

Illinois Country Living



A GOLD STAR

to honor
& remember

ENERGY SOLUTIONS

Six efficient holiday gifts to give (or keep!)

SAFETY CHECK

Decorate safely this holiday season

PRAIRIE TABLE

Our daily bread



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Illinois Country Living

NOVEMBER 2019
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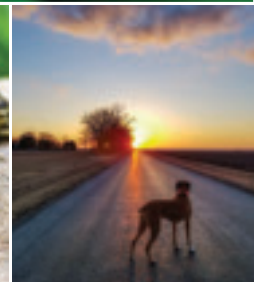
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COVER PHOTO COURTESY OF GOLD STAR MISSION.



Illinois farmers – resilient and dedicated

IT'S NO SECRET THAT 2019 has been a challenging year for Illinois farmers and agriculture businesses. The spring planting season was one of the most difficult in decades, creating uncertainty in our state's number one industry. As a farmer, I understand the ups and downs that come with the industry, but I also know that Illinois farmers are resilient and will find ways to weather the storm.

While there are no instant fixes for farmers this season, the Illinois Department of Agriculture continues our efforts to give all those involved with agriculture some certainty.

In September, myself along with Governor J.B. Pritzker, Illinois Soybean Association Chairman Doug Schroeder and Illinois Corn Marketing Board Chairman Roger Cy, joined a Taiwan trade delegation for a trade signing ceremony. Taiwan is Illinois' third largest importer of ag products.

During the event, the Taiwan Vegetable Oil Manufacturers Association and the Illinois Soybean Association signed a letter of intent, marking Taiwan's intentions to buy between 96 and 97 million bushels of soybeans between 2020 and 2021. The value of these purchases is estimated to be over \$1 billion.

At the same event, the Illinois Corn Marketing Board and the Taiwan Feed Industry Association signed a letter of intent marking Taiwan's intentions to purchase 197 million bushels of corn and 500,000 metric tons of corn coproducts (distillers dried grains with solubles) between 2020 and 2021. The value of these purchases is also estimated to be over \$1 billion.

Illinois is the top producer of soybeans in the United States, exporting 360 million bushels annually. We are the second largest producer of corn with exports of 877 million bushels each year. Our partnerships with foreign buyers like Taiwan provide some relief for Illinois farmers during these trying times of trade and tariff uncertainty.

In addition to positive trade news with Taiwan, there are other exciting things happening in our state's agriculture industry. The first hemp harvest is taking place in fields all around Illinois. In our first year, we had more than 1,000 applications to grow hemp in Illinois and farmers have begun notifying the department as they begin their harvest.

We are also working diligently to help bring expanded broadband service to rural communities across the state. Working with partners and stakeholders like the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives, Governor Pritzker and the Illinois General Assembly, we are making rural broadband expansion a priority. These efforts resulted in a \$420 million investment for broadband expansion being included in the recently passed capital bill. The Connect Illinois program working in conjunction with the Illinois Broadband Advisory Council will provide resources and guidance to expand broadband service throughout the state's unserved and underserved areas.

Farming has always been full of uncertainty—it is the nature of what we do. But if there is one thing I know for certain, it's the commitment all of us at the Illinois Department of Agriculture make to ensure agriculture continues to thrive and drive our state's economy. 💡



Dr. John Sullivan is the director of the Illinois Department of Agriculture. He served the 47th District in the Illinois Senate from 2003 to 2017 and was the chairman of the senate agriculture and conservation committees.

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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POWDER-FREE NITRILE GLOVES

PACK OF 100

- 5 mil thickness

12¢ PER PAIR

SAVE 59%

COMPARE TO VENOM **\$14.97**

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NOW \$5.99 **SAVE 79%**

14221882

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10" PNEUMATIC TIRE

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NOW \$3.99

\$5.99 **SAVE 50%**

COMPARE TO FARM & RANCH **\$8.09** MODEL: FR1055

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ITEM 63583/63582 shown

SAVE \$80 COMPARE TO IRONTON **\$179.99** MODEL: 45433

\$99.99 **\$179.99**

14240547

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- Weights 33 lbs.

