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A feather
Birdwatch together



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TRAVEL
Illinois barbecue
is heating up

PRAIRIE TABLE
River eatery
serves up fresh fish

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Smokin' hot
Independence Day

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NEWS**

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Illinois Country Living

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22 Birds of a feather birdwatch together

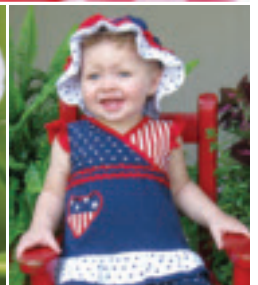
Illinois is home to more than 400 species of birds – a birdwatcher’s delight.

27 Illinois barbecue is heating up

Barbecue restaurants and competitions abound in Illinois and the pitmasters of both love what they do.

30 Floating restaurant serves up fresh fish

This month **PRAIRIE TABLE** visits **E’Town River Restaurant** in Elizabethtown.



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Readers show their patriotism by taking photos of the American flag.

Patriotism in action

ACCORDING TO MERRIAM-WEBSTER'S DICTIONARY, patriotism is “the love for or devotion to one’s country.” Perhaps no other day of the year evokes such a sense of patriotism than Independence Day. With flags rippling in the wind, red, white and blue bunting adorning porches and store



fronts and local parades and marching bands on display, it’s easy to feel a swell of pride for our country.

Arguably, another, perhaps deeper form of patriotism is active engagement in public and civic life. Involvement in your town promotes a richer community life, and ensures that institutions thrive and communities remain vibrant and inviting places to live work and play. Besides being enjoyable, your participation in community events and activities, together with your friends, neighbors and co-workers makes a difference.



Duane Noland is the President/CEO of the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives, Springfield, lives on the family farm near Blue Mound and is a Shelby Electric Cooperative member.

Simple things like supporting a bake sale or attending a local high school event signals to the young people in your community that you care and support them, and that the community itself is worth sustaining.

In fact, there are civic engagement opportunities throughout Illinois. You may recall that one of the most important cooperative principles is that of democratic participation. If you pay your bill, you

are a member of the co-op with an opportunity to provide input through voting during your annual meeting.

Illinois electric cooperatives originated more than 80 years ago to serve a need that was not being met by traditional for-profit electric companies. Providing reliable electricity is their top priority. They make decisions based on long-term thinking – what decisions will benefit the larger community in which they operate? One of the best ways you can engage with your co-op is by casting your vote when it’s time to elect board members. These are folks just like you, from the communities they serve, who provide guidance to co-op leadership on a myriad of issues and decisions both short-term and long-term.

Perhaps you haven’t voted in the past because you didn’t think you were qualified to weigh in on a particular topic, or maybe you simply didn’t have time to vote. But you do have an opinion on the issues that affect your community and your cooperative wants your particular perspective.

Everyone has valuable experience that informs their decision-making process. Diverse perspectives benefit the whole community. You may have a different view than your neighbor, but together, those perspectives provide a more balanced view of the community. You could be bringing new information that hadn’t been previously considered. Illinois’ electric cooperatives seek more members participating in the process, because greater numbers reflect a consensus on the direction of the future and the will of the people.

I would argue that voting, whether in the co-op or in local and national elections, is a form of patriotism as it reflects a devotion to one’s community and commitment to ensure that it thrives.

Democracy is not a spectator sport; it takes active civic engagement by citizens to thrive. This Independence Day, I hope you will embrace the local celebrations and actively participate in your community – and vote at every opportunity! 💡

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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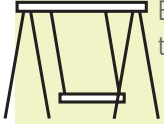
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JULY CHECKLIST

Playground safety.



Be sure to check the temperature of all playground equipment

before your child plays. It's not just metal surfaces that can cause thermal burns. **Source: CPSC.gov**

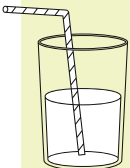
Did you know?

Texting and driving can take a driver's eyes off the road for an average of 4.6 seconds. At 55 mph, drivers can travel the length of a football field without looking at the road. Drop it and drive!



Survive the heat.

Drink plenty of water, even if you're not thirsty, wear light clothing, avoid strenuous activity and try to find a cool place out of the sun.



Tip of the month: Install low-flow faucets and showerheads.

Low-flow fixtures cost about \$10-20 each and achieve water savings of 25-60 percent. **Source: energy.gov**



2019 Line Clearance Forestry School

High winds, tornadoes, ice and other weather events can play havoc on trees and your electrical system. It is not unusual for branches to cause power outages, and Illinois electric cooperatives plan ahead by doing line clearance to help prevent the loss of power due to trees.

Each year, the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives safety and training department holds a line clearance forestry school to teach the proper safety procedures for clearing trees, branches and brush around power lines.

Sixty-two electric cooperative line clearance

personnel from 16 Illinois and five out-of-state co-ops participated in the annual line clearance forestry school at Wayne Fitzgerald State Park in Whittington May 13-17.

The school was designed to accommodate both experienced and inexperienced personnel who wish to become more proficient in the field of line clearance – right of way management. Attendees learned about chainsaw safety, climbing, rigging, cutting and felling techniques, storm damage and working around the electrical distribution system. 💡



For the latest currents news go to www.icl.coop

It's the cooperative way

Cooperation among cooperatives is one of the principles upon which all cooperatives stand. This commitment was never more evident than Memorial Day weekend, May 24-26. McDonough Power Cooperative, Macomb, had two separate storms blow through their service territory wreaking havoc on the electrical system.

On Friday, linemen from Adams Electric Cooperative assisted McDonough Power linemen replace 14 broken poles amid mud, downed trees and debris left in the wake of the afternoon storm. The following evening another storm hit the same area damaging an additional 28 poles. In all, three substations were damaged, and more than 1,350 members left without power. Additional crews from Clinton County Electric Cooperative, Inc., Illinois Electric Cooperative, Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative Co., Shelby Electric Cooperative and Spoon River Electric Cooperative arrived early Sunday morning to lend a hand in restoring power. By Sunday evening, the power was back on.



McDonough Power Journeyman Lineman Joe Wernsman posted, "Sometimes it takes a village to restore power!"

Electric cooperatives know that if in similar circumstances, the electric cooperative family is ready to help. It's the cooperative way. 💡

Touchstone Energy balloons celebrate 20 years

Electric cooperative members recognize the iconic Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives (TSE) logo as a familiar national brand, but hot-air balloon enthusiasts know it as a symbol of their sport.

"I first flew the Touchstone Energy name at the National Hot Air Balloon Championship

in Rantoul, Ill.," said Cheri White, Cooperative Balloon Associates general manager and chief pilot of the Touchstone Energy hot-air balloon program.



That was 20 years ago, just hours after representatives of some Illinois co-ops asked her to carry their banner aloft to help publicize the TSE brand, then in its infancy. The co-ops were sponsors of the event but did not have a relationship with any balloonists at the time.

"I won the women's division, and I finished 10th overall in the nationals," White recalled. "We received a lot of media attention on television and in the papers. The co-ops supporting us saw incredible potential to engage people with the balloon."

Eight Illinois distribution co-ops and two generation and transmission providers formed Cooperative Balloon Associates.

With a growing fleet and five main pilots, the balloons have been featured nationwide at co-op meetings, state and county fairs, agricultural exhibitions, community festivals and balloon competitions.

"In 20 years, we have put approximately 931,625 miles on the ground in our vans and 1,940 hours in the air in our balloons," said White. The balloon program and Touchstone Energy have also returned more than \$320,000 in charitable donations to co-op-served communities since 1999.

It's not uncommon for all five active balloons to be airborne at different events in one day during busy periods.

If you have never seen the balloon, or wish to view it again, you have two opportunities. One of the balloons will be at the Farm Progress Show in Decatur from Aug. 27-29, and again at the Touchstone Energy Balloonfest at Lake Shelbyville Oct. 11-13. 💡



IDOA offers free recycling of agrichemical containers

The Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDOA) is encouraging farmers and agrichemical facilities to save their empty agrichemical containers for recycling across the state.

Beginning the middle of August and continuing into September, sites throughout Illinois will collect the empty containers which will be recycled and made into shipping pallets, plastic lumber and other useful products.

"This program offers farmers and agrichemical facilities a convenient opportunity to dispose of empty pesticide containers while also helping to protect the environment," says John Sullivan, IDOA director. "I encourage farmers to gather any containers they may have been planning to throw out and take them to the nearest collection site to be repurposed."

Metal and household pesticide containers are not eligible. Collection sites will accept only high-density polyethylene, #2 plastic agrichemical containers that are clean and dry. Participants are responsible for rinsing them and removing all caps, labels, booklets and foil seals.

The program is a cooperative venture between IDOA, Agriculture Container Recycling Council, GROWMARK, Inc., Illinois Fertilizer and Chemical Association, G. Phillips and Sons, L.L.C., Illinois Farm Bureau and the University of Illinois Extension.

Additional information on collection sites and dates can be found on the IDOA website at agriculture.illinois.gov, click on the "Environment" tab and then "Agrichemicals." 💡

CURRENTS



Hearing loss becoming silent epidemic

Most people don't get their hearing checked like they get an annual physical or eye exam mostly because of the association of hearing loss with aging. Hearing loss doesn't only affect older people.

With earbuds and ear bleeding sounds from video game headsets, more kids, teens and young adults are suffering permanent hearing loss. The Journal of Pediatrics reports 12.5 percent of kids between the ages of six and 19 having hearing loss from listening to loud music, particularly through earbuds at unsafe volumes. Some of today's video games have noise levels approaching 120 decibels, the equivalent of a loud rock concert or sandblasting.

Audiologist Laurel Donaldson of OSF HealthCare's Illinois Neurological Institute in Peoria says most people wait seven years to get their hearing checked from the first time they notice a change in their ability to hear. She points out there's a bit of irony in the fact people don't want to appear old by wearing a hearing aid, yet when hearing loss is treated it improves communication and keeps people feeling younger because they are more engaged.

