

JANUARY 2019

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NEWS

# Eye Doctor Helps Illinois Legally Blind To See

*High Technology For Low Vision Patients Allows Many To Drive Again*



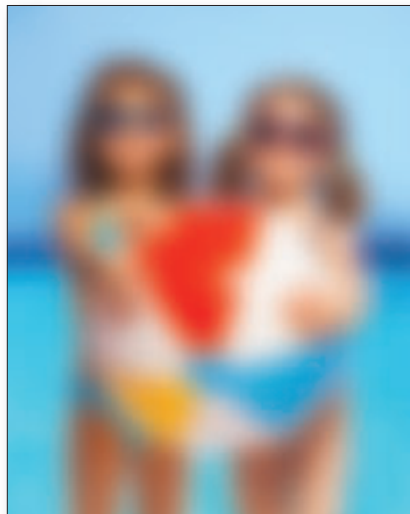
**F**or many patients with macular degeneration and other vision-related conditions, the loss of central visual detail also signals the end to one of the last bastions of independence: driving. A Mascoutah optometrist, Dr. Marianne McDaniel, is using miniaturized telescopes that are mounted in glasses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

[www.lowvisionofsouthil.com](http://www.lowvisionofsouthil.com)

**1-802-350-6599**

Office located in Mascoutah, Illinois  
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# Illinois Country Living

JANUARY 2019

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## 22 Journey to better health from the inside out

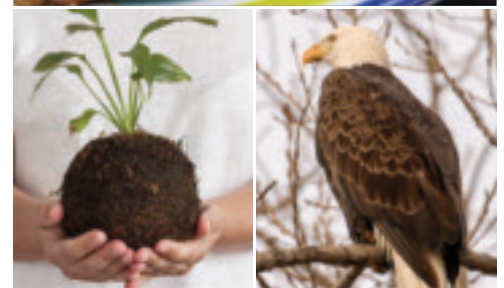
If you've ever been to a doctor, you know one of the first questions is about the amount of exercise you do on a weekly basis. Exercise isn't just for losing weight but also plays a large part in mental and physical health.

## 27 Green acres – Farm fresh and family owned

Vegetable farming, in the form of community-supported agriculture, becomes a way to help support a family and give back to the local community.

## 30 The original Burger King

This month **PRAIRIE TABLE** visits the original **Burger King** in Mattoon. The popular burger joint has been serving up the original since 1954 and was part of a 1968 landmark trademark case against the national franchise.



## DEPARTMENTS

### 4 FIRST THOUGHTS

#### The true colors of leadership

Achieve your full potential by examining the number of colors you use.

### 6 CURRENTS

#### This month's highlights

News/Legislation/Trends/Tips

### 14 ENERGY SOLUTIONS

#### Keeping the home fires affordable

Heating system upgrades have a big effect on comfort and your pocketbook for years to come.

### 16 POWERED UP

#### Cyber basics

Personal data is valuable. Know how to keep your personal information private.

### 18 SAFETY CHECK

#### Cheap electronic chargers spell trouble

Stay safe by resisting the urge to buy inexpensive chargers.

### 20 GARDENWISE

#### Kokedama string gardens

These creative Japanese planters can make a distinctive display piece in your home or office.

### 32 FINEST COOKING

#### The other white meat

Prepare delicious, low fat recipes from pork which is naturally high in protein and flavorful.

### 34 GREAT OUTDOORS

#### America's national bird

January is the perfect time for sightings of the majestic bald eagle along the Mississippi and Illinois rivers.

### 38 SNAPSHOTS

#### On the wild side

Readers go on the hunt to find the best shots of Illinois wildlife.

# The true colors of leadership

**MANY YEARS AGO,** WHEN I was in grade school, I used to love the week before school started. My mother would take me and my sister to purchase school supplies.

I remember asking my mother to purchase the big 64 Crayola box with the sharpener on the side of the box. The interesting phenomenon about this box of Crayolas was it contained 64 different colors of crayons but, in reality, you only used about six or seven colors.



Dr. Edward Piatt, Ed.D., is a retired manager from the state of Illinois with 32 years of frontline leadership experience. He is an adjunct professor of business at Olivet Nazarene University. Contact him at [epiatt@olivet.edu](mailto:epiatt@olivet.edu).

Your favorite colors dwindled down, and you tried to make them last by sharpening your favorite crayons while there remained many unused colors. The significance of this story will make sense shortly.

Recently, I was working out with a friend and we usually have a philosophical discussion between workouts regarding the salient topics of the day. This day was no different.

I was waxing eloquently about people not achieving their purpose and remaining in a state of mediocrity. My friend looked at me quizzically saying, "Ed, maybe they are using all of their three colors, and you are accustomed to using multiple colors."

His simplicity of this analysis was brilliant. Most people only are concerned with a certain finite number of colors in their ideological coloring box.

In a sense, these individuals don't know, or even necessarily care, what they don't know. Therefore, dissension occurs when we try to engage, motivate, cajole or illuminate others to start using other colors in their respective coloring boxes.

Often, frustration ensues when other people lack the understanding of what we are trying to accomplish. We think it's rather intuitive to offer new ways to use the figuratively unused Crayolas and the other person might not comprehend the need to expand their repertoire.

To understand this phenomenon, I came across an interesting article titled, "Leadership Is About Enabling the Full Potential in Others" penned by Glenn Llopis. I would like to highlight Llopis' significant points on how to add to your leadership domain.

Llopis stated, "The 21st-century leader must have the ability to make the most out of every

situation. They are courageous and not afraid to challenge the status quo and push the boundaries to make things better. Because of these qualities and many others, the best leaders know how to get the most out of people; they enable the full potential in others."

Llopis asserted, "Success as a leader is a by-product of the leaders and mentors we associate with throughout our careers."

Therefore, it's incumbent we mentor and associate with others to move them to new levels of excellence and success. In a sense, we are modeling the way for others to utilize other colors in their box of Crayolas.

Here are just a few things leaders do to enable an employee's full potential, said Llopis:

- Encourage them to think and act in ways that come most naturally to them.
- Develop their decision-making abilities.
- Expand their performance threshold. Llopis argued great leaders keep close tabs on how much each employee can handle.
- Enabling their full potential means working on the areas that require further development.
- Strengthen potential by surrounding it with those even stronger. Leaders must surround potential with stronger and complementary pieces.

Paradoxically, most of us are comfortable with our own limited use of Crayolas. In our mind, we think we are successful and tune out the need to use other crayons.

The real issue emanates in our ability to see beyond our limited thinking and engage our potential. You might find in the end, by utilizing all the colors in your figurative Crayola box, your tapestry of colors expands geometrically, and beautiful unforeseen art emerges. 💡



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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## JANUARY CHECKLIST



### Replace your furnace filter.

It should be changed a minimum of every

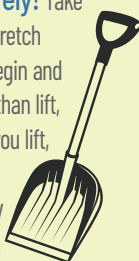
three months. Some filter styles need to be replaced even more often, especially if you've got pets in the house.

### Take precautions outdoors.

Wear appropriate outdoor clothing and work slowly when doing outdoor chores. Take a buddy and an emergency kit when you are participating in outdoor recreation and don't forget your cell phone. **Source: cdc.gov**

### Shovel safely!

Take it slow and stretch before you begin and push, rather than lift, the snow. If you lift, use a small shovel or only partially fill it.



### Tip of the month: Use wool dryer balls to save energy with every load of laundry.

As they tumble with your clothes, the balls help separate clothing in the cycle, providing better airflow and a shorter drying time, and they absorb moisture, which also reduces drying time. **Source: energy.gov**



## Illinois Country Living has a new look

The start of a new year brings a new look to Illinois Country Living magazine. As consumer-members of an electric cooperative, the majority of our readers receive the magazine as one of many member benefits.

We are always looking for interesting people, places and things that make rural Illinois unique. We hope you like the new look and welcome your comments at [info@icl.coop](mailto:info@icl.coop).



## Post-election priorities for America's electric cooperatives

With the midterm elections in the rearview mirror, Illinois' electric cooperatives are looking ahead at the impact and opportunities for rural America and electric cooperatives.

Electric co-ops across the nation played an active role in the midterm election and worked to get to know each candidate running for federal office. This was particularly important since more than 60 members of Congress decided to retire or run for another office.

Through Co-ops Vote, a nonpartisan political engagement effort led by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, more than 100 candidates attended electric cooperative functions or met with co-op staff.

There are several opportunities for our elected leaders to find common ground and advance legislation to benefit our communities.

Improving our nation's aging infrastructure is a great place to start. Congress and the White House should explore an infrastructure package that benefits all Americans, especially those at risk of being left behind in rural America. This investment in critical infrastructure needs to go beyond roads and bridges. Congress should leverage an infrastructure package to help maintain and modernize the electric grid and connect rural communities to the modern economy.

The new Congress also presents an opportunity to expand access to high-speed internet service in rural communities. According to the FCC, 23 million rural Americans lack access to broadband internet—most of them are members of an electric co-op. Several electric cooperatives

are working to close the digital divide by bringing broadband to their communities.

Despite that progress, an expanded combination of grants and loans is necessary to continue providing rural communities with the wherewithal for education, telemedicine and a 21st century economy. Everyone—the Trump administration and both Democrats and Republicans in Congress—agrees on the need to bolster rural broadband.