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SAVE \$91

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ITEM 60569/68053/62160/62516 64552/64832/64980/64545 shown

14298010

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BRAUN **SUPER COUPON**

5000 LUMEN LED HANGING SHOP LIGHT

Customer Rating **★★★★**

NOW \$19.99

\$29.99 **SAVE 57%**

COMPARE TO INOLO **\$47** MODEL: SNT28B-12

ITEM 64410

14273576

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- Air delivery: 0.6 CFM @ 90 PSI

\$59.99

YOUR CHOICE \$39.99

HOT DOG ITEM 69269 97080 shown

PANCAKE ITEM 61615/60637 95275 shown

COMPARE TO PORTER-CABLE **\$98.62** MODEL: PCFP02003

Customer Rating **★★★★** **SAVE 59%**

14278056

LIMIT 2 - Coupon valid through 1/1/20

WARRIOR **SUPER COUPON**

29 PIECE TITANIUM DRILL BIT SET

Customer Rating **★★★★**

NOW \$10.99

\$18.99 **SAVE 83%**

COMPARE TO DEWALT **\$68.14** MODEL: DW1369

ITEM 5889/62281/61637 shown

14283886

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- Weights 33 lbs.

NOW \$59.99

SAVE \$91

COMPARE TO K TOOL **\$151.42**

MODEL: KT163094

ITEM 60569/68053/62160/62516 64552/64832/64980/64545 shown

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ITEM 63086/68530/56169/56171/63085 shown

ITEM 68525/63088/56168/56170/63087 CALIFORNIA ONLY

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NOW \$549.99

\$649.99

14304257

LIMIT 1 - Coupon valid through 1/1/20

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Customer Rating **★★★★**

NOW \$14.99

\$5.99 **SAVE 90%**

COMPARE TO CRAFTSMAN **\$49.98** MODEL: CMM12018

ITEM 47902/975/61328/63015/62843 shown

14311193

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COBRA **SUPER COUPON**

4 CHANNEL WIRELESS SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM WITH 2 CAMERAS

Customer Rating **★★★★**

NOW \$219.99

\$249.99 **SAVE \$40**

COMPARE TO ALC **\$259.99** MODEL: ALC-AWS3266

ITEM 63842

14311496

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\$159.99 **SAVE \$40**

COMPARE TO MILWAUKEE **\$199.97** MODEL: 33700

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14321543

LIMIT 3 - Coupon valid through 1/1/20

luminar OUTDOOR **SUPER COUPON**

24 FT., 18 BULB, 12 SOCKET OUTDOOR LINKABLE STRING LIGHTS

Customer Rating **★★★★**

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\$27.99 **SAVE 50%**

COMPARE TO PORTFOLIO **\$39.98** MODEL: SLC12BK

BLACK WHITE ITEM 64486 ITEM 64739 63483 shown

14326413

LIMIT 1 - Coupon valid through 1/1/20

HaulMaster **SUPER COUPON**

40" x 72" MOVING BLANKET

Customer Rating **★★★★**

SAVE 60%

COMPARE TO PRATT RETAIL SPECIALTIES **\$9.98** MODEL: HDMVBLAN

ITEM 69504/62336/47262 shown

NOW \$3.99

14338739

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 1/1/20

COVER PRO **SUPER COUPON**

10 FT. x 10 FT. PORTABLE SHED

Customer Rating **★★★★**

NOW \$129.99

\$159.99 **SAVE \$170**

COMPARE TO SHELTER LOGIC **\$299.99** MODEL: 70833

ITEM 56184/63297 shown

14348101

LIMIT 1 - Coupon valid through 1/1/20

CHICAGO ELECTRIC POWER TOOLS **SUPER COUPON**

RECIPROCATING SAW WITH ROTATING HANDLE

Customer Rating **★★★★**

NOW \$19.99

\$29.99 **SAVE 66%**

COMPARE TO PORTER-CABLE **\$59.98** MODEL: PC360

ITEM 65570/61884/63297 shown

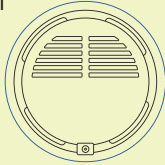
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NOVEMBER CHECKLIST

Don't forget. Change your smoke alarm batteries when you set your clocks back on Nov. 3.