Make a commitment to get a hearing test for you or insist on one for someone you love. 💡

Source: OSF HealthCare

Reducing vehicle theft

Summer is the worst season for vehicle theft. In 2016, more than three-quarters of a million vehicles were stolen in the U.S. – and nearly half of those were due to driver error.

Use common sense when parking and exiting your vehicle. Always take your vehicle's key and never leave it in or on your vehicle. Close and lock all windows and doors when you park and try to park in well-lit areas, if possible. Finally, never leave valuables in your vehicle, especially if they can be seen from outside the vehicle. 💡

Source: NHTSA.gov



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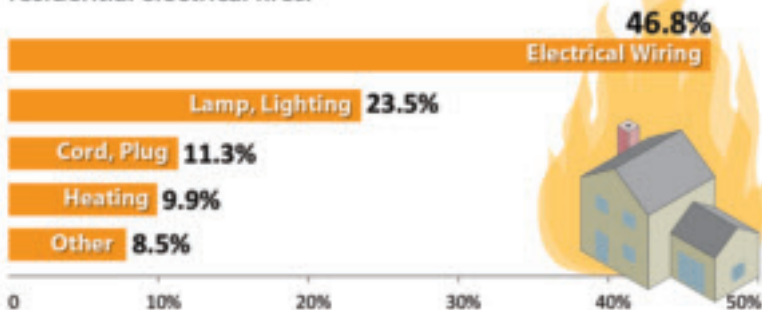
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Electrical Fire Culprits

About 26,000 household electrical fires occur in the U.S. every year. Following are the top five pieces of equipment that ignite residential electrical fires.



Source: U.S. Fire Administration National Fire Incident Reporting System; Residential Building Electrical Fires Volume 8, Issue 2; 2010 USFA Fire Estimate Summary

Spotting electrical problems at home

You walk in a room, flip a switch and have light. It's expected. When that doesn't happen, it grabs our attention and your home might be signaling there is a problem.

Signs that indicate an electrical malfunction include:

- **An unusual odor** – New appliances may emit a strange odor the first time or two they are used, but if outlets, the breaker box or other appliances emit a foul odor, you may have a problem with the wiring. Immediately turn off and unplug anything that smells wrong and call an electrician.
- **Breaker tripping** – If you have a breaker that is tripping more than occasionally, that's not normal and likely unsafe. Circuit breakers that trip signal an overloaded circuit. If an appliance trips the breaker each time you use it, it's likely the appliance. If the same outlet trips regardless of what you plug in, it's likely a problem with your electrical system and it's time for a professional.
- **Warm or sparking outlets** – If your light switches are warm to the touch or an outlet sparks, call an electrician immediately to see if your fixture should be replaced or if you need wiring repairs.
- **Buzzing sounds** – If you hear any buzzing, crackling or sizzling sounds when you flip a switch or plug into an outlet, turn off the power and consult a professional. Outlets and switches should operate silently.
- **Flickering lights** – If an electrical circuit in your home is overloaded, it could cause lights to dim or flicker. This usually happens when you have more demands than the system can handle. These surges can take a toll on your appliances and your fixtures. Large appliances should have their own circuit. A licensed electrician can move items to a different circuit or install a dedicated line.

Being aware of these warning signs can help protect your home for years to come. 💡

Outage detectives

By Maria Kavensky

Ever wonder what goes into restoring your power after an outage? The ordeal of losing electricity can be frustrating, but electric cooperatives are always looking for ways to get the power back on as soon and safely as possible.

As soon as an outage is detected, your electric co-op is working to correct the problem. And thanks to new and more advanced technologies, co-ops can restore power outages faster than ever.

Powering up after an outage starts on a larger level and ends up in local areas. First, high-voltage transmission lines are examined, then distribution stations, then main distribution lines. If the outage can't be pinpointed to these areas, tap lines and individual homes are inspected. This process allows your electric co-op to efficiently help the most members in the shortest amount of time, and co-ops are working to make this process move even faster.

One of the biggest advancements in technology that electric co-ops are using is Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI). These smart meters allow for two-way communications and work by sending information back to the co-op's operations center. This helps to distinguish between events that affect a single home or multiple outages, which is important because solving either issue is a very different process. The two-way communication also provides a way to verify that power has been restored after an outage.

Another technology is the Outage Management System (OMS), which can predict the location of the issue and how many members are impacted. Especially when used with the AMI system, the OMS can be extremely useful for a co-op's effectiveness in resolving an outage. As the AMI collects and sends data, the OMS then analyzes it to assess the impact of the outage.

One of the major benefits from improved technologies, especially for outages caused by extreme weather, is understanding where the outages are located, which helps to reduce risk for crews out on the road during the weather events.

These technologies clearly benefit electric co-ops and the members they serve. Power outages are inevitable, but as technology continues to improve, disruptions are becoming shorter and easier to resolve. 💡

Maria Kanevsky is a program manager for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

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NOW \$199

COMPARE TO GPL \$514.5

MODEL: H-21

SAVE 61%

ITEM 62515/66911 shown

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LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 11/21/19

KRAUSE & BECKER

SUPER COUPON

AIRLESS PAINT SPRAYER KIT

Customer Rating

NOW \$169.99

COMPARE TO GRACO \$299

MODEL: 262800

SAVE \$129

ITEM 68001/62915/60600 shown

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LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 11/21/19

COVER PRO

SUPER COUPON

10 FT. x 17 FT. PORTABLE GARAGE

Customer Rating

NOW \$169.99

COMPARE TO SHELTER LOGIC \$290.75

MODEL: 76377

SAVE \$120

ITEM 62859/63055/62860 shown

47889623

LIMIT 1 - Coupon valid through 11/21/19

GREENWOOD

SUPER COUPON

1-1/4 GALLON HOME AND GARDEN SPRAYER

Customer Rating

NOW \$8.99

COMPARE TO ROUNDUP \$13.48

MODEL: 190315

SAVE 33%

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LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 11/21/19

PORTLAND

SUPER COUPON

14" ELECTRIC CHAIN SAW

Customer Rating

NOW \$39.99

COMPARE TO CRAFTSMAN \$80.74

MODEL: 071-45247

SAVE 50%

ITEM 64498/64497 shown

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WARRIOR

SUPER COUPON

3 PIECE HEX DRILL SOCKET DRIVER SET

Customer Rating

NOW \$2.99

COMPARE TO DEWALT \$15.98

MODEL: DWA2240IR

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ITEM 42191/63909/63928/68513 shown

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Canton Kids' Fest
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17
Downs Village Market
 DOWNS
 Wednesdays
 thru Sept. 25

21
3rd Sunday Market
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 crafts & garden vendors

For more information or a complete listing of Events, visit our website www.icl.coop.



Elizabeth Freedom Fest

JULY 1 Enjoy live music by Ten Gallon Hat and tasty food and drinks, while the kids have their faces painted and endless fun in the bounce houses. The highlight of the event is at 7 p.m. when the U.S. Army Gold Knights parachute jump into the park. The night ends with a spectacular fireworks display. Come dressed to show your patriotism and you might win an award.

July 1, 2019; 4 – 10 p.m.
 ● Terrapin Park, 350 West St., Elizabeth
 Admission is free
www.elizabeth-il.org

Cork & Pork Festival

JULY 13 The 5th annual Cork & Pork Festival features wine tasting from area wineries, delicious pork, great live music and a beer garden. Proceeds are given to local organizations with over \$86,000 donated over the past four years.

July 13, 2019; all day
 ● Picquet Park, 200 Franklin St., Sainte Marie
 Admission is \$10
 Go to Cork & Pork Festival on Facebook



Inside Out Arts Fair

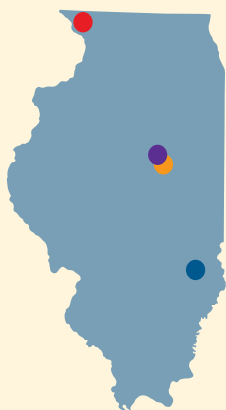
JULY 20 Celebrate art and nature at Funks Grove. The event combines free art-centered activities with a local art show and sale. Free activities include fairy house building, face painting, spin art, guided photo walks, giant bubbles, mandala making, stamping, a drum circle and live music. Demonstrations will feature the Illinois Blacksmiths and woodworkers. Concessions will be available.

July 20, 2019; 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.
 Sugar Grove Nature Center at Funks Grove
 ● 4532 N 725 East Road, McLean
 Admission is free
<https://insideoutartcoop.org/>

Electric Vehicle Drive-In

JULY 19 Corn Belt Energy will host local electric vehicle (EV) owners and enthusiasts for a modern take on the classic car show. Stop by the office for a fun night out to learn more about the growing local EV community. Local vehicle dealers will be on hand offering EV test drives, including Tesla. Food vendors (Healthy in a Hurry, Curbside Grillin' and Carl's Ice Cream) will be available. Call 800-879-0339 for more information or to register a vehicle to show.

July 19, 2019 – 5-8 p.m.
 ● Corn Belt Energy, 1 Energy Way, Bloomington
 Admission is free
 Call 800-879-0339



Celebrate, and be thankful

Who doesn't love parades, barbecues and fireworks on July Fourth? They comprise the great American holiday and celebrate the freedom to govern ourselves. As you enjoy your holiday festivities, please pause to remember the servicemen and women who lost their lives on foreign soil and those who continue to fight abroad to preserve that freedom. We owe them a debt of gratitude.

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Keeping pets (and energy bills!) comfortable

By Pat Keegan and Brad Thiessen

WE LOVE OUR PETS, and we love saving energy! This month, we're taking a look at three common energy efficiency questions from pet owners.