**As we continue getting to know our new elected officials, your cooperative will continue advocating for policies that protect local business interests and advance the quality of life in Illinois.**

A third area of possible bipartisan agreement lies in the need to produce a new farm bill. The farm bill, which authorizes numerous rural economic development programs, traditionally has enjoyed bipartisan support in Congress. Although the House and Senate have passed very different versions of a farm bill this year, we're hopeful that lawmakers can come to an agreement on a compromise bill that promotes rural economic development and protects Rural Utilities Service electric loan funding on which electric co-ops depend.

Electric cooperatives are engines of economic development and we are proud to continue working toward a brighter and more prosperous rural America. **Source: NRECA**



## What's in it for me?

You may think attending your co-op's annual meeting has no benefit, however Illinois' electric cooperatives exist to provide safe, reliable and affordable energy to its consumer-members (that's you!). Cooperatives enrich the lives of their members and serve the long-term interests of the local community. So, what's in it for you?



**Your annual meeting gives you the chance to catch up with old friends and maybe make some new ones. When is your co-op's annual meeting?**

- As a member of the community, your perspective is valuable. Share it with your co-op to better inform their decisions for the future.
- Annual meeting is the time to vote for new board members to represent you. Board members are local consumers and members of the community, just like you.
- The health of your co-op and the well-being of your community are closely intertwined.
- Your dollars are reinvested locally into improvements that impact the reliability and affordability of your energy. 💡

## Beware of scammers pretending to be from Social Security

Always be cautious and avoid providing sensitive information such as your Social Security Number (SSN) or bank account information to unknown individuals over the phone or internet. If you receive a call and aren't expecting one, you must be extra careful. You can always get the caller's information, hang up, and — if you do need

more clarification — contact the official phone number of the business or agency that the caller claims to represent. Never reveal personal data to a stranger who calls.

Please take note; there's a scam going around right now. You might receive a call from someone claiming to be from Social Security or another agency. Your caller ID may even display Social Security's national customer service number, 1-800-772-1213. In some cases, the caller states that Social Security does not have all of your personal information, such as your SSN, on file. Other callers claim Social Security needs additional information so it can increase your benefit payment or that Social Security will terminate your benefits if they do not confirm your information. This appears to be a widespread issue as reports have come from people across the country. These calls are not from Social Security.

Callers sometimes state that your SSN is at risk of being deactivated or deleted. The caller then asks you to provide a phone number to resolve the issue. People should be aware the scheme's details may vary; however, you should avoid engaging with the caller or calling the number provided as the caller might attempt to acquire personal information.

Social Security employees will never threaten you or promise a Social Security benefit approval or increase in exchange for information. In those cases, the call is fraudulent, and you should just hang up. If you receive these calls, please report the information to the Office of the Inspector General at 1-800-269-0271 or online at [oig.ssa.gov/report](http://oig.ssa.gov/report).

Remember, only call official phone numbers and use secured websites of the agencies and businesses you know are correct. Protecting your information is an important part of Social Security's mission to secure today and tomorrow. 💡



## Illinois K-12 high-speed internet connectivity rises to 96 percent

Ninety-six percent of K-12 school districts in Illinois can now access the internet at speeds of 100 kbps per student, 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. 💡



## Kids and socializing online

Social networking sites, chat rooms, virtual worlds and blogs are how teens and tweens socialize online; it's important to help your child learn how to navigate these spaces safely. Among the pitfalls that come with online socializing are sharing too much information or posting comments, photos, or videos that can damage a reputation or hurt someone's feelings.

The Federal Trade Commission suggests parents remind kids that online actions have consequences. The words they write or images they post have consequences offline.

- Kids should post only what they're comfortable with others seeing.
- Remind kids that once they post it, they can't take it back.
- Tell them not to impersonate someone else.
- Help them understand what information should stay private.
- Politeness counts, teach them to be courteous online and off.
- Teach them to trust their gut if they feel threatened or uncomfortable because of something online.

Get to know the social networking sites your kids use, and you may want to search the social sites they use to see what information they're posting.💡

Source: Federal Trade Commission

## An outlet for energy savings

Does the ebb and flow of your energy bill have you searching for an affordable way to reduce or better control your use? If you answered yes, then look no further because we're taking a quick dive into a practical and affordable device that allows you to better manage your home's energy use. We're talking about energy-saving outlets!

These next-generation devices afford the same surge protection as their predecessors, but also tie in the "smart" functionality of an internet-connected device.

There are several different kinds of energy-saving outlets available, but there are two factors you should consider. First is size; there are many different sizes ranging from a single external outlet to a power strip with multiple sockets. The second thing you'll want to consider is Wi-Fi connectivity; internet-connected outlets, commonly known as smart plugs, may enable you to fully realize the potential of these energy savings. This is because you'll have greater remote control of the outlet through your smart phone, tablet or home assistant.

You'll also want to consider where you'll be using the energy-saving outlet and what you'll be using it for.



ThinkEco also offers smart, energy-saving outlets. Shown here is the modlet (or modern outlet), which can be controlled remotely and even adjust to your personal schedule

With smart plugs or smart power strips, a few clicks and swipes on your smart phone will enable you to fully shut down the electrical currents to your high-powered devices to prevent them from consuming electricity even when switched off. Several devices found inside your home are commonly referred to as "parasitic loads," or "energy vampires." In fact, most entertainment systems consist of several parasitic loads, such as televisions, DVD players and video gaming consoles. These outlets can potentially curb these loads,

CONTINUES ON PAGE 10

affordable ways to  
**LOWER HEATING COSTS**  
and keep you warm

### Cut Heating Costs This Winter

- Cut up to a fifth of your bill by sealing exterior wall air leaks and drafts.
- If there are leaks or holes in your ducts, use sealant or metal tape. Air leaks in ducts can account for about 20 to 30 percent of wasted heat.
- Lower the temperature while sleeping or away. A programmable thermostat can save up to 15 percent.
- Water heaters account for nearly a fifth of heating bills. Set yours to no more than 120 degrees F.
- Use a space heater to help warm a room and keep the home setting lower. A 1 degree reduction can save 3 percent on the bill.
- Open drapes on sunny days and change the furnace filter monthly.

Learn more at [EfficiencyResource.org](http://EfficiencyResource.org)



# Stay Safer & More Independent with a Jacuzzi® Luxury Walk-In Bathtub

**SAVE \$1,500**

on your NEW Walk-In Tub  
with ONE DAY installation



Low Entry Step

The safety features of the Jacuzzi® Walk-In Bathtub help with mobility in and out of the tub, and also help you feel more secure and independent when bathing at home.

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- ✓ **NEW!** Relaxing Bubble Foot Massage
- ✓ **NEW!** Heated back and seat for more comfort and relief
- ✓ **PLUS!** Installation in as little as one day available!

**NEW!**



## Epsom Salt Compatible

Now enjoy the relaxing health benefits of Epsom salt in your tub without the worry of rust or damage to your tub's components.

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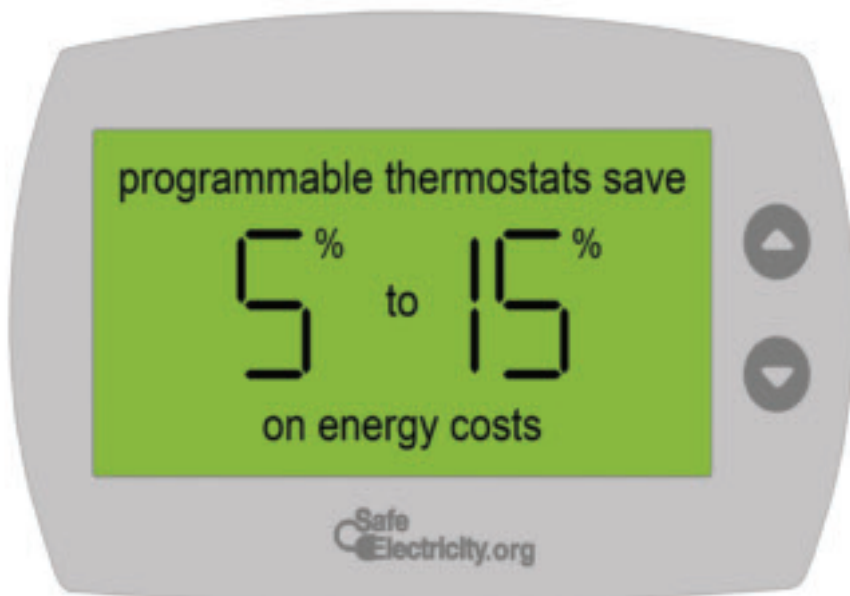
**The NEW Gold Standard  
of Walk-In Bathtubs**



## CURRENTS

which can cost the average household an extra \$200 per year.

In addition to preventing unnecessary energy consumption, these energy-saving outlets are affordable for most folks who are looking to trim their use. The average smart outlet costs around \$10 to \$20 on Amazon.com and has the potential to pay for itself within two years or less depending on how often you use it.



research collected from the U.S. Department of Energy

Convenience is also a major factor to consider when thinking about your next efficiency upgrade. Smart plugs typically come with simple instructions to download an accompanying app on your smart phone and then connect the plug to your home's Wi-Fi. The convenience in being able to turn the device on and off using your phone cannot be understated. Advanced smart plugs and smart plug apps also have the ability to automate the use with your schedule and even your presence in the home.

You can also have large-load devices turn off or on at set times when you're ready to use them. If you want to use your television, for example, at a time that's outside of the pre-set hours, you can easily switch the device on through the smart phone app. Through automation, you're able to power down these energy-intensive devices and prevent unnecessary energy use.