Stand by your pan. Never leave food, grease or oils cooking on the stovetop unattended.

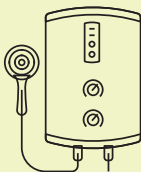


Source: mass.gov

Plan ahead. A 20-pound frozen turkey can take up to five days to thaw in a refrigerator. Once thawed, it should be cooked to an internal temperature of 165 degrees F.



Tip of the month.



Consider insulating your hot water pipes to reduce heat loss. It allows you to lower the temperature and saves 3-4 percent per year on water. Source: energy.gov



2019 Lineman's Safety Rodeo

Line personnel from 10 Illinois electric cooperatives and one Illinois municipal utility gathered at the Chuck West Lineman's Hot Line School training grounds at Lincoln Land Community College on Friday, Sept. 27 to exhibit their prowess at the 22nd Lineman's Safety Rodeo, hosted by the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives.

Prizes were awarded to the top finishers in each of five events and one team was named overall winner. Teams competed in the hurt man rescue, egg climb, H-structure obstacle course, crossarm challenge and a head-to-head climbing challenge. Individual participants and apprentices competed in all events except the crossarm challenge.

The EnerStar Electric Cooperative team of (l-r) Austin Swango, Russ Camp and Jake Keys won honors as the Best Overall team by placing first in the crossarm changeout and second in the egg climb. Additionally, Austin Swango received first place overall for an individual apprentice. The Corn Belt Energy Corporation team 2 of Grant Cooper, Jack Dodd and Austin Schindel placed second overall. 📍



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

CMEC secures REDLG loan for new convention center

Ground was broken on Sept. 18 for Coles Centre, a new hotel and convention center east of Mattoon, thanks in part to a \$2 million loan from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant Program secured by Coles-Moultrie Electric Cooperative (CMEC), Mattoon.



At the groundbreaking were Steve Horve, Horve Builders; Jeremy Yost, Yost Enterprises LLC; Mattoon Mayor Tim Gover; Amy Borntrager, CEO, CMEC; Ed Dowd, Mattoon Chamber of Commerce; and Jessica Killough, Charleston Chamber of Commerce.

The \$15 million project will include a Hilton Garden Inn hotel, on-site restaurant and a connected 8,200 square-foot facility. The center will be named the Coles-Moultrie Convention Center in recognition of the project's loan sponsorship by Coles-Moultrie Electric Cooperative. The cooperative acts as a pass-through for the USDA funds.

State USDA Director Doug Wilson called it the "best use" of federal tax revenue and will help with future development in the area.

Developer Jeremy Yost and his family's business, Yost Enterprises LLC, envision the project as an anchor for additional development and employment in the area. Blue Cross Blue Shield of Illinois and HSHS recently announced intentions to build new facilities at Coles Centre. 💡

Don't let seasonal blues get you down

With cooler weather comes shorter days which can lead to mood changes. Many people find themselves feeling blue due to shortening of daylight hours. For most, the winter blues usually clear up on its own and are often linked to stressful holidays or absent loved ones.

However, "seasonal affective disorder (SAD) is different," according to Dr. Matthew Rudorfer, a mental health expert at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). "It's a well-defined clinical diagnosis that's related to the shortening of daylight hours. It interferes with daily functioning over a significant period of time."

A key feature of SAD is that it follows a regular pattern. It appears each year as the seasons change, and it goes away several months later, usually during spring and summer. SAD is more common in northern rather than southern parts of the U.S., where winter days last longer.

The NIH offers several mood lifting tips to help with seasonal depression:

- Go to a movie, take a walk, go ice-skating or do other activities you normally enjoy.
- Get out in the sunlight or brightly lit spaces, especially early in the day.
- Try to spend time with other people and confide in a trusted friend or relative.
- Eat nutritious foods and avoid overloading on carbohydrates like cookies and candies.
- Be patient. You won't suddenly "snap out of" depression. Your mood will improve gradually.
- If you have thoughts of suicide, get help right away. Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255).