Q: We've thought about installing a pet door. Will this impact my energy bill?

A: Pet doors are convenient for pet owners and pets, but they can impact energy bills. A pet door that is poorly made or improperly installed will create unwanted drafts that increase energy bills and reduce the overall comfort level of your home. The wrong type of door may also be pushed open during high winds.

Consider installing a pet door that is certified by the Alliance to Save Energy (ASE) or has a double or triple flap. These types of pet doors can reduce energy loss and make life easier for you and your furry friends. The best solution may be a high-quality electronic door that is activated by a chip on your pet's collar.

It's difficult to undo a pet door installation, so before taking the leap, we suggest doing your homework. There may be other strategies that will give you and your pet some of the convenient benefits without the downsides.

Q: To save energy, we keep our home cool during winter nights and warm during summer days. How much "hot and cold" can our pup and tabby handle?

A: Cats and dogs can handle the cold better than humans. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), which regulates facilities that house cats and dogs, requires these facilities to maintain temperatures above 50 F. Some exceptions are allowed for breeds accustomed to the cold or if some form of insulation for the animals



Consider installing a pet door that is certified by the Alliance to Save Energy (ASE) or has a double or triple flap. These types of pet doors can reduce energy loss and make life easier for you and your pets.

is provided. Your pet's tolerance really depends on their breed and the thickness of their coat.

A report by the Purdue Center for Animal Science says that Siberian huskies can tolerate temperatures below freezing, but some short-haired dogs require temperatures of 59 F or higher. Older animals may require warmer temperatures than younger ones.

During summer, cats and dogs handle the heat in different ways. Cats clearly enjoy warmer temperatures than dogs, and they do a good job of reducing their activity level as temperatures climb. But both cats and dogs can get overheated. The USDA says that room temperatures in facilities housing dogs or cats should not exceed 85 F for more than 4 hours at a time.

Q: Is it okay if my cat or my dog sleeps in the garage overnight?

A: USDA rules suggest this should be fine if your garage

temperature stays between 50 F and 85 F. Pets might be able to handle a lower temperature if they have a warm, insulated bed.

I do not recommend heating or cooling your garage for your pet. This could lead to extremely high energy bills, which makes sense because an uninsulated but heated garage could easily cost more to heat than a home. A better solution is a heated pet house, which you can purchase from multiple retailers. If you're willing to spend a little more, you can even find climate-controlled pet houses that include heating and cooling options.

You can also purchase heated beds for cats and dogs. Some beds use as little as 4 watts of electricity, so they won't drain your energy bill.

We hope these tips will be helpful as you work at saving energy while caring for your favorite furry friend! 💡

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

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Enhance outdoor fun with technology this summer

SUMMERTIME IS HERE, AND for my family that means camping, boating and cookouts. We usually reserve screen time for rainy days or when it is just too hot to play outside. Typically, if we CAN spend time outside, that is what we do.

Bluetooth speakers


Bluetooth speakers have been around long enough that everyone should have one by now. They are convenient, take up little space and allow you to bring favorite tunes wherever you go. With so

LED, which tend to be brighter and last longer than a traditional flashlight. One of my new favorite tech toys happens to be an inflatable solar-powered LED lantern which we took on a recent camping trip.

I always pack my standard Coleman propane lantern, but we decided to try out these inflatable LED lanterns. While they didn't last quite as long, they provided brighter light, covering more area. We left them in the sun the next day, and they were ready to go again that night. These are now a go-to lighting solution for our camping trips, but you could use them by your pool, for night grilling or accent lighting around your patio. You can find them online or in stores by searching for inflatable solar light, PackLite, LuminAID or MPOWERD Luci. They run between \$15 and \$30.

Grilling

When it comes to grilling, I am somewhat of a traditionalist. This usually means you will find me hovering over the grill like a hawk to make sure the food comes out just the way I like it. This works most of the time, but sometimes I get distracted and you know what happens. Weber has come out with a product called iGrill Mini. This is a wired probe for your meat that measures the temperature for that perfectly cooked piece of steak. Go ahead and visit with your family or mingle with your friends, the iGrill connects to your phone to let you know when your food has reached your desired temperature.

Whatever you do this summer, take the time to get outside and enjoy it. Take a break from your screen technology and enjoy the benefits of summer technology. 

many options, it's hard to choose. Bose, UE, Altec Lansing and JBL all make great Bluetooth speakers. I usually look for something with good audio quality that produces big sound with minimal footprint, which is hard to find for less than \$100. It's also a good idea to choose one that is waterproof for those days at the pool, lake, boat or for the occasional pop-up storm.

LED technology

LED technology is being used in more innovative ways and is a low energy consuming technology. If you need flashlights for this year's camping trip, make sure you buy

As someone who is a self-proclaimed geek and enjoys technology, I also appreciate nature and the simplicity of enjoying what summer has to offer. I am always trying out new technology that compliments outdoor activities. For me, summer technology needs to balance between functionality and transparency. It should make traditional summer activities more comfortable, efficient or convenient without being a distraction. Let's look at some summertime technology that you may want to consider utilizing this year.



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



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

Leading Acid Reflux Pill Becomes an Anti-Aging Phenomenon

Clinical studies show breakthrough acid reflux treatment also helps maintain vital health and helps protect users from the serious conditions that accompany aging such as fatigue and poor cardiovascular health

by David Waxman
Seattle Washington:

A clinical study on a leading acid reflux pill shows that its key ingredient relieves digestive symptoms while suppressing the inflammation that contributes to premature aging in men and women.

And, if consumer sales are any indication of a product's effectiveness, this 'acid reflux pill turned anti-aging phenomenon' is nothing short of a miracle.

Sold under the brand name AloeCure, it was already backed by clinical data documenting its ability to provide all day and night relief from heartburn, acid reflux, constipation, irritable bowel, gas, bloating, and more.

But soon doctors started reporting some incredible results...

"With AloeCure, my patients started reporting less joint pain, more energy, better sleep, stronger immune systems... even less stress and better skin, hair, and nails" explains Dr. Liza Leal; a leading integrative health specialist and company spokesperson.

AloeCure contains an active ingredient that helps improve digestion by acting as a natural acid-buffer that improves the pH balance of your stomach.

Scientists now believe that this acid imbalance is what contributes to painful inflammation throughout the rest of the body.

The daily allowance of AloeCure has shown to calm this inflammation which is why AloeCure is so effective.

Relieving other stressful symptoms related to GI health like pain, bloating, fatigue, cramping, constipation, diarrhea, heartburn, and nausea.

Now, backed with new clinical studies, AloeCure is being recommended by doctors everywhere to help improve digestion, calm painful inflammation, soothe the joint pain, and even reduce the appearance of wrinkles – helping patients to look and feel decades younger.

FIX YOUR GUT & FIGHT INFLAMMATION

Since hitting the market, sales for AloeCure have taken off and there are some very good reasons why.

To start, the clinical studies have been impressive. Participants taking the active ingredient in AloeCure saw a stunning 100% improvement in digestive symptoms, which includes fast and lasting relief from reflux.

Users also experienced higher energy levels and endurance, relief from chronic discomfort and better sleep. Some even reported healthier looking skin, hair, and nails.

A healthy gut is the key to a reducing swell-

ing and inflammation that can wreak havoc on the human body. Doctors say this is why AloeCure works on so many aspects of your health.

AloeCure's active ingredient is made from the healing compound found in Aloe vera. It is both safe and healthy. There are also no known side effects.

Scientists believe that it helps improve digestive and immune health by acting as a natural acid-buffer that improves the pH balance of your stomach.

Research has shown that this acid imbalance contributes to painful inflammation throughout your entire body and is why AloeCure seems to be so effective.

EXCITING RESULTS FROM PATIENTS

To date over 5 million bottles of AloeCure have been sold, and the community seeking non-pharma therapy for their GI health continues to grow.

According to Dr. Leal, her patients are absolutely thrilled with their results and are often shocked by how fast it works.

"For the first time in years, they are free from concerns about their digestion and almost every other aspect of their health," says Dr. Leal, "and I recommend it to everyone who wants to improve GI health without resorting to drugs, surgery, or OTC medications."

"I was always in 'indigestion hell.' Doctors put me on all sorts of antacid remedies. Nothing worked. Dr. Leal recommended I try AloeCure. And something remarkable happened... Not only were all the issues I had with my stomach gone - completely gone – but I felt less joint pain and I was able to actually sleep through the night."

With so much positive feedback, it's easy to see why the community of believers is growing and sales for the new pill are soaring.

THE SCIENCE BEHIND ALOECURE

AloeCure is a pill that's taken just once daily. The pill is small. Easy to swallow. There are no harmful side effects and it does not require a prescription.

The active ingredient is a rare Aloe Vera component known as acemannan.

Made from 100% organic Aloe Vera, AloeCure uses a proprietary process that results in the highest quality, most bio-available levels of acemannan known to exist.

According to Dr. Leal and several of her colleagues, improving the pH balance of your stomach and restoring gut health is the key to revitalizing your entire body.

When your digestive system isn't healthy, it causes unwanted stress on your immune sys-



tem, which results in inflammation in the rest of the body.

The recommended daily allowance of acemannan in AloeCure has been proven to support digestive health, and calm painful inflammation without side effects or drugs.

This would explain why so many users are experiencing impressive results so quickly.

REVITALIZE YOUR ENTIRE BODY

With daily use, AloeCure helps users look and feel decades younger and defend against some of the painful inflammation that accompanies aging and can make life hard.

By buffering stomach acid and restoring gut health, AloeCure calms painful inflammation and will help improve digestion... soothe aching joints... reduce the appearance of wrinkles and help restore hair and nails ... manage cholesterol and oxidative stress... and improve sleep and brain function... without side effects or expense.

Readers can now reclaim their energy, vitality, and youth regardless of age or current level of health.