For folks who are looking to optimize their energy use and eliminate vampire loads, smart plugs may be your best option. For others who want more of a hands-off option to save additional dollars, energy-saving outlets and power strips without the Wi-Fi connection may be a better choice. 💡

• Source: Kaley Lockwood, NRECA

An infographic titled "WINTER DRIVING KNOW BEFORE YOU GO" in large, bold, yellow letters. The background is dark blue with white dashed lines. There are four main sections with tips: 1. "Check road conditions." with a target icon and text: "Call 511 or visit your state's DOT webpage to check on road conditions. Choose a different route or adjust your travel plans if road conditions are poor." 2. "Pack an emergency supply kit." with a car icon and text: "Stock your vehicle with a mobile phone, charger, batteries, blankets, flashlight, first-aid kit, high-calorie, non-perishable food, candle to melt snow for drinking water, sack of sand or cat litter for traction, shovel, scraper, and battery booster cables." 3. "Get the weather forecast." with a house icon and text: "Change your travel plans if hazardous weather is expected." 4. "Ready your vehicle." with a car icon and text: "Check your battery, wipers, coolant, and other systems affected by cold temperature. Make sure your tires have good tread. Clear snow, ice or dirt from your windows, lights and camera." The NRECA logo is in the bottom left corner.





# What Kind of Hearing Aids Do Doctors Use?

The same ones they recommend to their patients!

Doctors love MDHearingAids® for the same reasons patients do. These FDA-registered, medical-grade hearing aids have the same high-tech features found in more expensive hearing aids yet cost one-fifth the price.

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"MDHearingAids are better than expensive clinic hearing aids, which cost thousands more," says retired physician Dr. Robert A.

"I have had five pairs of expensive hearing aids and MDHearingAids are just as good," adds retired neurosurgeon Dr. Brian L.

### So Strong Even Doctors Can't Break Them

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*"My MDHearingAids went through a complete washer and dryer cycle. I placed them on my ears and – ay caramba! – they were working fine! Can you believe that I did it again? I found them at the bottom of the washer... still working!"*

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Tiny Price.**

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## LET'S GO!

Would you like to see your event in the magazine?

Go to [www.icl.coop/datebook](http://www.icl.coop/datebook), click the green box "post your event" and fill out your information. Don't forget to click submit. Datebook events are chosen from those on the website calendar.



### Bald Eagle Days at Pere Marquette State Park

DECEMBER 28 - MARCH 8

Follow along with a site interpreter and see majestic American Bald Eagles out in the wild. The interpreter will present an informative program about eagles and visitors will learn to distinguish between immature and mature bald eagles, what they eat, and why they spend winter months in the area. Reservations are required. All programs begin at 8:30 a.m. in the visitor's center. Dress warmly and have a full tank of gas.

Dec. 28, 2018-March 8, 2019; 8:30 a.m.-2 p.m.

- Pere Marquette State Park, 13112 Visitor Center Lane, Grafton  
Admission is free, but reservations are required.  
Call 618-786-3323  
<http://greatriverroad.com/Pere/eventsPere.htm>

### Illini Farm Toy Show and Auction

JANUARY 4-5

The Champaign and Vermilion County Farm Bureau Young Leaders are hosting this show with a variety of farm toy vendors and collectible items. Featured items will be available at a live consignment auction on Sat., Jan. 5 at 10:30 a.m. Also available is hands-on agricultural play time and kid's scavenger hunts.

Jan. 4-5, 2019, Fri. 4-8 p.m.,  
Sat. 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

Wyndham Garden Hotel,

- 1001 W. Killarney St., Urbana  
Adults \$3, Kids (6-12) \$2, Under 6 free  
Search for Illini Farm Toy Show and Auction on Facebook



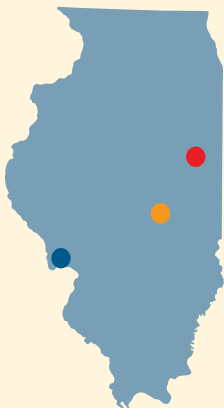
### 9th Annual Candle Light Walk

JANUARY 19

The General Dacey Trail will be lit with 500 luminarias to light the 2.5-mile trail. More than 150 will be hanging in the trees. Hot chocolate and hot cider can be found near the huge bon fire. You will also find a six-foot luminary you can autograph. See you on the trail!

Jan. 19, 2019, 6-8 p.m.

- General Dacey Trail, Forest Park, Shelbyville  
Free admission  
[www.daceytrail.org/news-events/](http://www.daceytrail.org/news-events/)







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# Keeping the home fires affordable: home heating options

By Pat Keegan and Brad Thiessen

Dear Pat: I have high energy bills, especially during the winter. My home is heated with a 20-year-old propane furnace. To make matters worse, I've also been paying the expenses on my mother's home, which is heated with electric baseboards and wall heaters. Should I upgrade to a different kind of system? – Ryan

**DEAR RYAN: YOU'RE**

**REALLY** getting the double whammy, especially if you live in a cold climate. Fortunately, you have a few potential solutions.

**A good first step, before making major changes to the heating system, is to look at the area you are heating.** The amount of heated space and the efficiency of that space determine how large of a heating system you'll need. Air leaks and inadequate insulation might be a major cause of higher bills, and correcting these problems might

enable you to install a smaller heating system.

An energy audit will provide the answers you need and give you an idea of how much you can save from weatherization measures and a more efficient heating system. Contact your local electric cooperative first to see if they offer energy audits or if they can recommend an auditor.

**Let's talk about heating systems.** Propane furnaces are expected to

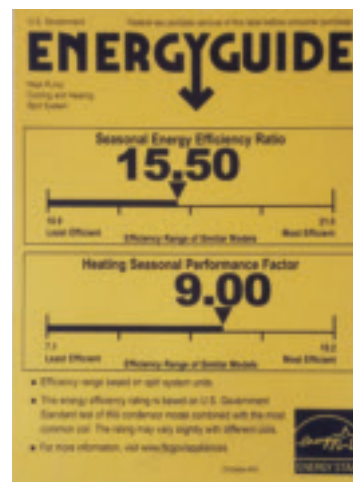
last 15 to 25 years, but if yours has been well-maintained, you may get more mileage out of it. Even if your furnace is still running well and has some life left in it, it may not be efficient. Propane, gas and oil furnace efficiency is measured by the Average Fuel Utilization Efficiency (AFUE). This is indicated on a label which may still be attached to the furnace.

Your 20-year-old unit might have an AFUE in the 70 to 80 percent range. A new high-efficiency furnace can have an AFUE rating of over 95 percent, which can reduce the portion of your propane bill that goes toward heating by 15 to 20 percent. The AFUE doesn't account for any heat escaping through poorly-insulated or improperly-sealed pipes or furnace ducts, so you definitely want those issues taken care of first.

**Instead of replacing your old propane furnace with a new one, you have two additional options.** You could install an air source heat pump, which would use your existing duct work, or a mini-split heat pump, which can heat up to four rooms. In the past decade, the efficiency of heat pumps has greatly improved, even to the point where they are solid options even in colder climates.

**It's not surprising that your mother's electric bill is high.** This is common for inefficient homes that rely on resistance heat using wall heaters, portable heaters or baseboard heaters.

Your mother's home probably doesn't have ductwork, which makes the installation of a central heat pump very expensive. Instead, I suggest getting a quote on a ductless



Energy Guide Labels can be found on any major appliance and include information on energy efficiency. The heat pump described here is ENERGY STAR® approved.

mini-split heat pump. They are efficient for heating and cooling, so if your mother uses a window A/C unit (or two), she can save even more money. Mini-splits are usually installed to heat and cool the largest, most used area of a home.

Your mother can continue to use baseboard heaters in the rooms she doesn't use as often. As efficient as the mini-splits are, they might not provide enough heat in a prolonged, extreme cold snap, so leaving a few baseboard heaters connected is a good idea.

**Heating system upgrades have a big effect on comfort and the pocketbook for many years.** Scheduling an energy audit and considering all your options gives you the best chance at making the right decisions. Good luck and stay warm! ☺

For more information on managing a home renovation contractor, please visit: [collaborativeefficiency.com/energytips](http://collaborativeefficiency.com/energytips).



Mini-split heat pumps are efficient options for heating and cooling. They are typically installed to heat and cool the largest, most used area of a home.

This column was co-written by Pat Keegan and Brad Thiessen of Collaborative Efficiency.



Nominate a mother for

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Country Living

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*Nancy Agney, 2017 recipient from  
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**Rules:** *The contest is open to any mother served by an Illinois electric cooperative. No purchase is necessary. The winner will be selected by committee and featured in the May edition of Illinois Country Living magazine. All nomination letters submitted will be published on Illinois Country Living's website at [icl.coop](http://icl.coop).*

Her name

Address

City

State

Zip

In which Illinois electric cooperative territory she resides

Organizations to which she belongs

Person nominating her

Relationship to the nominee

Your phone number with area code

Nominee's phone number with area code *(we would contact her only if she wins)*

### DEADLINE TO SUBMIT:

Entries must be emailed or postmarked by March 1, 2019

Colten Bradford, Illinois Country Living • P.O. Box 3787, Springfield, IL 62708-3787 • [cbradford@aiec.coop](mailto:cbradford@aiec.coop)

# Be cyber safe, not sorry

Make it a resolution to protect your data online with cyber security basics

**WE LIVE IN A** time when data is valuable. Names, addresses, dates of birth, social security numbers, credit card numbers and general information about an individual are all valuable. It is imperative that we protect this information. I would

or more characters consisting of upper- and lowercase letters, numbers, and a special character are fairly secure but can be hard to remember. If you find yourself just adding an exclamation point or a consecutive number every time

There are several themes or consistencies with scams and malicious emails. Fraudulent emails are from unknown senders and are about something that hasn't been communicated prior to receiving the email. They are often poorly written and tend to have a sense of urgency.