If you're feeling blue this winter, and if the feelings last for several weeks, talk to a health care provider. "It's true that SAD goes away on its own, but five months out of every year is a long time to be impaired and suffering," says Rudorfer. "SAD is generally quite treatable, and the treatment options keep increasing and improving." 💡

Source: National Institutes of Health



Apply now!

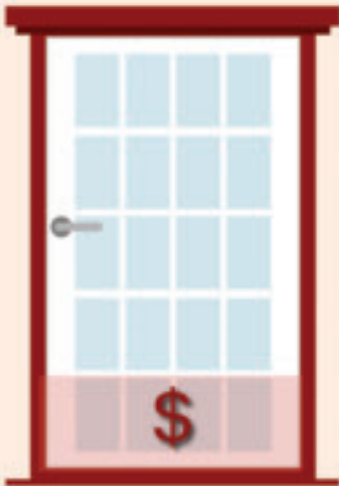
The Thomas H. Moore Illinois Electric Cooperative Memorial Scholarship Program is now taking applications. Twelve \$2,000 scholarships are awarded annually to deserving students in the electric cooperative family who plan to attend college.

Six scholarships will be awarded to high school seniors who are the sons or daughters of Illinois electric co-op members. A seventh scholarship, the Earl W. Struck Memorial Scholarship, will be awarded to a student who is the son or daughter of an Illinois electric cooperative employee or director. Four additional scholarships are reserved for students enrolling full time at a two-year Illinois community college who are the sons or daughters of Illinois electric cooperative members, employees or directors.

The 12th scholarship, the LaVern and Nola McEntire Lineworker's Scholarship, will help pay for costs to attend lineworker school conducted by the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives in conjunction with Lincoln Land Community College, Springfield, Ill. Sons and daughters of co-op members, relatives of co-op employees or directors, and individuals who have served or are serving in the armed forces or National Guard are all eligible for this scholarship.

The application deadline is Dec. 31, 2019. For more information, contact your local electric cooperative. 💡

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DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME REMINDER

Don't forget to fall
back on **November 3!**
Set your clocks back
by one hour.



A threat to co-ops' tax-exempt status

Due to an unintended consequence of current federal tax law, many electric co-ops are finding themselves in a precarious position.

Imagine working hard to secure funding for an important local project only to turn around and give a large chunk of that money back in taxes.

That's the situation many Illinois cooperatives may face because of recent tax law changes. And it could jeopardize the not-for-profit tax status of cooperatives that receive federal or state government funding of any kind, including disaster relief aid, energy efficiency grants, economic development support and rural broadband development grants.

In order to maintain tax-exempt status, an electric cooperative must receive at least 85 percent of all revenue from its members. However, an unintended consequence of a 2017 change to federal tax law modified the calculation for some contributions by a government entity or civic group.


Now, grants and other contributions may be considered non-member revenue and could threaten a co-op's tax-exempt status. This would have a profound impact on co-ops and their members.

For example, West Florida Electric Cooperative Association has received \$24 million in expedited reimbursement from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) this year for storm recovery work in the wake of Hurricane Michael in 2018. That's about 40

percent of the co-op's projected annual revenue. Gulf Coast Electric Cooperative to the south is in the same tax position, and three other Florida co-ops could surpass the 15 percent threshold by year's end. It's unfair to classify the FEMA reimbursement as revenue—it was for expenses that West Florida incurred to restore service to a large swath of its members after the category 5 hurricane pounded the Florida panhandle.

Encouraging Congress to fix the tax code to exempt government grants from being defined as member revenue is one of the highest priorities of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the service organization representing America's electric co-ops. Legislation called the Rural Act has been introduced in both the House and the Senate, attracting large groups of bipartisan cosponsors. However, getting it enacted into law will be a heavy lift, given the political sensitivity of tax issues on Capitol Hill.

Congress must act now to correct this unintended consequence and protect the tax status of electric co-ops. In doing so, Congress would preserve the full value of government grants that deliver societal benefits to our communities.

You can play an important role in encouraging Congress to act. Voice your support for the Rural Act by visiting www.action.coop/ruralact. 