One AloeCure Capsule Daily

- Helps End Digestion Nightmares
- Helps Calm Painful Inflammation
- Soothes Stiff & Aching Joints
- Reduces appearance of Wrinkles & Increases Elasticity
- Manages Cholesterol & Oxidative Stress
- Supports Healthy Immune System
- Improves Sleep & Brain Function

HOW TO GET ALOECURE

Due to the enormous interest consumers have shown in AloeCure, the company has decided to extend their nationwide savings event for a little while longer. Here's how it works...

Call the AloeCure number and speak to a live person in the US. Callers will be greeted by a knowledgeable and friendly person approved to offer up to 3 FREE bottles of AloeCure with your order. AloeCure's Toll-Free number is 1-800-593-8218. Only a limited discounted supply of AloeCure is currently available.

Consumers who miss out on the current product inventory will have to wait until more becomes available and that could take weeks. They will also not be guaranteed any additional savings. The company advises not to wait. Call 1-800-593-8218 today.

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Don't let unsafe actions make waves in summer fun

WHETHER CLOSE TO HOME or while on vacation, hot summer temperatures beckon many people to activities in and around the water. To help ensure that the fun stays in these summer activities, it is important to keep safety in mind. Safe Electricity shares tips to help keep you and your loved ones safe when enjoying water recreation activities this summer.

Check the weather

Before spending time on the water, be sure to check weather forecasts and stay up-to-date on the possibility of storms. Postpone your plans if a thunderstorm is expected, as the risks for lightning strikes are especially high in or near bodies of water. Remember the advice from the National Weather Service (NWS), "When thunder roars, go indoors."

You are not safe from lightning strikes while outside, so once you hear thunder, immediately get out of any body of water. "With the first signs of a storm, head for the shore," says Jim Miles, Energy Education Council board member. "Get to a safe shelter, such as an enclosed building with electricity or plumbing or an enclosed

metal-topped vehicle with its windows up. Wait until at least 30 minutes have passed without thunder to return outside."

Be aware of power lines

Be aware of your surroundings and look out for potential hazards. Always check the location of nearby power lines before boating or fishing. Make sure you are casting the line away from power lines to avoid potential contact.

Contact between your boat and a power line could be devastating. Do not raise a mast or antenna when your boat is near a power line. Never attempt to move a power line out of the way so a boat can pass underneath. Maintain a safe distance of at least 10 feet between your boat and power lines.

Keep in mind that water levels are constantly changing, altering the distance between the water and the line. Do not assume you can safely pass under a power line just because you have in the past.

If your boat comes in contact with a power line, do not enter the water. The water could be energized. Instead, stay in the boat and

avoid touching anything metal until help arrives or until your boat is no longer in contact with the line.

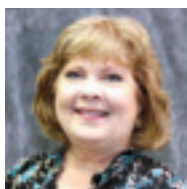
Use caution when swimming

Do not swim around docks with electrical equipment or boats plugged into shore power. If you are in the water and feel a tingle of electric current, shout to let others know, try to stay upright, tuck your legs up to make yourself smaller, and swim away from anything that could be energized. Do not head to boat or dock ladders to get out.

If you see someone who you suspect is getting shocked, do not immediately jump in to save them. Throw them a float, turn off the shore power connection at the meter base, and/or unplug shore power cords. Try to eliminate the source of electricity as quickly as possible; then call for help.

To help prevent the risk of electricity entering the water, have your boat and dock electrical systems regularly inspected and maintained by a professional familiar with marine electrical codes.

To learn more about electrical safety, visit SafeElectricity.org. 



Molly Hall is Director of Safe Electricity. Email molly-hall@SafeElectricity.org. Safe Electricity is a public awareness program of the Energy Education Council. EnergyEdCouncil.org

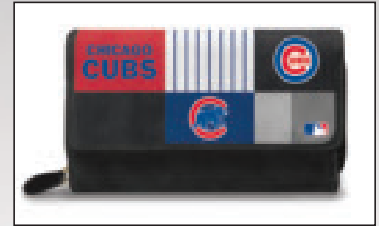
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Not all garden insects are bad

MANY GARDENERS MAY SEE an insect in their garden and immediately suspect the worst – that insect will eat holes in their leaves and produce or stress their plants by sucking out the plant juices. All those things can certainly happen, but luckily nature has a solution – beneficial insects.

Beneficial insects are naturally-occurring insects that help control garden pests, whether by eating it, eating the pest's eggs, or parasitizing it. Ladybird beetles, for example, are a great beneficial insect to have in the garden because both the larvae and adults feed on soft-bodied pests, like aphids, and help control an infestation in the garden.

There are also various parasitic wasps or parasitoids that lay their eggs inside pests like aphids or tomato hornworms. The larvae develop inside the pest, essentially killing it from the inside out.

How can you attract these naturally-occurring beneficials to your garden? Beneficial insects like to have a diverse selection of things to feed from, so start off by planting a variety of fruits, vegetables and flowers. Don't simply plant the garden in rows. Instead, try interplanting your fruits and vegetables with flowers throughout the garden.

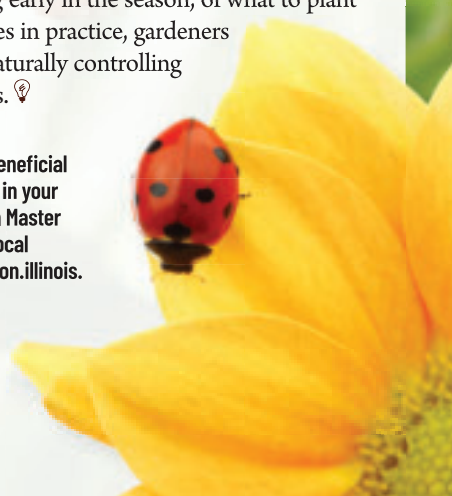
Parasitoids need to feed on nectar, honeydew and pollen and prefer to feed from plants with small flowers. Sweet alyssum, members of the carrot family such as Queen Anne's lace, members of the brassica family like broccoli, and herbs like dill, fennel and coriander are all great plants with small flowers. Plants in the aster family, such as cosmos, are great as well.

You may also consider planting marigolds or pepper plants around the garden to serve as trap crops. These plants attract garden pests away from your other desired plants. The infested marigolds and pepper plants can then be removed, treated with pesticides or kept in the garden to maintain pest populations for beneficial insects to feed from.

Reducing the use of chemical pesticides in the garden is also essential. Most pesticides that kill your garden pests are also going to kill your beneficial insects and may leave a residual that lasts the rest of the season.

With simple planning early in the season, of what to plant in the garden and changes in practice, gardeners can take a step toward naturally controlling the pests in their gardens. 💡

For more information about beneficial insects and identifying a pest in your garden, contact the Extension Master Gardener Volunteers at your local Extension office: web.extension.illinois.edu/mg/



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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Birds OF A feather

Birdwatch together

By Colten Bradford

CHANCES ARE SOMEONE YOU know is a birdwatcher. According to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, of all wildlife in the U.S., birds attract the largest following. It estimates 45.1 million people in the nation are birdwatchers and rack up a whopping average of 96 days annually of bird observing.

“Birdwatching isn’t just a group of goofy-looking people running around with binoculars,” says Jim Herkert, executive director of the Illinois Audubon Society. “There’s lots of normal, everyday people who are birdwatchers: lawyers, doctors, a whole range of folks.” He says there’s even a trend of punk rockers getting into it.

More than 420 species of birds have been spotted in Illinois. Fish is the only group with more species. “Of course, the big difference is that you can see virtually all birds,”

Herkert says. “The fact that they are all around us and there’s such a wide diversity of them I think is one of the reasons people love them.”

According to Herkert, Illinois is one of the best spots in the country for birdwatching, and that’s because Illinois is in a flyway. The main one in the U.S. is the Mississippi Flyway where birds tend to follow the Mississippi River and Illinois River during migration.

While there are birds that nest in Illinois year-round, every spring and fall there are

huge numbers of birds that go from the tropics to Canada. They go north to breed and come back in the fall.

Early bird catches the worm

It’s never too late or too early to start birdwatching. While some kids get into it at a young age, others start later because the opportunity aligns. Herkert admits that he was a little birder as a kid.

“We traveled a lot as a family,” Herkert explains. “I would try to identify birds we saw around the campsite.” But he got hooked on it in college.

“I’m sort of bird crazy,” he says. “To me, birdwatching is sort of a puzzle. Can I solve this puzzle? I just have fun with it. There’s no pressure. It is just like detective work.”

He says to start by trying to identify the birds you see, whether it’s around the house or when you are traveling. However, there is much more to birdwatching than identifying bird species.

“Birdwatching is fun. It’s relaxing. It’s destressing,” Herkert says. “Spending time outdoors is good for your health. It could be what motivates people to get outside. It could be time to spend with your kids... It helps connect you with the natural world around you.”

“There are people who are absolute avid birders to the point where they’re always birding,” says Jo Fessett, assistant to the executive director of the Illinois Audubon Society. “Some go out of the state or out of the country. Then there’s a good flock of them that just want to sit and watch their backyard.”





Get your ducks in a row

When it comes to birdwatching, not many supplies are needed. First, start off with a decent pair of binoculars. “You could buy a pair for \$50, or you could spend \$3,000 on a pair,” Herkert explains. “If you are starting out, I would not recommend the cheapest pair. For \$50 to \$100, you can get a decent pair that would certainly get you started.”

In addition, a notebook will help keep track of the birds you see. “Birders are compulsive listers,” Herkert says. Most birdwatchers keep several lists. “Some will have a yard list, a county list, a list of birds seen this year and a lifetime list.”

For beginners, it may be difficult to tell the difference between species. That’s where a good field guide comes in. “Field guides are great,” says Kaleb Baker, land steward for the Illinois Audubon Society. “They have information on how to tell the difference between similar looking species.”