Sometimes the bad guys make it look like it is from someone we know, but if you look closely, the email address is off by only one character. If you are not expecting an email from someone, then it is more than likely fraud. If you are unsure, call the other party and verify the email. I guarantee the amount of time to verify its legitimacy is much less than the time to remediate a compromised account. Don't forget your IT department. Trust me, they will happily confirm if an email is fraudulent or not.

## Internet browsing

Everyone does it. You start to browse the web for something and before you know it, you're off on some tangent. Be aware of where you are online and what might be malicious. If you have found yourself at a store at 11 p.m., I bet you have a heightened sense of awareness when walking to your car. The same applies to the internet. Be aware of your surroundings. When browsing an unfamiliar website or clicking a link that invokes popups telling you to "click here" because of a virus or because you have won \$1 million, IT'S A SCAM!

As we bring in the new year, don't forget your information and privacy are valuable, and it is worth taking extra time to be cautious. I wish you the best as we begin an exciting new year! 🍀



like to remind you of a few things that can protect you and keep your data from being compromised.

## Passwords

A password is the first line of defense. Unfortunately, due to the increase of online transactions, subscriptions and overall use of the internet, we have become numb to the number of passwords that need to be maintained. You know it is important to have a secure password, but is your password really secure? Do you only change one character when the time comes to change it?

Complex passwords of eight

you change it, you may want to consider a pass phrase consisting of more than 15 characters. For instance, the pass phrase "whenth esuncomesoutit'stimetoplay" is a very secure password. According to howsecureismypassword.net, it would take 695 octillion years to crack. That's a REALLY long time!

## Email

Almost everyone uses email for communication, making it an easy target for social engineering. Our daily work lives revolve around email, so it is easy to get duped into clicking a link or attachment if we are not paying attention.



Comment on this column Visit [icl.coop](http://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.



# Survival of the Sharpest

When it's you against nature, there's only one tool you need:  
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That first crack of thunder sounded like a bomb just fell on Ramshorn Peak. Black clouds rolled in and the wind shook the trees. I had ventured off the trail on my own, gambled with the weather and now I was trapped in the forest. Miles from camp. Surrounded by wilderness and watching eyes. I knew that if I was going to make it through the night I needed to find shelter and build a fire... fast. As the first raindrops fell, I reached for my **Stag Hunter Knife**.

Forget about smartphones and GPS, because when it comes to taking on Mother Nature, there's only one tool you really need. Our stunning **Stag Hunter** is the ultimate sidekick for surviving and thriving in the great outdoors. Priced at \$149, the **Stag Hunter** can be yours today for an unbelievable **\$49!** Call now and we'll include a bonus leather sheath!

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— J., La Crescent, MN



*"The feel of this knife is unbelievable...this an incredibly fine instrument."*

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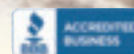
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Rating of A+



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## Cheap electronic chargers spell trouble

**THE CHARGERS THAT CAME** with our phone, digital camera or other electronics seem to disappear as often as a sock mate sometimes.

As a solution, many people reach for the low-cost, generic plug-in USB chargers and charging cables found in the sea of impulse items that flank the check-out line at your favorite drug, convenience or big-box store. They're also popular items on numerous online shopping sites and cheaper than dishing out money to replace them with their original maker's versions.

It can save money and it's so convenient, you rationalize. Without much more thought, in the virtual cart or on the counter it goes.

Inexpensive charging components may be one area you don't want to cut corners on for a variety of reasons. Amazon recalled 26,000 AmazonBasics portable lithium-ion battery chargers and power banks after the massive online retailer learned the units can overheat and ignite, causing fire and burn hazards. According to the U.S. Consumer Safety Product Commission, the products were sold between December 2014 and July 2017.

Along with being a potential fire hazard, using cheaply made charging components and devices can also cause electrocution. Dangers aside, they may cost you more in the long run since they can cause

damage to whatever is on the other end of the cable.

To keep safe around electrical devices and charging gear, Safe Electricity recommends the following:

- Do not leave items that are charging unattended.
- Always keep charging items away from flammable objects, especially bedding, and do not take them to bed with you. Tell kids and teens to NEVER place any charging device under their pillow. The heat generated cannot dissipate and the charger will become hotter and hotter, according to the Newton, N.H. Fire Department. This could lead to the pillow or bed catching fire.
- Do not touch charging electronic devices with wet hands or while standing in water.
- Make sure charging components are certified by a reputable third-party testing laboratory.
- Only buy product-approved chargers and cables (those made or certified by the manufacturer). Using cheaper devices can cause damage to the USB charge chip. Although it's tempting to save money, this can have a lasting impact on how quickly and effectively your device charges in the future.

The bottom line is: Don't buy charging equipment with prices that seem too good to be true or from companies you've never heard of. And even if you've heard of the company, be leery of fakes. In 2016, Apple sued a company that sold counterfeit wall chargers with Apple's name on them for less than \$10 each.

Say yes to the Milky Way in the check-out line or to the online Kindle book and no to cheap chargers. ⚡



### TIPS TO SAFELY CHARGE YOUR ELECTRONICS



Don't buy cheaply made, off-brand charging cubes and cables. They can be **potential fire hazards**, cause electrocution, or damage the device.



Throw away charger blocks and cords that are worn or damaged and **make sure they are not hot** when charging devices.

**NOT IN BED**

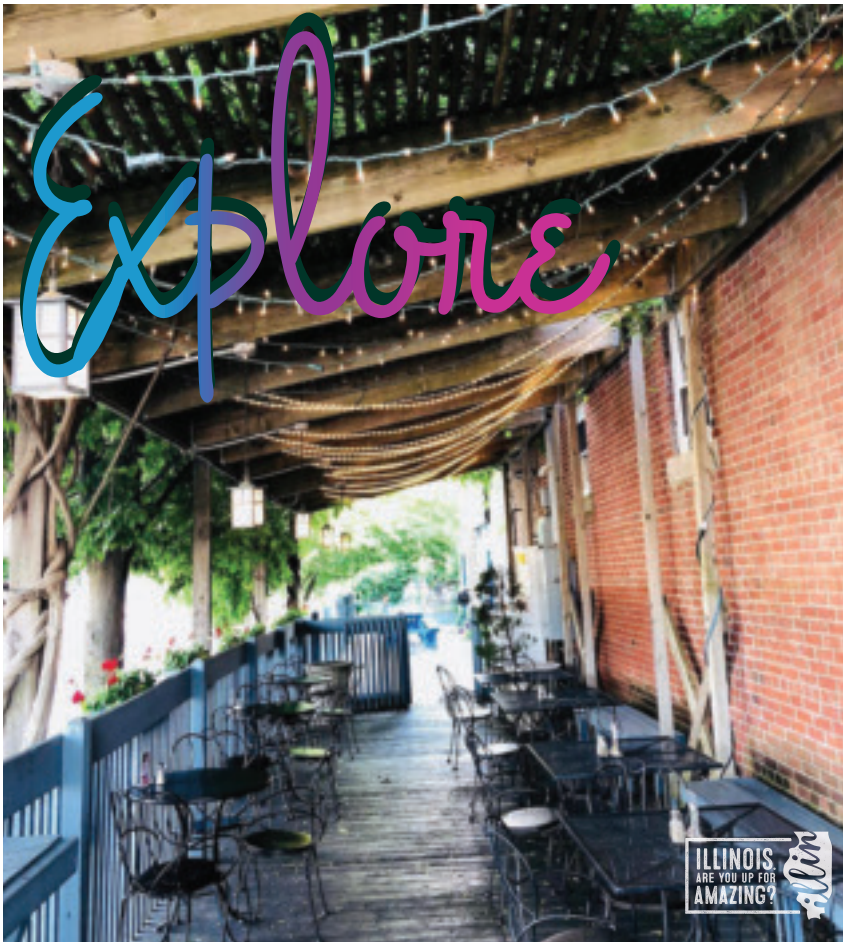
Only charge devices on a **hard, flat, noncombustible surface** to allow for adequate ventilation.



**Do not touch** any electronic devices that are charging **when you are wet** or standing in water.

Learn more at 





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## Kokedama string gardens

Instead of growing plants in pots, try this creative technique.

**GET CREATIVE WITH YOUR** houseplant displays this winter and try hanging a few plants in the window to create a string garden. The term string gardening has become attached to a style of Japanese bonsai known as kokedama, which literally means “moss ball” in English.

Instead of growing plants in a traditional container, the root ball is replaced with a special soil and wrapped in moss and string. These living planters can make a distinctive display piece in your home as they can be hung, fixed to a piece of driftwood or bark, or nestled into a container or tray.