Source: Dan Riedinger, NRECA

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

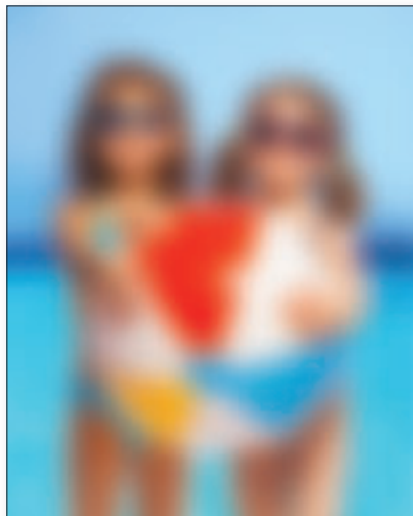
the end to one of the last bastions of independence: driving. A Mascoutah optometrist, Dr. Marianne McDaniel, is using miniaturized telescopes that are mounted in glasses to help people who have lost vision from macular degeneration and other eye conditions.

"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.

www.lowvisionofsouthil.com

1-618-566-8899

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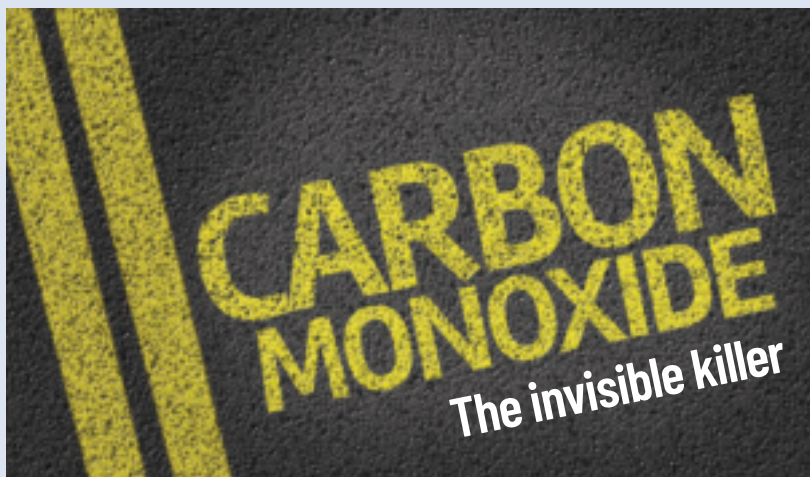
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Ronald Weingart, O.D.



Carbon monoxide is a colorless and odorless gas. Every year, more than 100 people in the U.S. die from unintentional exposure to carbon monoxide.

Carbon monoxide is produced by burning fuel, therefore, any fuel-burning appliance in your home is a potential CO source. When cooking or heating appliances are kept in good working order, they produce little CO. Improperly operating appliances can produce fatal CO concentrations in your home.

Running a car or generator in an attached garage can cause fatal levels of CO in the home. So can running a generator or burning charcoal in the basement, crawlspace or living area of the home.

Symptoms of CO poisoning

Initial symptoms are like the flu but without the fever and include:

- Headache
- Fatigue
- Shortness of breath
- Nausea
- Dizziness

If you feel you may be experiencing CO poisoning, get fresh air immediately. Leave the home and call for assistance from your cell phone or a neighbor's phone. Get medical attention immediately and inform medical staff that CO poisoning is suspected. Do not reenter the home until the fire department says it is safe to do so.

What should you do?

- Make sure your appliances are installed according to manufacturer's instructions and local codes.
- Always follow manufacturer's directions for safe operation.
- Have your heating system inspected and serviced annually by a trained technician.
- Examine vents and chimneys for improper connections, visible cracks, rust or stains.
- Operate portable generators outdoors and away from open windows, doors or vents.
- Install battery-operated or plug-in CO alarms in your home. All homes should have a CO alarm in the hall near bedrooms or in each separate sleeping area.

Source: Consumer Product Safety Commission

U.S. POSTAL SERVICE — STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION (Required by 39 U.S.C. 3685)

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/s/Valerie Cheatham



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NOVEMBER Datebook

LET'S GO!