Baker helps manage the 3,000 acres across the state that the society owns. While he’s more focused on the habitat that’s home to birds and other wildlife, he considers himself

a budding birder. “I’m still very much learning to bird, which is fun,” he says. He also suggests tools for birdwatching that can’t be purchased. “You need a lot of patience and persistence.”





A helpful tool for new and experienced birders is eBird, and it comes highly recommended by the Illinois Audubon Society. It's a website and an app that can be downloaded to a smartphone.

"If you're not into eBird, you should be," says Jim Herkert, executive director of the Illinois Audubon Society. "Beside it being fun, you can put your data in, and it actually helps conservation. Second, it's great because it is global. You can use it as a resource anywhere."

All you must do is create an eBird account, and you can start keeping track of your bird lists, upload photos and sound bites you capture, and report observations.


There's also an interactive map that shows the location of bird sightings, types of birds found there and time the birds were seen. If you're looking for a specific bird, you can search for it and find locations where others have spotted that bird.

"It's kind of like a Google map," says Jo Fessett, assistant to the executive director of the Illinois Audubon Society. "It's also helpful if you're a new birdwatcher and not sure what you've just seen. Go see what other people are reporting and it might give you some help in narrowing down."

The map on the eBird site is color coded. As you zoom in, you can see places where people have seen a lot of birds. It is a resource that can help find the best places to bird.

"I would encourage any parent or grandparent with a young child to have that child start an eBird account. It's free," Fessett says. "It will follow you your entire life. In years to come, you can look back at it."

While this tool is helpful for birdwatchers, eBird is also used to help conservation. "Birds are such an environmental indicator," Fessett explains. "If there's a trend, it's an indication that something is going on in that ecosystem."

"Because of migration, [eBird] has the potential to build a connection that's way beyond Illinois," Herkert says. "It helps build connections to other parts of the world." 

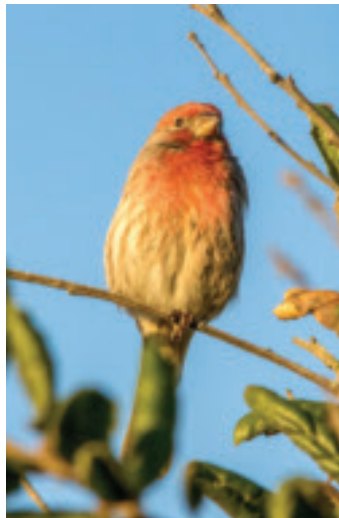
Rule the roost

Birdwatching is growing in popularity and is a hobby practically anyone can do. "Birdwatching is great for people of all ages," Fessett says. "You don't have to be outside. You can just sit in your window and watch."

According to Herkert, most birdwatchers primarily bird in their yard. "I count in my backyard every morning, and I frequently count 20 to 25 different kinds of birds in five minutes," he says.

For beginners, the Illinois Audubon Society suggests starting by trying to identify birds in your yard. To attract more birds, have a water source and a variety of feeders to bring in different species. You can even plant different kinds of shrubs and trees.

"The more diverse your yard and what you feed, the more diverse the birds," Herkert explains.



Fly the coop

There are many who travel to look for birds. That could be anywhere from a city park, state park or county forest preserve. "Any public land tends to be where people go," Herkert says. "By visiting different kinds of habitats, the more bird species you're going to see."

If you're getting started, Herkert advises to look for a bird hike in your area where you can go out with people who have birding experience and help you find birds.

"I would recommend reaching out and try to find a local Audubon group," Herkert suggests. "Just look for bird hikes in your area. There could be a nature center that hosts a bird hike."

Birdwatching is also a great way to socialize. "People go out and bird together," Herkert explains. "There's lots of ways it could get into your social fabric."

If you're looking to travel somewhere to bird, most of the Illinois Audubon Society's sanctuaries are public accessible including some with trails and facilities. Visit illinoisaudubon.org to learn more.





Illinois Audubon Society

The Illinois Audubon Society is Illinois' oldest conservation organization. It was founded in 1897 and had a mission to protect birds and advocate for wildlife. Some of the earliest work the society did was to help establish federal laws for bird protection, promote conservation, establish state parks and county forest preserve districts, and stop pollution.

"Birds are still a major focus for us," says Jim Herkert, executive director of the Illinois Audubon Society. "But now the mission is to promote the appreciation and perpetuation of the flora and fauna of this state and the habitats that they need. It is a broader mission, but birds are still the key focus for us and many of our members."

The organization owns more than 3,000 acres of wildlife sanctuaries across Illinois. Most of these sanctuaries are publicly accessible and open from dawn to dusk. Additionally, there are 17 chapters of the Illinois Audubon Society scattered across the state that offer many programs that include birdwatching field trips, conservation projects and educational programs.

For more information about the Illinois Audubon Society, to locate a local Audubon chapter or become a member, visit illinoisaudubon.org.



Take someone under your wing

"Take a kid birding." That's Fessett's advice for the experienced birdwatcher. She knows this from experience because she's been birding since she was around 9 and remembers the first pair of binoculars she received for her birthday. "My dad knew his birds really well, so it was a challenge for me to spot the bird and know what it was before him."

"Share your passion with someone else and encourage them," Herkert agrees. "Get them hooked by sparking their curiosity. You really need someone who has a little bit of experience to provide a better spark."

Ways you can help get others involved in birdwatching is by giving a birdwatching starter pack (complete with binoculars, a field guide and a notebook), organize a group outing, and be there for advice and tips.

"I have people call me and say, if I sing the tune, can you tell me what it is? They send us photos, soundbites and even funny stories," Fessett says. "We like to find the spark that gets people interested. If they get interested in birds, at some point they will realize they need to protect the habitat. Once they love the creature, they want to protect its habitat."



Bird photos courtesy of Maurice Shallow.

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62460

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

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

Leroy Farm & Lawn
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Leroy, IL 61752

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

Marine Mower
& Saw Inc
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Marine, IL 62061

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McNabb, IL 61335

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Okawville, IL 62271

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Ursa, IL 62376

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and Repair
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Biggsville, IL 61418

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Washington, IL 61571

Small Engine Specialty
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Chillicothe, IL 61523

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Oblong, IL 62449

Sparta Equipment Sales
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Sparta, IL 62286-1046

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ILLINOIS BARBECUE IS HEATING UP



By Lisa Cherry

BARBECUE IS SYNONYMOUS WITH a good time. Warm weather, cooking outside, hanging out with family and friends—these elements lend to our love for the many interpretations of this ubiquitous dish. But for some, barbecue is a way of life.

Barbecue restaurants

David Sandusky, owner and pitmaster of Beast Craft BBQ Co., Belleville, believes the role of food in the world's different cultures bleeds into all facets of life. He says barbecue can be found all over the world in varying contexts; in the U.S., it's subcultural, almost denominational.

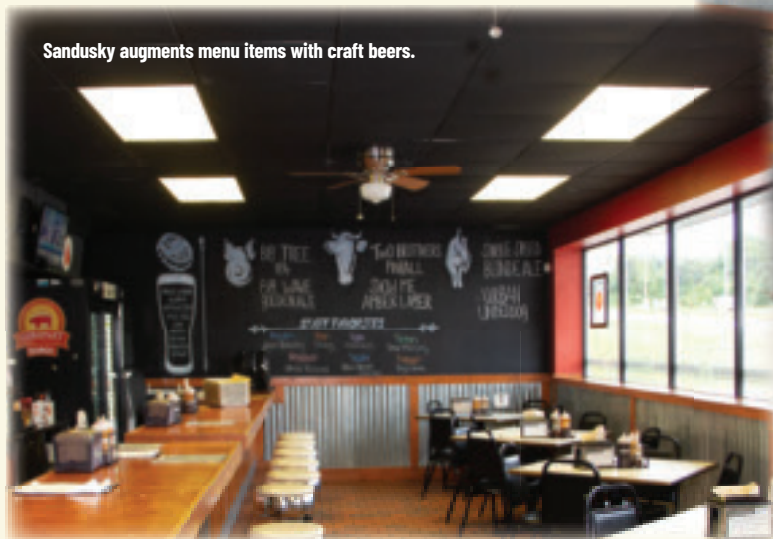
Well-known styles in the States are often referred to by their place of origin, including North Carolina, South Carolina, Memphis, Kansas City and Texas. They vary in types of meat, rubs and sauces used.

Though the emphasis on barbecue in Illinois has historically been less than that of other states, Sandusky asserts that people are now paying more attention, and that it is at a point of escalation. He mentions the growth of barbecue in Chicago and, of course, "grandfather" of barbecue Mike Mills, owner of 17th Street Barbecue in southern Illinois.



Sandusky and his daughter in front of Beast Craft BBQ Co.

Sandusky augments menu items with craft beers.



Sandusky says there is a distinction between the competitive barbecue circuit and the barbecue restaurant industry—that in some ways they are mutually exclusive.

For instance, at Beast Craft BBQ, the focus is on using the very best meats and doing as little as possible to them—as Sandusky puts it, “letting the animal speak for itself”—whereas, competitive barbecue is criteria-based.

Sandusky left a fine-dining background for barbecue. He says he chose it because it’s hard, and he is highly competitive. In an industry so established, Sandusky wants to shake things up. His passion is what he calls the premium landscape, reflected in Beast’s motto: “All killer, no filler.” This applies to sides as well. He’s not going to serve something because it’s expected—only if it’s outstanding.

Because of this, his entire pork menu is sourced from Compart Family Farms in Minnesota. According to Compart’s website, their method is “a carefully managed pork breeding program ... the result of 55-plus years of combining the very best purebred lines of the Duroc breed.” They also employ a proprietary feeding program and reduce stressors in their livestock’s environment to optimize the quality of their meats.

Beast Craft BBQ Co.