Here are the supplies and tools needed to create your own kokedama at home:

- Lightweight potting mix or peat moss
- Akadama bonsai soil or clay-based cat litter
- Sheet moss or Spanish moss
- 4-5" container plant
- Water
- Scissors
- String
- Gloves
- Bucket - to mix in
- Newspaper or a tarp - to protect your work surface

### How to make a kokedama

1. Moisten the moss, if it is the dried variety, by soaking in a bucket of water for an hour. Squeeze it out and lay aside until step five.
2. Mix together your soil mixture composed of 70 percent peat moss or potting mix and 30 percent bonsai soil (akadama) or clay cat litter. Add water gradually to your mixture until the medium can be gathered into a ball. Press it firmly forming it into a ball.
3. Remove your selected plant from its container, dust off the excess soil and gently break apart the root ball.
4. Make a hole in the clay ball big enough to push in the roots of the plant. Push the clay around the roots and compact it around the base of the stem.
5. Press the moss around the form until all the surfaces are covered. Use twine or string to wrap the moss onto the ball with at least two passes around the surface.
6. Cut away the excess string and fix the ball to a piece of wood, hang in an appropriately lighted area or place in a container.



### Kokedama maintenance

Watering is your main maintenance task with a kokedama and you can use your finger to check the moisture level of the ball. Check the weight. If the ball feels light, it's likely time to water.

If watering is needed, fill a bowl, bucket or sink with room temperature water. Place your kokedama in the water, plant side up. Push the moss ball down so that it is fully submerged and begins to absorb water. Allow to soak for 10-25 minutes, or until bubbles stop rising. Remove the kokedama from the water, and gently squeeze the moss ball to allow excess water to drain. Allow to drip dry in a colander before replacing it to its given home. 💧



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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# JOURNEY TO BETTER HEALTH

from the inside out





*By Lisa Templeton Rigoni*

**RUNNING FOR FUN?** NO way! Spending time in the gym? Yeah, right! Eating food for fuel? Seriously? I was the girl who hated physical education and didn't play sports. Junk food was the only food category I wasn't picky about, and I had no health concerns or weight issues.

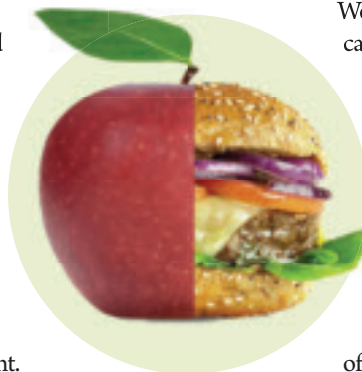
### Keeping secrets

How things can change. Fast-forward a decade or so. I gained weight, was tired all the time and tried to make light of it. I used to laugh it off and say, "At 5 feet 2 inches and 174 pounds, I'm under tall, not overweight." Guess the joke was on me. The scale tipped closer to the 200 line than the 126 pounds still on my driver's license.

That was in 2009. I wore clothes to camouflage the rolls. I found out later the big, bulky shirts and stretchy pants served as a way for me to hide myself, and it was more than extra pounds. I added layers to help cover my sadness, anger, resentment, food addiction, financial woes and more.

Few people knew any of that. Most saw me as healthy, happy and confident.

Like drug and alcohol addiction, food addiction is a serious problem. I know firsthand. You could call me a junk food junkie, chocoholic and sugar addict – names usually spoken whimsically. However, for the food-addicted person who stuffs bags of chocolates or cookies in the nightstand for bingeing or stops at the drive-through for a double cheeseburger and a shake on the way home from work before dinner, and also eats the full dinner, it's no joke. I've gone through the drive-through and then hidden the empty bag and cup so no one would know.



Mental, emotional and spiritual issues can become prevalent for someone with weight-related issues. Depression, feeling unworthy. These breakdowns in our minds and hearts can lead to isolation and withdrawal from others, even the positive relationships. The good news? There are resources to help you move forward.

### Leading by example

My husband, Mike, a physical education teacher and a basketball coach at the time, went through his own health crisis. He was overweight, run-down, taking three blood pressure medications and often barely had the energy to get through the day. He also had issues with sugar.

Diabetes and hypoglycemia run in his family.

We ate fast food. Most of our meals came from a box, a bag, the freezer or a drive-through. It was mostly processed food, full of sugar and fat. We loved it. Plus, it was easy and cheap.

When Mike and I met in 1990, he was active, playing softball. Later, he played men's recreational basketball until his legs and ankles got the better of him – too much wear and tear.

His weight had also increased, which led to surgeries – knee, both Achilles' heels and the removal of a bone spur. He was benched for a while but returned to the basketball court later.

Still overweight, his doctor scolded him about his blood pressure and warned he was a ticking time bomb waiting to explode. Then another year, another physical and a new doctor with a fresh approach. The doctor asked him directly, "Are you leading by example?" Referring to how he was living in front of his students and players ... those he was teaching and coaching toward healthy lifestyles.

That question clicked in his head, and the answer was an emphatic, "No!" His



transformation began that night. He joined a gym and cleared our kitchen of junk food, replacing it with healthier, whole foods. Subway became our fast-food choice. We started eating at home – more salads, fruits and vegetables, lean meat. There was no magic formula or pill. It was hard work, discipline and an intentional new mindset.

***Mike and I had fallen into the unhealthy category. He stepped up first to make the necessary changes. I was still on the fence.***

#### **Reality check**

That single question was his reality check. It was hard to swallow, as are the national statistics. The U.S. has one of the highest percentages of obesity in the world. According to reports from the National Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), nearly 40 percent (almost 94 million) of adults and 18.5 percent (13.7 million) of children and adolescents are obese.

The CDC estimates if things don't change by 2030, there will be a new reality, and it will affect younger generations, too. Half of U.S. teenagers will be overweight or obese. One third of kids between 6 and 11 years old will fall into the same category.

In fact, more than 57 percent of today's children will be obese by the time they are 35.

Mike and I had fallen into the unhealthy category. He stepped up first to make the necessary changes. I was still on the fence.

At a dinner with my co-workers, someone asked Mike how much weight he had lost. I was busily chatting with someone else when I heard him respond, "About 50 pounds." I spun around, shocked. "You've lost 50 pounds?" He smiled.

How did he do it? He changed the way he thought. He made better food choices, eating habits and added exercise. In the process he lost a total of 85 pounds. I knew he had made changes, but seeing him every day, I hadn't truly noticed the physical results.

I begrudgingly started going to the gym with him, but only in a neighboring town so I wouldn't run into people I knew. I was afraid I'd make a fool of myself. At that time, the machines were intimidating. I was sure I would fly off a treadmill, drop a dumbbell on my head or something worse. What we worry about or envision as obstacles often get in the way of what is possible.

#### **Change your mindset**

Healthy starts from the inside out. It starts with small steps and changing your thought patterns. Start by writing down your health goals. Make them SMART – Specific. Measurable. Attainable. Realistic. Time-based. (i.e., I will lose 15 pounds by Easter, exercise three to five days a week and eat healthy based on the ChooseMyPlate model for my specific health profile. Visit [ChooseMyPlate.gov](http://ChooseMyPlate.gov) for details.)

Sonya Jones, former "Biggest Loser" finalist and outreach representative for HSHS Medical Group in Springfield, Ill., spent six months on "The Biggest Loser" show and four months on the Biggest Loser Ranch learning about healthy living.

While we don't all have that option, Jones advises, "Don't just view health and wellness as weight loss. Weight loss is part of it, but true health and wellness is being healthy in body, mind and spirit. Work on the spiritual. Work on the emotional. Work on the mental. And, of course, work on the physical as well. As I shrunk physically, I grew emotionally, mentally and spiritually, and that's where the real win came for me. Get healthy in all areas of your life!"





Mike and Lisa Rigoni, 2009 and today, have chosen to live a healthier lifestyle and are now reaping the benefits of better health, mind and spirit.

### Rewards for healthy living

That's what I did. Finally, in 2012, I was making huge strides in my own health journey. I began enjoying my workouts and made healthier food choices and created good habits. I lost 40-plus pounds and kept it off. My energy levels climbed. My attitude shifted from negative to positive. People at the gym started asking for my help.

Suddenly, I was an example of good physical health. I decided to go a step further in 2013 and earned certifications as a personal trainer and specialist in fitness nutrition through the International Sports Sciences Association (ISSA) so I could coach others. Most recently, I earned the ACE (American Council of Exercise) personal trainer certification.

### The cost of poor health

It may surprise you to know the impact poor health has on the economy. Economic pressures for businesses, organizations, communities, households and schools are growing exponentially due to health-related issues.

Insurance costs continue to rise, in general. Add obesity-related diseases to the mix, and the cost increases dramatically. This is largely due to diseases that often occur when a person is not healthy – strokes, asthma, heart attacks and other cardiovascular diseases, to name a few.

According to the CDC, an obese person in America incurs an average of \$1,429 more in medical expenses annually. More than \$147 billion is spent in added medical expenses per year within the U. S. and may increase approximately \$1.24 billion per year until the year 2030.

### Influence the next generation

Before being on "The Biggest Loser," Jones spent 19 years in education. She taught elementary physical education, coached junior high softball and high school track. She also served as athletic director at a school. While she personally knows the effects of being overweight, she has also noticed it in our younger generations.

"Among children and youth, I've seen some good changes and some bad changes. I've seen students who start playing sports at a younger age and desire to do well in them. It's caused them to be more physically active at a younger age, which has fostered a deep desire to remain active and competitive as they grow older," she explains. "On the flip side, I've seen other students become less engaged in physical activity and instead focus more on screen time and video games.

