'll be used.

Never string more than three strands of lights together unless the packaging says it is safe to do so. Overloaded cords or outlets could start a fire.

Never tack or nail through a strand of lights. Do not place cords under rugs or in high traffic areas.

Lighted and electrical outdoor decorations should be plugged into ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) protected outlets.

Turn holiday lights off before going to sleep or leaving the house. A timer can help you do this.

Get more safety tips at

 Safe
Electricity.org

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Clayville Christmas



WHEN: December 1, 2018 – 10 a.m.-4 p.m.
WHERE: Clayville Historic Site, 12828 Route 125, Pleasant Plains
COST: Donations accepted
CONTACT: www.clayville.org/ or 217-481-4430

Step back in time as you enjoy touring this historic site. The Broadwell Inn, cabins and barns will be decorated for Christmas. Enjoy caroling by school children from 10-11 a.m. along with hot chocolate and cookies. Santa will be in the village all day for photos.



Harrison Bruce Historical Village Christmas Stroll



WHEN: December 2, 2018 – 2-4 p.m.
WHERE: Harrison Bruce Historical Village, 700 Logan College Rd., Carterville
COST: Free
CONTACT: Carla Coppi 618-985-3741 Ext. 8015

Join costumed guides for a Yuletide walk at the third annual Christmas Stroll. See southern Illinois during the 1800s as you visit the rustic charm of the 200-year-old Hunter Cabin and the Victorian grandeur of the Harrison House. Festive music, sweet treats and a visit from St. Nicholas complete the journey. The village is located on the campus of John A. Logan College.



Hugo Kringle Comes to Tot Time



WHEN: December 6, 2018 – 9:30-11 a.m.
WHERE: Dickson Mounds Museum, 10956 N. Dickson Mounds Rd., Lewistown
COST: Free
CONTACT: Dickson Mounds Museum 309-547-3721

Santa's brother, Hugo Kringle, comes to Tot Time to sing songs and share stories about growing up with the boy who became Santa Claus. Tots may enjoy fun crafts to take home. Registration is not required. Participants will enjoy light refreshments. The program portion will last approximately 30 minutes followed by crafts, snacks and time to explore the museum. Older siblings are welcome to participate.



Night of Luminaria and Living Windows



WHEN: December 8, 2018 – 4-9 p.m.
WHERE: Main Street, Galena
COST: Free
CONTACT: Email galena@visitgalena.org or call 815-776-9200

Don't miss one of the most beautiful and romantic visions of the year. Stroll down Main Street and watch more than 30 windows come alive with holiday-inspired animation. From Main Street to the hills overlooking Grant Park, all of Galena will be glowing. More than 5,000 candlelit luminarias will light the streets, steps and sidewalks. Drive, walk, take a trolley or enjoy a carriage ride and be amazed at the sight.



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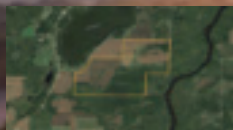
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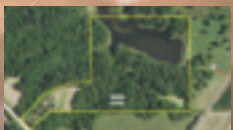
BRADY JENNEMAN

343 ACRES
\$786,919
Rusk County, WI



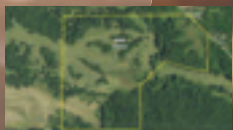
ZACK SISK

31.23 ACRES
\$120,236
Iroquois County, IL



TOBY STAY

50 AC. w/ home
\$859,900
Brown County, IL



DON WAGNER

116 ACRES
\$533,600
Peoria County, IL



TONY SMOTHERMAN

75 ACRES
\$249,900
Hardin County, IL



ADAM FENCIK

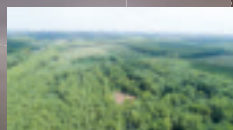
40 ACRES
\$120,000
Williamson County, IL



2/7 Ownership Share of 123 AC

MATT COX

17.57 AC.
\$77,000
Putnam County, IL



MATT COX

235 ACRES
\$805,000
Schuyler County, IL



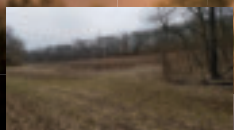
LT TAYLOR

220 AC. w/ home
\$1,144,000
Carroll County, IL



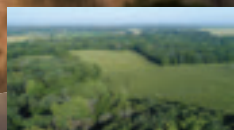
LT TAYLOR

102 AC. w/ lodge
\$2,900,000
Whiteside County, IL



GEORGE CHANDLER

150 ACRES
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152 ACRES
\$998,000
Bureau County, IL



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\$241,153
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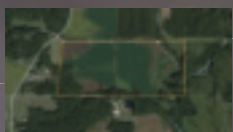
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