20 South Belt West
 Belleville, IL, 62220
 618-257-9000
 info@beastcraftbbq.com
 beastcraftbbq.com
 dauidsandusky.com

Awards:

- 2018 “Best BBQ in Illinois” – Food & Wine Magazine
- Named to 2018 “33 Best BBQ Joints in America” – Thrillist

Other Illinois BBQ restaurants to try:

A Fine Swine BBQ, afineswine.com

- New Baden
- Mount Vernon
- Carlyle

17th Street Barbecue, 17bbq.com

- Marion
- Murphysboro

Black Dog Smoke and Ale House, blackdogsmoke.com

- Urbana
- Champaign

Pauly’s BBQ, pauly’sbbq.com – Winner of Illinois Pork Producers Association’s 2019 Pulled Pork Madness contest

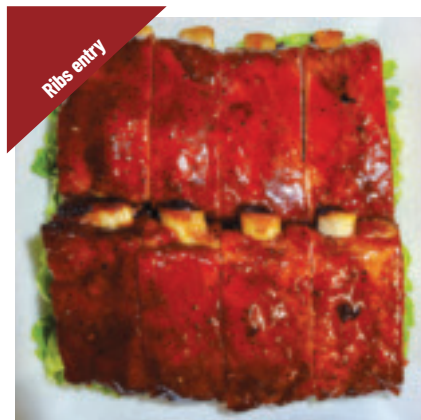
- Arthur

Doc’s Smokehouse

- Edwardsville

Competitive barbecue

As Sandusky said, unlike the restaurant industry, competitive barbecue is based upon a certain set of criteria. For example, Kansas City Barbeque Society’s (KCBS) rules and regulations require competitors to submit their cuts of meat for inspection and to use only wood, wood pellets or charcoal as heat sources. KCBS categories are chicken, pork ribs, pork and beef brisket. Each is judged on appearance, taste and tenderness.



Pigs and Swigs Festival/Up in Smoke on the Square, Lincoln

Bryan and Kari Luke, of Cissna Park, competed in barbecue competitions for 13 years. Now, they are representatives of the Steak Cookoff Association (SCA). They echo Sandusky’s sentiments, both that Illinois is making a name for itself on the map, and that barbecue competitions and restaurants vastly differ.

Their journey on the competitive barbecue circuit began in 2005, first in “backyard” competitions and later as “professional” in Kansas City Barbeque Society contests. One year, they participated in 22 events. The Lukes say Lincoln’s Pigs & Swigs/Up in Smoke on the Square is one of their favorites because of the location and the people.

For them, it all started with a trip to Memphis in May’s World Championship Barbecue Cooking Contest. There they met two men, one a competitor who sold smokers, the other a judge. Bryan bought a smoker, which later led to a second-place finish for ribs at his first backyard competition in Le Roy. It was then, Bryan says, “The barbecue bug bit.” They named their team “It’s 5 O’Clock Somewhere” and were on the road to becoming award-winning professional competitors.



Smoking trailers fill the square in Lincoln for the annual Pigs & Swigs/Up in Smoke on the Square.

At the Lincoln event, among other distinctions, they have been named Reserve Grand Champion (2014) and Grand Champion (2017). They also qualified to compete in the World Food Championship, where Kari won the steak category.

They have since retired from competitive barbecue but that doesn't stop them from attending events. As representatives for SCA, they oversee aspects of steak competitions, including judging, scoring and the cooks themselves. More importantly, they get to see old friends. One of those friends is the Lincoln barbecue event's current organizer, Chris Graue.

The Lukes love the friendly culture, saying everyone hangs out except for competition time, when focus zeroes in on the food. Still, Bryan says participants can always borrow something they need or get help from each other. "We met our best friends because of barbecue," says Kari.

Things have changed since they started out with just a pickup truck and a smoker and slept in lawn chairs. (They eventually graduated to a motorhome and smoking trailer.) They've noticed that it's become harder for backyard competitors to bridge the growing divide between amateur and professional competition.

These days, though competition for them is a thing of the past, their love of barbecue remains. They serve it for lunch at their convenience store, Luke's One Stop, in Cissna Park. They also recommend competitions to try, including the Murphysboro Barbecue Cook-off, the Westmont Red White and BBQ Festival, and Belvidere Heritage Days BBQ Showdown.

Chris Graue, who heads up the Pigs & Swigs barbecue competition, also competed for several years, drawn by his love of cooking and trying different recipes and techniques. Early on, he says he had the opportunity to talk to barbecue icons like Mike Mills. "We're a family," he says.

According to Graue, competing is hard work, especially for those doing it up to 38 weekends a year. He's content with overseeing the competition, getting to experience that same camaraderie and bringing people to Lincoln. "We're proud of our town," he says.

The event is in its ninth year, originally part of the Lincoln Balloon Festival. The "Swigs" portion—featuring craft beers and a homebrew competition—was added five years ago.

Backyard competitors submit ribs and chicken, while KCBS contenders cook pork,



Chris Graue oversees the Pigs and Swigs barbecue competition.

brisket, chicken and ribs. Graue outlines the day of competition cooking/submission timeframe for competitors:

Start times:

- 2 a.m.brisket/pork
- 6 a.m. ribs
- 7 a.m.chicken

Submission times:

- Noonchicken
- 12:30 p.m. ribs
- 1 p.m. pork
- 1:30 p.m. brisket

Graue says turn-in for four categories in an hour and a half can be challenging. The backyard competition is a little easier with only two categories. The highest number of teams they've had competing was 53, which was demanding for organizers as well. He says keeping the number of teams to the mid-30s is easier to manage.

He foresees a lot of potential growth for the SCA steak competition (now a sanctioned event) because it is a less expensive and speedier process. Graue has seen the number of those teams grow in just a few years from 22 to 39.

Graue's advice to all would-be competitors? "Take it slow, like the barbecue."

Though connoisseurs agree that barbecue experienced from a restaurant and competition barbecue are two entirely different things, the pitmasters of both love what they do. It appears that barbecue lovers in Illinois are reaping the delicious rewards. 🍷

UPCOMING EVENTS

July 19-20
Central Illinois BBQ
Throwdown
Peoria

July 27-28
3rd Annual Smokin'
On Main Street BBQ
Competition
Collinsville

Aug. 10-11
4th Annual Chillin'
and Grillin' for the
Boys in Blue
Marine

Sept. 13-14
Decatur Smokin'
BBQ Festival
Decatur

Sept. 19-21
2019 Murphysboro
Barbecue Cook-off
Murphysboro

Oct. 5-6
Edwardsville Roots
Festival and Barbecue
Competition
Edwardsville

Oct. 11-12
Central Illinois
Bragging Rights BBQ
Competition
Arthur

Nov. 2-3
4th Annual Veterans
Honor Que
Columbia





The Ohio River has much to say about when this barge cafe opens in the spring, but owner Patrick Joyner ensures the ramp is high and dry.

E'town River Restaurant

By *Karen Binder*

HOOK, LINE AND SINKER, the freshest fried catfish dinner can be caught at the E'town River Restaurant.

It's likely those tender, but crispy golden nuggets were caught in the Ohio River that morning and delivered by boat to this unique barge restaurant in Elizabethtown in Hardin County.

Using the restaurant's own method to cut and clean the fish into perfect sizes for the fry baskets, many of these popular catch-of-the-day prizes literally pass from boat to plate in less than 12 hours.

"We're an attraction, we're a draw. It helps bring people to E'town," says Patrick Joyner, the restaurant's third owner for 12 years now.

Business on the river

E'town, as the locals call it, is home to about 300 people, with many of them regular customers since the restaurant opened in 1988.

The establishment is a barge complex comprised of the restaurant, a patio with outdoor seating, a fish shack processing center and a boat dock. The barge housing the business is 20 feet wide while the restaurant is 35 feet wide. It's cantilevered across steel beams that rest from edge to edge on the barge. A platform hangs over the perimeter and smartly placed tanks are used for ballast.

"That's why it looks like we're sitting right on top of the water," Joyner says.

That's also why Joyner keeps a close eye on river levels.

"We follow predictions for Golconda and Shawneetown. We fall somewhere between," he explains.

Although the Ohio River doesn't experience as many flood issues as the Mighty Mississippi, it does have its share of high water. For Joyner, the river levels affect whether the ramp from the parking lot can clear the water. It also means the restaurant closes mid-November and re-opens each April depending on when the river cooperates.

This year, that was after two false starts.

"We opened three times this spring," Joyner said. On April 17, it opened for five days, then closed for 10, re-opened one day and then closed again for two days. "When the water goes across the road, people don't want to get their feet wet," Joyner jokes.

Closing for the season is typically right after Illinois' first shotgun season in November.



The best river views are from the "patio."



Fry baskets are always full of catfish.



Grilled burgers are a good catch, too.



Traditional sides dress up this catfish dinner.



The shrimp dinner is equally crispy, but tender.



Save room for one (or two) of these cheesecakes.

“We’re good for summer, but you have to watch the river all the time,” Joyner says, adding that a huge tree tagged the fish shack last year.

Setting up a processing center and kitchen right on the river means the four or five commercial fisherman who supply the restaurant can unload their catches from the water. The fishermen place the fish in aerated tanks, so they are delivered live – no dead fish are accepted. The fish are kept alive until they are on the processing table.

“That’s how fresh our fish is,” Joyner says.

In one week, as much as 6,000 pounds of catfish may be delivered.

“So, we turn a lot of fish. I don’t ever turn them away. I have to get as much as I can,” Joyner says.

There’s no magic number on the restaurant’s fish inventory. “If we get ahead of the game, we freeze it because fish aren’t always running,” Joyner explains. “We’re taking as much as we can because there will be a time when it gets hot and dry. Things slow down and then the fishermen don’t catch as well.”

Yet, it’s so busy as many as 16 people work there at the peak of summer.