"Get your children involved," continues Jones. "Encourage them to be active with their friends. Get on a team. Do



## Streamline your grocery shopping

### FOLLOW THESE BASIC GUIDELINES, AND YOU'LL BE OFF TO A GREAT START.

- Determine your weekly needs by planning your menu ahead of time. Mix up the meals. Allow each member of the family a choice.
- Keep a running grocery list. What foods, spices or other ingredients are needed for the week? Write it down, type it up or use a grocery app.
- Group your foods to match the layout of the store.
- Review your household's weekly schedule. Decide who will be home when, so you know the number of mouths you are feeding at any given time throughout the week.
- Shop the outer perimeter of the grocery store for the healthiest ingredients. That's where you will find produce, meat and dairy.

### 10 TIPS ON HOW TO SHOP SMART FOR FRUITS AND VEGGIES (CHOOSEMYPLATE.GOV)

- Celebrate the season – use vegetables and fruits that are in season.
- Don't pay full price – check store ads and manufacturer's coupons.
- Stick to your list – it will save you time and money.
- Try canned or frozen – choose items without syrup or added salt.
- Buy small amounts frequently – keeps waste down, saving money.
- Buy in bulk when items are on sale.
- Save money with store brands.
- Keep it simple – buy produce in its simplest form.
- Get it fresh – plant a garden.
- Plan and cook smart – pre-cook foods in bulk, package and freeze.



# Nutrition is key to good health

Your body is an intricate system that needs the right kind of fuel to run properly. Good nutrition is the place to start, and it isn't as difficult as we often make it. Guidelines set by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) are simple.

- Fill your plate with vegetables and fruits. Choose from a rainbow of bright colors; they are full of nutrients to help boost your energy.
- Include lean proteins. Beef, chicken, pork, turkey, even beans and tofu. Twice a week, make seafood your choice of protein.
- Get your calcium. Drink a cup of fat-free or low-fat milk. You'll benefit from the same amount of calcium with less calories and fat.
- Make half your grains whole grains.
- Use healthy fats such as canola oil, olive oil and nonstick vegetable spray for cooking.
- Replace sweets with fruit – strawberries, apples, orange slices. It's okay to grab frozen or canned but be sure they aren't in syrup. Get produce in its most natural state.
- Exchange chips and dip with veggies and dip. Fresh veggies are always best.
- Use spices and herbs to flavor your foods, rather than adding sugar and salt.
- Prepare foods in advance, so you don't grab convenience foods that aren't as healthy.
- Read the nutrition label.

## UNDERSTAND THE NUTRITION LABEL

Read the nutrition label as you shop so you know what's in your food. The FDA updated it for packaged foods and beverages in May 2016, its first revision in 20 years.

It is now easier to understand so you can make more informed food choices. It still includes calories, serving sizes, daily value percentages, nutrients and ingredients. Everything is based on new scientific research – one of the reasons “added sugars” is now included.

For detailed information about nutrition label changes visit [fda.gov](http://fda.gov).

Since competing on the *Biggest Loser*, Sonya Jones has become an advocate for healthy living.

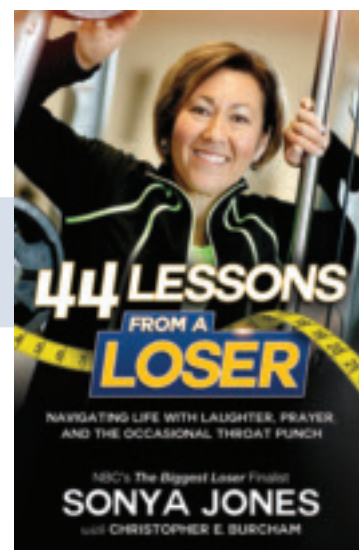
activities with them ... that's huge. Don't just demand that kids go outside and play ... go outside and play with them.”

That is one of the things Mike and I have done. Our three adult children have watched us learn to make healthy choices and have made changes themselves. We also make sure our grandson and granddaughter, both toddlers, see fitness as fun. We want to help them create a life-long love for it.

One of our favorite activities with them is to grab our bright yellow bucket and go on a nature walk. I ask them to collect treasures: an acorn, yellow flower, red leaf, round rock, whatever is plentiful. It activates their minds and bodies and allows quality time together without the distraction of toys and electronics. It's something we can continue as they get older, though they may not always carry the yellow bucket.

You can do the same. Help your family change the trajectory for future generations. You don't have to deprive your family of treats or be on the go every minute. Be cognizant of the choices you help them make. Be intentionally active. Below is a list of suggestions – things we have had success with through the years.

- Don't allow your toddlers or teens to mindlessly snack while sitting in front of the TV.
- Don't reward your child for a job well done with unhealthy foods.
- Don't let your teenagers spend all their time playing video games or texting.



PRINTED WITH PERMISSION OF SONYA JONES.

- Do sit down at the table together. Bring back the tradition of the family meal.
- Do reward smart choices with age-appropriate activities. Take a trip to the zoo. Play at the park. Go for a bike ride or long walk with your tweens and teens. Ask for their suggestions.
- Don't make it complicated.
- Do create simple, fun adventures. When you go for a walk, have the younger children yell out “march, walk, hop, skip, run!” You can call out the moves and do them, too.

## Change is possible

Are you ready to move forward? Jones says the best thing to do is, “Start! Start now! And believe in yourself. If you think you can, you're right. If you think you can't, you're right. Believe you can make a change, develop a plan and go get it. Don't make a hundred changes at once ... just make some changes you can incorporate into your daily life. Don't go on some fad diet to lose a lot of weight ... it always comes back on. Do something you can continue to do throughout your life.”

Yes! It's a matter of choice. Change your mind. Change your habits. Change your life. ☺





# Green acres Farm fresh and family owned

By Valerie Cheatham

**IN SOME WAYS, COLES-MOULTRIE** Electric Cooperative members Owen and Jessica “Jess” Sweitzer resemble the old television show *Green Acres*. The husband longs to live in the country, but his wife, the city girl, can’t imagine it. Jess was from the Chicago suburbs when she met Owen, who was from rural Illinois. But, this is where the story changes. Once Owen showed Jess the ways of the country, in her words, she was sold!

“When we bought this particular piece of property, we did not intend to use it for farming,” says Jess. Owen fell in love with the location of the 14 acres and the possibilities. “It wasn’t until five years later that we felt God calling us to start a vegetable farm,” she explains.

In January 2013, Jess, and now former business partner Lauren Callandrilla, decided to start a family garden together on the land and added chickens, pigs and cattle. Neither had a background in agriculture, farming or growing

food, but they planned their first garden to help feed their families. They wanted their children to know where their food came from and appreciate the work it took to put it on the table.

“We realized we wanted to do more and offer it to the community and be able to give back,” Jess says. “That’s where the business came from – having that desire to give back to the community and make the produce accessible to food insecure families and individuals. We just jumped in headfirst.”

Jess says she learned vegetable farming takes a lot of hard work and is not a very profitable venture. “We knew it was a seasonal thing with the farmers market, but to be able to pay the bills year-round, we needed something that would bring in revenue November to May.”

The answer was community-supported agriculture (CSA). Through a CSA, subscribers buy a weekly, or bi-weekly, share of the harvest. Community-supported agriculture allows consumers to buy seasonal foods directly from farmers. Shares typically include a box of freshly







***"The start of the farm was to build community and have a safe place for families to come experience God's creation and nature."***

harvested produce, and some may include other products, such as eggs, meat, flowers or homemade bread.

In November 2014, the venture officially became First Fruits Homestead. They made plans for the following growing season and hosted their first sign-ups in January.

"We literally felt like God was telling us this is what we needed to do," Jess says. "We tossed around some other crazy ideas of what sustainability might look like for us and how we could give back to the community. This was the model that made the most sense."

By pre-selling shares, a CSA gave them income up front to purchase seeds, equipment and needed supplies.

"It allowed us to involve another demographic that doesn't necessarily come to the farmers markets but wants to be more experimental with their food," Jess explains. "It gave us two things – the financial means during the off season and deeper relationships with those who want to know their farmer. You get to know your customers at the farmers market, but CSA is a different relationship."

When families come out to pick up their shares, they are encouraged to spend time there to enjoy the farm and let their kids run around.

"It's more of a farm experience," Jess says. "They've seen pigs being born, taken a hayride and milked a cow. At the farmers market, there is always that financial transaction. Here, it's

100 percent interaction...The start of the farm was to build community and have a safe place for families to come experience God's creation and nature."

In the spring and fall, they grow a lot of root crops and greens, which then changes to tomatoes, cucumbers, zucchini and okra. Jess enjoys growing a wide variety, including unusual types such as Asian long beans, cotton and flowers.

The first year of the CSA, there was a great turnout for sign-ups with 25 weekly and 20 bi-weekly shares sold.

Jess says, "We had to feed all these families, and we had never farmed before. It rained almost every day that June, and nothing was growing except weeds. It was very humbling. We thought, what are we going to feed all these people?"

"We turned it around with some new equipment," she explains. "We couldn't handle all the weeds. We built up the rows and covered them with plastic. Our first year, we just didn't know the ground very well and where the drainage issues would be."

The biggest challenges have been bugs and weather. It is guaranteed they will battle insects every year and the weather will be unpredictable. While those elements may change, Jess knows she can count on the cucumber beetles being out in June, and once broccoli is in the ground, she will battle cabbage worms and moths.

"That's been a challenge," Jess says. "We do grow organically. We are not certified organic,



but we follow those practices. We lose most things from bugs.”

The goal of the farm has always been to give back. The original goal was 10 percent at a minimum—last year the total came to 25 percent. Local food pantries and those in need benefited from total donations of 2,500 pounds of food. “When you think in terms of lettuce, that’s a lot,” Jess explains. “It’s not all watermelon... a lot of it is lighter weight things.”

She adds, “A lot of the individuals that go to food pantries want ready-to-eat meals and may not have the means to do food prep or cooking. They want vegetables they are familiar with and are ready to eat. Tomatoes and cucumbers are always a good thing. The past four years has shown what people will use. The majority don’t want mustard greens or Asian beans; they want the basics they know how to use.”

With Lauren stepping away from the business after the 2018 season, Jess and Owen will scale back their vegetable acreage from five to two acres and utilize the other



acres for rotational grazing for their cattle. They plan to continue offering their 14-week CSA but will only sell 16 bi-weekly shares.

“With the transition of the farm, Owen and I felt it was important to have high quality produce baskets rather than quantity,”

Jess explains. “We will continue to participate in the 18th Street Farmers Market in Charleston on Saturday mornings. We have developed many close relationships and want to continue to provide our community with access to locally-grown, farm-fresh produce.”

In November and December, Jess pored over seed catalogs and put together her planting spreadsheet. Thanks to a \$10,000 grant last year from Faith in Place, she now has a seed house that allows her to start seeds in January.

It appears that for Jess those green acres are the place to be and farm living is her life. The city girl has truly been transformed by the countryside. 🌱

*The goal of the farm has always been to give back. The original goal was 10 percent at a minimum—last year the total came to 25 percent.*

## LEARN MORE

For more information about First Fruits Homestead, go to [firstfruitshomestead.org](http://firstfruitshomestead.org) or email [fruitfruitshomestead@gmail.com](mailto:fruitfruitshomestead@gmail.com). To find a CSA in your area, go to [www.localharvest.org](http://www.localharvest.org) and input your location.



Soft-serve sundaes are available in a variety of options, including strawberry.

Meet the current Burger King staff. That's owner Ernie Drummond second from the left. He works with his staff to instill the restaurant's original quality and carry on the tradition at this hometown favorite.

## Burger King Served the original way

By Karen Binder

While Burger King has long been a Mattoon favorite, it wasn't until 1968 that the use of the same name by the national franchise became an issue.

**LOCATED ROUGHLY IN THE** middle of Interstate 57 in Illinois is Mattoon exit 190B, the quickest way to Burger King – the original Burger King, that is.

Since 1954, well before that other one started, the burger joint at 1508 W. Charleston Ave. has been wrapping double cheeseburgers in wax paper and shaking salt on some of the best fries in the state. Add a lemon or hot fudge shake and any weary traveler will find himself revived with tasty and nostalgic Midwestern goodness.

"Very little has changed on the menu. If it worked all these years, why change it?" says owner Ernie Drummond.

### Hoots' burger house

In operation now for 66 years, the burger joint was founded by Gene Hoots. Some folks may remember Gene's second restaurant, the now defunct Hoots House and its famous broasted chicken dinner.

While Burger King has long been a Mattoon favorite, it wasn't until 1968 that the use of the same name by the national franchise became an issue. The matter even became a landmark trademark case. To this day, the Mattoon restaurant enjoys first rights to the name and continues to operate with the agreement that the franchise will not locate a store within 20 miles. In fact, the nearest one is 23 miles away in Tuscola.

In homage to Hoots, black-and-white photographs from the early days hang in the remodeled dining room. Hoots retired in February 2015 and sold the company to local businessman Cory Sanders. Hoots died at age 90 in December 2017, the same year longtime employee Ernie Drummond bought the business.

"For the first six months, it was hard to grasp that I was the owner because I kept expecting Gene to pop in and ask what's the (customer) count," Drummond says.



An institution in Mattoon, the original Burger King is located on one of the main drags through town. In 1957, when original owner Gene Hoots fixed up a two-car garage to add a grill and counter for customers, it also was time to retire the Frigid Queen name for a new one. While Hoots wanted The Hot Dames, his wife overruled him, claiming that a queen needs a king, and chose the name Burger King instead.



Mattoon residents Gene and Betty Hoots bought the successful Frigid Queen ice cream shop from Gene's uncle, Bill Paullin, in 1952. It wasn't until 1954 that hamburgers, fries and other items were added to the menu.





Cheeseburgers are the outright favorite. They are even offered by the bagful. The onion rings have a reputation, too.



These battered and fried hot dogs on a stick are called Pronto Pups, another menu favorite.



Burger King has so many frozen treats that they have their own menu board. The lemon and hot fudge shakes are top sellers.

Returning guests may recall the wood paneling, but that was torn out about four years ago to make the space more inviting, Drummond says.

Since Drummond took over ownership in 2017, he's focused on bringing back original menu items and cooking methods. Although "it took some digging around to find it," the pork loin sandwich is back, and every morning a 50-pound bag of onions is specially ground as a sandwich condiment.

The bestsellers are the cheeseburgers, including the bacon double cheeseburger. Each one is still wrapped in wax paper and then popped into a white paper bag.

### Today's owner

Drummond's life with Burger King has a history in itself.

He fondly recalled his father taking his family out for dinner and buying a bag of 12 burgers with everything. "Back in those days, that meant mustard, pickle, onion. I remember that well because I'm a ketchup guy. But all six of us always found a way to eat all of those burgers," he says.

To this day, the restaurant sells burgers and fries by the bag, called the family pack. For example, four cheeseburgers with one pound of fries goes for \$14 and change on the menu.

By the time Drummond was 16, he was flipping those burgers part-time. He later met his wife Polly there and became the restaurant manager, a position he held for more than 25 years. He and Polly still work there, along with his sister, brother, a nephew and cousins.

High school and college students remain a favorite staff hire for Drummond, many of them staying with the restaurant through their college years. He calls them "the backbone of the business."

Today, the store employs 30 to 38 depending on the season, and Drummond reports that it competes well against burger chains.

"This place really has a life of its own. I want to try to preserve it somehow." 🍷

## LET'S EAT!

### Burger King

1508 Charleston Ave.

Mattoon, Illinois

Phone: 217-234-8122

Social media: Facebook, Yelp

### HOURS:

Monday-Sunday:  
9 a.m. - 10 p.m.



## The Other White Meat

**CONSIDERED BY SOME TO** be the other white meat, lean cuts of pork are low in fat and a naturally high source of protein. In fact, a study conducted by the USDA found pork tenderloin to be more lean than skinless chicken breast. It also contains many essential nutrients and vitamins. Choosing cuts such as the loin or round will provide you with the higher amounts of protein and lower amounts of saturated fat. However you cook it, pork is flavorful and versatile. We suggest you try some of this month's recipes which use everything from tenderloin and sausage to bacon, ham and more. We think you'll agree! 💡



### Peppered Pork Tenderloin

Submitted by Brenda Evans, SouthEastern Illinois Electric Cooperative, Inc.

#### Marinade:

- 2 c. salad oil
- 1/4 c. honey
- 1 t. garlic powder
- 1/2 c. soy sauce
- 1 t. onion powder
- 1 pork tenderloin

#### Sauce:

- 1 c. mayonnaise
- 1/2 t. salt
- 2 finely chopped garlic cloves
- 1/2 t. Worcestershire sauce
- 1/2 c. sour cream

- 1/2 t. white pepper
- 3 t. Dijon mustard
- Crushed black pepper
- Seasoned salt

Mix all ingredients for marinade in a small bowl. Place tenderloin in a gallon Ziploc bag and pour the marinade over the tenderloin. Marinate for 6 to 8 hours. Mix all sauce ingredients and chill in refrigerator until ready to use. To cook, remove meat from Ziploc bag and discard marinade. Sprinkle all sides of meat with seasoned salt and crushed pepper. Grill over hot coals until both sides are brown. Cut tenderloin into pieces about 3/4-to 1-inch thick. Sprinkle newly exposed sides with seasoned salt and crushed pepper. Return to grill and cook on each side until done. Serve with dipping sauce. **Note:** You can use a pork loin instead of tenderloin. It is not quite as tender, but the flavor remains excellent.

## WE NEED RECIPES!

### Upcoming monthly topics

Peanut butter

Shrimp

Summer drinks

Please email submissions to [finestcooking@icl.coop](mailto: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](http://icl.coop/finestcooking).



Recipes prepared, tasted and photographed by Illinois Country Living staff. For more recipes and photos go to [www.icl.coop](http://www.icl.coop). Questions? Email [finestcooking@aiec.coop](mailto:finestcooking@aiec.coop).

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

### Spicy Pork Meatloaf Supper

Submitted by Bonna Grabarec, Rock Energy Cooperative

- 2 lbs. ground pork
- 1 lg. onion, diced
- 1 sleeve saltine crackers, crushed
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1 t. salt
- 1 sm. jalapeno pepper, finely diced
- 1/2 t. ground black pepper
- 1 - 12 oz. medium salsa, divided
- 1/4 c. fresh cilantro, chopped
- 1 T. Worcestershire sauce
- 1/4 t. cayenne pepper
- 1/4 t. smoked paprika
- 1/4 t. turmeric
- 1/4 t. chili powder

- 1 - 15 oz. can whole kernel corn, drained
- 1 - 15 oz. can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 each - red, yellow and green peppers, sliced
- 1 sm. onion, sliced
- 3-4 potatoes, peeled and cut in 1/2-inch cubes
- 2 strips bacon

Combine first 14 meatloaf ingredients using only 1/2 c. salsa. Shape into loaf. Place in large Dutch oven. Surround meatloaf with corn, beans, peppers, onions and potatoes. Top with remaining jar of salsa and 1 cup water. Place bacon strips on top of meatloaf. Bake covered at 350 degrees for 1 hour. Uncover and bake at 425 degrees for additional 20 minutes or until bacon browns and meatloaf is done. Serve with salad or cornbread.