Catfish and more catfish

About 80 percent of sales are catfish. However, there are plenty of other menu offerings including burgers, grilled chicken, pork tenderloin, grilled chicken salad, chicken strips, BBQ and the popular BLTs.

It’s the catfish that flies out of the tiny kitchen. Joyner says the fish is prepared with a special cut without any of the red meat or fat. “We kind of spoil the public on the white meat only but you know people come here for the fish,” he says.

There’s been no change in the breading recipe or frying process since the restaurant opened. While the breading is a time-honored tradition with paprika and salt, “good luck figuring out the proportions,” Joyner says.

The fish can be purchased by the pound or by the plate, with sides, or as nuggets, filets or a sandwich (sorry, no fiddlers here). It can be enjoyed in the window-wrapped air-conditioned dining room or on the two-story patio barge just a step away. “Everyone wants to sit on top for the river view,” Joyner says.

Likewise, boaters on the river can pull up to the docks (and bring their own beer).

Whatever way you arrive, one thing is certain, “our fish is good, period,” says Joyner. 📍

IF YOU GO...

Elizabethtown is tucked in along the Ohio River Scenic Byway, so there’s plenty to explore in the area. Not to miss is Cave-in-Rock State Park with its river pirate history.

Ohio River Scenic Byway:
www.enjoyillinois.com/explore/listing/ohio-river-scenic-byway

Tourism:
SouthernmostIllinois.org

Regional wine:
IllinoisWine.com

Shawnee National Forest:
www.fs.usda.gov/shawnee/

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 11 a.m.-8 p.m.
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Smokin' hot Independence Day

IT'S TIME TO BREAK out the red, white and blue and celebrate July Fourth! Cookouts and picnics seem to go hand-in-hand with the holiday and everyone has their favorite foods. Rather than stick with the expected burgers and hotdogs, (and there's nothing wrong with those!) we decided to break out the smoker to celebrate with smoky, finger-lickin' good meats and summer sides. 💡



3, 2, 1 RIBS

3, 2, 1 Ribs

Servings: 6-8

Wood chips - hickory, mesquite, apple or cherry
 2 racks spare ribs, with membrane removed
 Apple juice
 Your favorite BBQ sauce

Rub:
 1/4 cup brown sugar
 1 tablespoon sea salt
 2 teaspoons cracked black pepper
 2 teaspoons smoked paprika

2 teaspoons garlic powder
 2 teaspoons onion powder
 1 teaspoon dry mustard
 1/2 teaspoon chipotle chili powder

In a small bowl, combine rub ingredients. Place in an airtight jar and set aside. Preheat smoker to 250 F. Put apple juice, beer or water in water tray. Lightly brush olive oil over ribs, sprinkle liberally with rub and pat to help adhere the spices to the ribs. Before putting ribs in smoker, add wood chips. Put ribs on smoker rack and smoke for 3 hours. After 90 minutes, open smoker and spritz with a spray bottle filled with apple juice and water. Spritz every 30 minutes. After 3 hours, wrap ribs tightly in aluminum foil with a bit of apple juice added to the packet. Place meat side down on rack and continue smoking for 2 hours. Remove foil and baste with your favorite bbq sauce, if desired, or skip the sauce and let smoke for 1 more hour. Remove from smoker and let rest.

Nutrition information: 803 calories; 54.3g fat; 1106mg sodium; 39.5g carbohydrates; 36.1g protein.

WE NEED RECIPES!

Upcoming monthly topics

- Apples
- Coffee
- Root vegetables

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.



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.

Smoky Chicken Wings with Alabama White Sauce

Servings: 10

6 pounds chicken wings
 Your favorite rub
 2 tablespoons cornstarch

Sauce:
 1 cup mayonnaise
 1/3 cup cider vinegar
 1 tablespoon water
 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce

1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
 1 teaspoon fresh ground pepper
 1/2 teaspoon onion powder
 1/8 teaspoon cayenne

Separate wings into drumettes and wings and pat dry. Place wings in a container, add rub and cornstarch and mix to coat. Let rest for an hour. Heat smoker or grill to 250 F. Place wings over indirect heat. Add wood to smoker. Smoke for 2-2.5 hours. Meanwhile, combine sauce ingredients and refrigerate until ready to use. Using a quick read thermometer, check wings. They need to be 165 F. Let rest and serve with sauce.

Nutrition information: 619 calories; 28g fat; 524mg sodium; 7.6g carbohydrates; 79g protein.

Red, White and Blue Cake

Servings: 12

1 angel food cake mix
2 - 8 oz. containers Cool Whip, thawed
1 - 7 oz. marshmallow cream
2 teaspoons almond extract
Assorted berries - strawberries, blueberries, raspberries, blackberries
Mint

Bake cake according to package directions and cool completely. Wash berries, stem and set aside (cut strawberries in half). Mix together 1 container Cool Whip and marshmallow cream. Fold in other Cool Whip and almond extract. Cut cake into thirds. Layer cake with Cool Whip mixture and top with assorted berries. Repeat layers. Finish with Cool Whip and berries on top and garnish with mint. Refrigerate until serving. Adapted from hoosierhomemade.com.

Nutrition information: 122 calories; 1.5g fat; 220mg sodium; 24.6g carbohydrates; 2.2g protein.

GRILLED PINEAPPLE SPEARS



Grilled Pineapple Spears

Servings: 8

1 pineapple, cut into spears
1 cup brown sugar
1 teaspoon cinnamon

In a Ziploc bag, combine brown sugar and cinnamon. Add pineapple spears and toss to coat. Let sit for 30 minutes. Place spears on grill set to medium-heat and turn often until all sides are grilled. Remove and serve.

Nutrition information: 76 calories; 0g fat; 5mg sodium; 19.7g carbohydrates; 0.1g protein.

Creamy Smoked Mac and Cheese

Servings: 8-10

2 cups elbow macaroni
2 tablespoons butter
3 cups milk
2 cups heavy whipping cream
1 - 8 oz. pkg. shredded cheddar cheese
1 - 8 oz. pkg. shredded Colby jack cheese
1 - 4 oz. can chopped green chilies
Salt and pepper

In a greased 9x13" pan, put the dry macaroni. Melt butter and pour over macaroni. Add cheese (reserve a little to sprinkle on top after done), milk, heavy cream and chilies. Add salt and pepper to taste. Combine. Put into a preheated 250 F smoker for about 2 hours. Top with reserved cheese. Put under broiler or into oven to brown. For variety, can also add chopped bacon or ham. Adapted from copymethat.com

Nutrition information: 439 calories; 30.6g fat; 373mg sodium; 25.8g carbohydrates; 16.8g protein.

Smokin' Good Potato Salad

Servings: 6-8

2 pounds russet potatoes
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 tablespoon kosher salt
½ teaspoon cracked black pepper
½ cup mayonnaise
¾ cup sour cream
2 stalks celery, diced
8 slices crispy cooked bacon, crumbled
1 cup shredded cheddar cheese
3 green onions, sliced
½ teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon black pepper
Hickory chips

Place a pan of soaked hickory chips on grill burners and preheat one side of grill. Scrub potatoes under water with a vegetable brush. Cut into quarters, lengthwise. Coat with the olive oil, salt and pepper and place on a baking sheet. Put baking sheet on opposite side of the grill, not over direct heat. Turn grill to low and cook for 15-20 minutes. Turn potatoes and continue cooking/smoking until fork tender, cool to room temperature. Meanwhile, in a large bowl, combine mayonnaise, sour cream, celery, salt and pepper. Cut potatoes into bite-sized pieces and add to dressing along with half of the bacon, cheese and green onions. Lightly fold vegetables into dressing to combine. Cover and refrigerate for several hours. Garnish with remaining bacon, cheese and green onions and serve.

Nutrition information: 374 calories; 25.7g fat; 1526mg sodium; 23.3g carbohydrates; 13.4g protein.



SMOKIN' GOOD POTATO SALAD



Good for nothing?

by *Patty Gillespie and Sarah Marjanovic*

I WAS WORKING IN my asparagus patch, trying to pull a pokeweed, when its stem snapped ... and I toppled. I grumbled, “Good-for-nothin’ weed!”

Having heard me, my daughter Sarah retorted, “And this from a biology teacher who lectures about the interconnectedness of all living things?”

Thus began a summer-long artistic endeavor designed to disprove the derogatory phrase “good-for-nothin’ weed.” We started with mullein, a non-native plant with large woolly leaves. Mullein is a roadside weed – I mean to say plant – which sports yellow flowers arranged on a club-like head at the apex of a four-foot-tall stalk. Sarah had read that a dye could be derived from mullein, so we gathered a bushel of leaves and laid them out to dry on an old window screen.

Sarah was able to coerce me into participating in the creation of natural dyes for fiber art. She promised me that I’d enjoy the process because it could be accomplished mostly outdoors. However, I soon found myself standing at the kitchen sink, washing skeins of dye-free non-synthetic yarn in a solution of water and borax. Remembering the old-time soap brand 20 Mule Team Borax, I sang the jingle in my best cowboy intonations.

the afternoon heat, we decided to immerse ourselves in cool water at our favorite swimming hole. We had a pleasant time, lollygagging in the pond. We emerged convinced that algal pond scum would serve as dye, albeit of questionable color.

The next morning, I walked into a steamy kitchen and saw Sarah brewing tea by the gallons, or so it seemed. Steeping in the hot water was a plump gauze bag filled with mullein leaf fragments. As Sarah lowered the yarn into the dye bath and swirled it with a wooden dowel rod, she said, “Mom, help me watch this pot? If it boils, the wool fibers might be damaged.”

Mousy yellow, that’s how I would describe the end result. Not pretty!

We were disappointed, but not discouraged. We kept on experimenting. We gathered Queen Anne’s lace and produced a pale green dye. We braved the chiggers and picked blackberries, staining our fingertips purple but dyeing cloth gray. Dye from pokeweed berries was a dud.