## Orange Honey Glazed Ham

Submitted by Betsy Higginbotham, EnerStar Electric Cooperative

- |  |                    |
|--|--------------------|
| 1 smoked ham (1 like bone-in spiral cut) | 1/2 c. honey       |
| 1 c. orange marmalade                    | 1 T. Dijon mustard |
| 1 c. light brown sugar, packed           | Whole cloves       |

Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Remove ham from all packaging. If ham comes with a glaze packet, remove and save for a later use. Place ham on large cutting board, fat side up. Score ham in diamond pattern with 1/4-inch deep cuts. Place one whole clove in center of each diamond. Place ham in large roasting pan, scored side up. Cover with aluminum foil and cook according to package directions, until internal temperature reaches 140 degrees, about 13-15 minutes per pound. While ham cooks, combine remaining ingredients in small bowl and set near the stove so it gets nice and warm. I set mine on top of stove. Half way through cooking, remove foil and baste ham with glaze. Repeat every 20-30 minutes until ham is cooked through. The more you glaze, the prettier the ham will be. Remove from oven and rest 10 minutes before slicing. Serve hot or cold.

PEPPERED PORK TENDERLOIN

## PORK SAUSAGE



## Bacon Wrapped Pork Tenderloin

Submitted by Ella, Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative

- |                    |                                      |                        |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------|
| 4 lb. pork loin    | 1 t. dried thyme                     | 4 scallions, chopped   |
| 1 lb. bacon        | 1/2 lb. baby bella mushrooms, sliced | 4 oz. feta cheese      |
| 1 t. garlic powder | 5 oz. baby spinach, chopped          | 1/4 c. vegetable stock |

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Place the pork loin on a long strip of plastic wrap. Cut the pork loin horizontally stopping at about 1/2-inch. Lay the meat open. Sprinkle with salt, pepper, garlic powder, oregano and dried thyme. In a small bowl, mix together mushrooms, spinach, scallions and 1/4 cup stock. Spoon over meat. Sprinkle with feta cheese. Using plastic wrap to help, roll the meat up into a tight roll. Wrap the pork roll in bacon and tie with kitchen twine. Place on a greased baking sheet and bake for approximately 1-1/2 hrs. Serve immediately. **Note:** I serve it with polenta and roasted broccolini.

## BACON WRAPPED PORK TENDERLOIN



## Pork Sausage

Submitted by Connie Pease, Shelby Electric Cooperative

- 10 lbs. ground pork scraps
- 5 T. salt
- 2-1/2 t. dry mustard
- 5 t. black pepper
- 2-1/2 t. ground cloves
- 2 t. cayenne pepper
- 6 T. ground sage (adjust to taste)

Mix all ingredients in a large bowl, with clean hands. Mix well. Form into patties to freeze or measure out 1-pound portions and wrap in freezer paper. Freeze until ready to use.

## Sausage Dip

Submitted by Christina Goolsby, South Eastern Illinois Electric Cooperative

- 1 lb. ground sausage
- 2 8 oz. pkgs. cream cheese, softened
- 1 10 oz. can Ro-Tel tomatoes (diced with green chilies)

In a large bowl, place softened cream cheese and Ro-Tel tomatoes (do not drain). Brown sausage and drain off grease. Add hot meat to bowl, mix together until cheese is "melted." Refrigerate overnight. Can serve with your choice of crackers or corn chips.

# America's national bird

By Mike Roux

**IF YOU'VE BEEN NEAR** the Mississippi or Illinois rivers, you have no doubt had the opportunity to see one of our most identifiable national icons. The bald eagle represents the pride and strength of the United States. Its power, graceful maneuvers and majestic posture make it an appropriate symbol.

Native Americans, believing thunder came from the great wings of the eagle, named it "Thunderbird." Their legends

unusual. Their nests can be 5 to 6 feet in diameter and 6 feet deep. Eagles are very territorial and will usually return to the same nest year after year. They also prefer to mate for life.

I was very fortunate a few years ago to be able to talk with a true expert on the bald eagle. Jim Mattsson is a regional biologist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. He told me about the remarkable recovery of the bald eagle in North America.

the biggest single influencing factor was the regulation of DDT in the mid-70s. This pesticide almost drove eagles out of existence.

"... This chemical would be carried by run-off into our streams and rivers and infect the fish. These fish would in turn be eaten by eagles, and toxic levels would build up in the birds. This caused the shells of eagle eggs to be thin and fragile. When these eggs were laid, they would crack during incubation, killing the fetus. With fish being 90 percent of the eagle's diet, this problem was enormous."

The eagle infant mortality rate has decreased significantly over the past two decades, though an entire generation of DDT-infected eagles had to live out their lives before non-infected birds could take over the breeding duties and produce stronger, non-toxic eggs.

I questioned Jim about the eagles we routinely see here along the river during the winter. He said that most of them come from the north, as far as Canada. They follow the river, their main source of food, just ahead of the freezing ice.

In my research, I discovered that virtually every observation point for hundreds of miles has some sort of eagle-sighting celebration. These events occur in the winter from south of St. Louis north to where the river is just a trickle. A simple online search offers multiple options.

Observing our national bird in its natural surroundings is truly inspiring. People come from all over the world to see these magnificent birds. Don't miss this regal creature in your own backyard! 🦅



tell of a powerful creature strong enough to fly to the sun and pull it across the sky. They said the intense heat of the sun turned its head and tail feathers white. Only warriors who had proven themselves in battle could wear an eagle feather on their head.

At 10 to 13 pounds and over 3 feet long, the eagle is the largest bird of prey in North America. Its wingspan is commonly over 6 feet wide, with 8-foot spans not

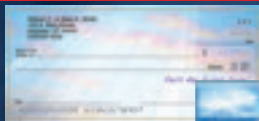
"In the mid-1970s, the eagle was in real trouble," Mattsson said. "There were only 450 documented breeding pairs in the country. Now we have about 4,600 breeding pairs nationwide.

"...The birds are now highly protected. Both the Bald Eagle Act and the Endangered Species Act have proven to be valuable tools to cut down on and eliminate the senseless killing of our national bird," Mattsson continued. "But



Mike Roux is an outdoor enthusiast and former Illinois Outdoor Writer of the Year. Check out his website at [www.mikeroux.com](http://www.mikeroux.com).





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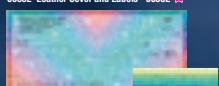
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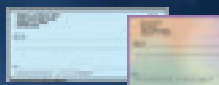
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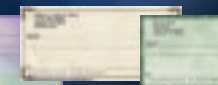
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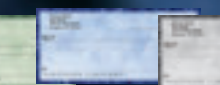
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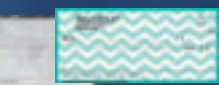
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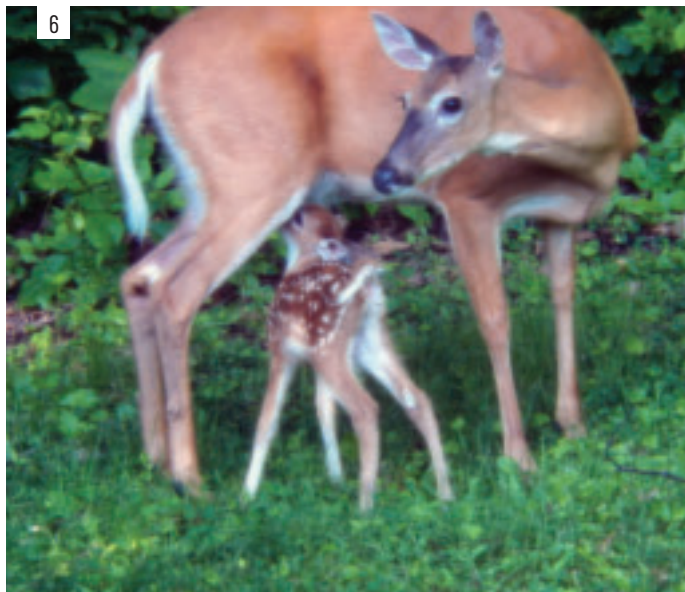
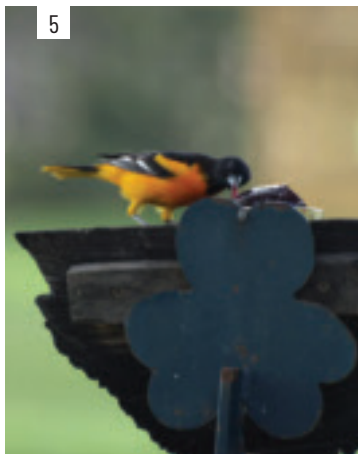
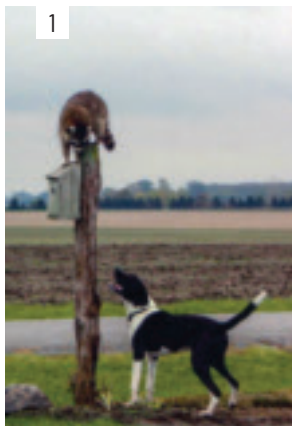


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March - Going green  
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