Then, one afternoon in July, we unexpectedly discovered the plant which gave us a beautiful color. I had heard one of our cows bawling, expressing maternal concern of the bovine kind. Sarah and I went in search of the errant calf. We

spotted it contentedly lying in the shade of the big burr oak tree on the wrong side of the fence. We crossed the fence and made our way through the tall prairie grasses. The calf got up, found the spot in the fence where it had squeezed through, and trotted over to its mother. Sarah and I ambled back through the prairie, picking wildflowers as we went.

Tickseed or lance-leaved coreopsis is a native prairie plant with daisy-like flowers of eight rays encircling a center of numerous

florets. The lovely yellow of this wildflower is less golden than that of Black-eyed Susans but is more vibrant than dandelion yellow. When silk fabric is tinted by the dye derived from coreopsis, the color is dazzling! 🌻

For more information about natural dyes, visit www.sarahmarjanovic.com



Laughing, Sarah prepared the mordant necessary to fix the dye so the color wouldn’t wash out. She made a solution of alum, much less toxic than the metallic salts often used. Small bundles of my clean yarn were immersed in the hot solution and simmered in a big enamel-coated pot. When all the bundles had been processed and arranged on a drying rack to air in

Good News for Americans, Bad News for Pain Drugs

Millions are expected to benefit from a new technology that could relieve years of severe joint discomfort; reprograms the body to block slow burning inflammation instead of creating it



By Casey Law, Health News Correspondent

NATION—Several of the major drug companies behind popular pain relievers may take a financial hit as manufacturing of a new pill is now complete.

Using a new technology, the pill could be safer and more effective than many store bought brands.

The pill, *VeraFlex*, was developed in May of this year by a private company in Seattle.

Functioning primarily as an immune modulator, the pill targets the body's immune system which can decrease pain in the body.

The Science Behind Relief

Research shows that the joint stiffness, soreness and discomfort associated with arthritis is caused by inflammation which attacks healthy cartilage and protective tissue.

And according to leading medical scientists, this inflammation is caused by two inflammatory enzymes released by the body's immune system.

Remarkably, the active ingredients in *VeraFlex* help to block the production of both these enzymes, resulting in a dramatic decreasing in swelling, inflammation, and discomfort.

Right now, the leading over-the-counter pills are only able to block one of these enzymes!

It's why so many sufferers fail to ever find relief.

Years of Discomfort Relieved in 5 Days

"*VeraFlex* users can generally expect more flexibility in three days...their joint pain alleviated in five days...and in just seven days, a tremendous improvement in overall joint function that may help them move like they did years prior" explains Dr. Liza Leal, developer and spokesperson for *VeraFlex*.

"It's an incredibly powerful little pill. And with the addition of a patented absorption enhancer, it packs an even greater punch. That's why I'm so excited to be the first to share these results. It's giving sufferers their life back."

A Safer, More Effective Avenue to Amazing Relief

Its widely accepted through the medical community that inflammatory enzymes are the primary cause of pain and suffering in millions of Americans. It's why most prescriptions and even nonprescription pills are designed to block them.

However, what most people don't know

is that even the most advanced ones can't block both!

And yet, that's exactly what *VeraFlex* is designed to do and why it works so well.

"Top pharma companies have struggled to create a drug that blocks COX and LOX; the medical names for the two inflammatory enzymes in the body. Consider the top seller Celebrex, it only blocks one variation of the COX enzyme" explains Leal.

"And that's because they have focused on using chemicals instead of natural substances like *VeraFlex*."

"Every *VeraFlex* capsule contains an ultra-high dose of a patented plant extract which has been clinically shown to block both enzymes, bringing relief to every joint that hurts!

"The kind of relief most people have never experienced. I often say two enzymes, twice the relief. People think I'm kidding until they try it."

Piling on the Clinical Research

Remarkably, the key ingredient in *VeraFlex* is protected by 8 patents that spread from the US into Canada. And as would one guess, it's backed by an enormous amount of research, including two patient clinical trials.

In the first, 60 participants with rheumatoid arthritis and/or osteoarthritis were randomly placed into four groups.

Two groups were given the patented ingredient in *VeraFlex*, one was given the drug Celecoxib, and the last group a placebo. The results were monitored at 30, 60, and 90 days.

The data collected by researchers was stunning.

The groups taking the *VeraFlex* ingredient saw staggering improvements in arthritis symptoms such as flexibility, discomfort and function.

And even more astonishing they experienced a dramatic reduction in pain by the 30-day mark that was even better than Celecoxib, a powerful drug!

A second study was conducted to ensure the data was accurate and again the results participants experienced taking the *VeraFlex* compound blew away researchers.

This time it beat out the drug Naproxen. Shockingly, both men and women experienced a reduction in joint stiffness two days faster than when using Naproxen.

"I have to admit I was surprised when I read the initial findings" explains Leal. "But when you look at the science it

just makes sense. It's going to change everything."

Faster Delivery, Maximum Absorption

VeraFlex is mainly comprised of two patented ingredients: Univestin, a powerful immune modulator which blocks the enzymes which cause your joints to hurt and BiAloe, an absorption enhancer (accelerator) that ensures maximum potency.

Research shows that severe joint discomfort arises when the immune system goes haywire and releases COX and LOX into your blood stream, two enzymes that causes tremendous swelling and inflammation around cartilage and protective tissue.

Over time, this inflammation overwhelms the joint and it begins to deteriorate resulting in a daily battle with chronic pain.

Unfortunately, modern day pain pills are only able block only one of these enzymes, resulting in marginal relief and continued suffering.

The Univestin in *VeraFlex* is one of the only known substances which has been proven successful in blocking both enzymes, resulting in phenomenal relief from the worst kinds of discomfort.

The addition of BiAloe, a unique aloe vera extra, maximizes the delivery of the plant based Univestin extract to every joint in the body because it is proven to improve nutrient absorption for maximum results.

Aloe Vera also is proven to support the body's immune system which manages inflammation, further supporting relief.

How to Claim a Free 3-Month Supply Of VeraFlex

Due to the enormous interest consumers have shown in *VeraFlex*, the company has decided to extend their nationwide savings event for a little while longer. Here's how it works...

Call the *VeraFlex* number and speak to a live person in the US. Callers will be greeted by a knowledgeable and friendly person approved to offer up to 3 FREE bottles of *VeraFlex* with your order. *VeraFlex*'s Toll-Free number is 1-800-574-6088. Only a limited discounted supply of *VeraFlex* is currently available.

Consumers who miss out on the current product inventory will have to wait until more becomes available and that could take weeks. They will also not be guaranteed any additional savings. The company advises not to wait. Call 1-800-574-6088 today.

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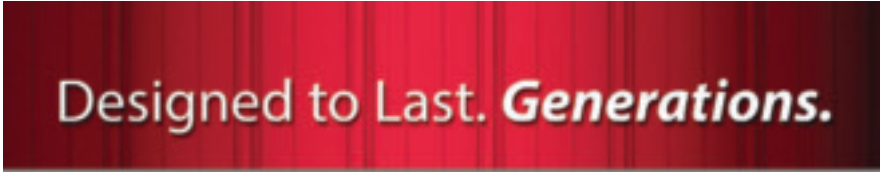
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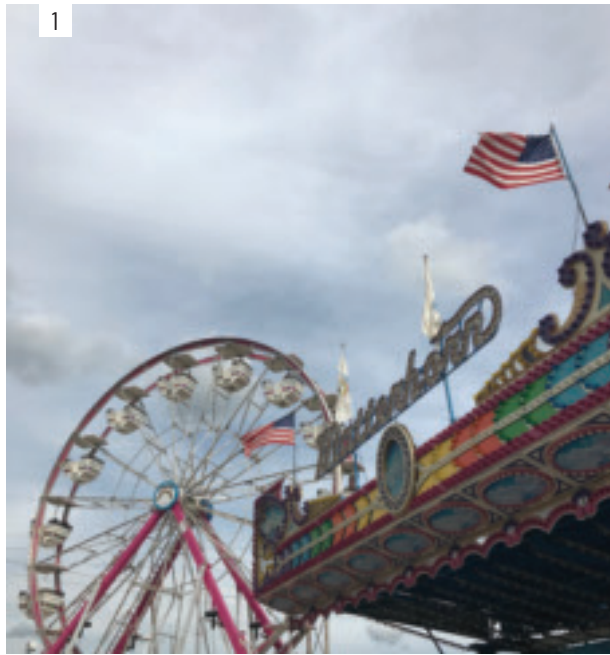


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UPCOMING THEMES
September - *Furry friends*
October - *Silhouettes and shadows*
November - *Country roads*
December - *The holidays*



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Eye Doctor Helps Illinois Legally Blind To See

High Technology For Low Vision Patients Allows Many To Drive Again



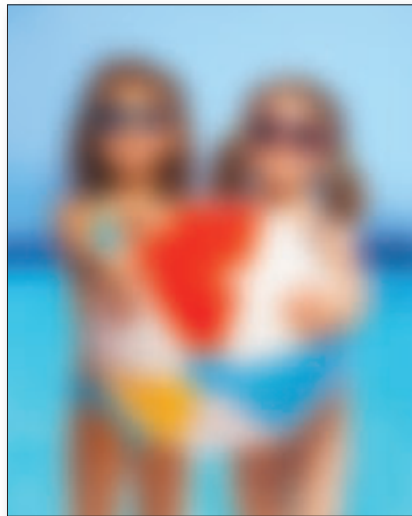
For many patients with macular degeneration and other vision-related conditions, the loss of central visual detail also signals the end to one of the last bastions of independence: driving. A Mascoutah optometrist, Dr. Marianne McDaniel, is using miniaturized telescopes that are mounted in glasses to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