2-3
Towboat Festival
 GRAFTON
 Explore working towboats on the Mississippi

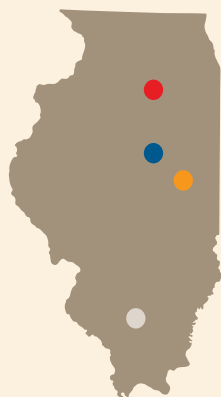
2-3
Heritage Festival
 HARRISBURG
 Locally handcrafted items and food

11
Veterans Day Parade
 ANNA
 Floats, band and marching units

21-23
Deer Festival
 GOLCONDA
 Celebrate opening of shotgun season

29-30
Holiday Open House along the Shawnee Hills Wine Trail
 JACKSON AND UNION COUNTIES
 Find unique gifts

For more information, a complete listing of events or to submit an event, visit icl.coop/datebook.



Champaign-Urbana Spinners and Weavers Annual Show

NOVEMBER Browse a collection of members' work including handwoven and handknit garments and accessories, skeins of handspun and hand-dyed yarn, spinning fibers, household textiles and décor, jewelry, and more. Demonstrations from prior years have included tatting lace, needle felting, spinning with a drop spindle or wheel, etc.

Nov. 1-2, 2019; Fri., 3-8 p.m.; Sat., 10 a.m.-4 p.m.
 ● Hessel Park Christian Reformed Church, 700 W. Kirby, Champaign
 Admission is free
www.cuswg.org/show-and-sale/

Starved Rock Mid-Week Mega Hike

NOVEMBER Hike all the canyons in the park in one day. Board a trolley to the east end of the park with a pair of guides to begin your trek. Included in admission is trolley, guides, boxed lunch around 1 p.m., and a specially designed long-sleeved shirt. Reservations required. For more information or to make a reservation, call 815-220-7386.

Nov. 6, 2019; Hikes leave at 8:30 and 9 a.m.

● Starved Rock Lodge & Conference Center, 2688 E. 873rd Rd., Oglesby
 Admission is \$37
www.starvedrocklodge.com



7th Annual Holiday Craft/Vendor Fair

NOVEMBER The West Franklin Historical District and Silkwood Inn Museum host this annual fair including items that are handmade, antique, repurposed/refurbished, furniture, primitive and jewelry. Lunch/concessions of chili, chili dog, hot dog, nachos, chips and drinks will be available for purchase from 11 a.m.-2 p.m.

Nov. 16, 2019; 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

● West Franklin Historical District, 2130 School House Rd., Mulkeytown
 Admission is free
 618-218-8325

Sunday Market Antiques Holiday Show

NOVEMBER Show features 150 of the Midwest's finest antiques, collectibles, vintage, repurposed, craft and garden dealers. Held rain or shine inside the West Expo and Mini Expo Buildings at the Interstate Center.

Nov. 17, 2019; 8 a.m.-4 p.m.

● Interstate Center, 2301 W. Market St., Bloomington
 Admission is \$6
www.thirdsundaymarket.com





Make Veterans Day about veterans

Droves of people stand along Main Street with flags waving to the beat of the marching band. They impatiently crane their necks to catch the first glimpse of camouflage uniforms. Suddenly, they see them – weary, yet elated, men and women marching in formation. The sound of cheers, whistles and clapping is deafening. Their mothers, brothers, fathers, sisters and cousins are home from deployment.

This year on Veterans Day, think about the people who have protected this country's virtue. Your freedom has been their sacrifice.

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Six efficient holiday gifts to give (or keep!)

Dear Pat and Brad: With the holidays approaching, I'm starting to think about unique gifts for my family and friends that won't use too much energy. Can you share any ideas?
– Monica

DEAR MONICA: IT'S ALWAYS a great idea to give energy efficient gifts. Here are a few ideas based on a range of prices. You might even want to keep one or two of these for yourself!

1. Smart power strip. Price: \$15 to \$100—Smart power strips are the perfect gift for your tech-savvy family members and friends because they'll likely need the extra outlets for their many devices. Smart power

strips give more control than traditional ones. By plugging the main hardware item, such as a computer or monitor, into the master outlet, you can easily control the rest of the devices. When that main device is turned off, everything else plugged into the strip also powers off. Some smart

power strips can also be operated through a remote control or smartphone app, and some include programmable timers.

2. Smart thermostat. Price: \$30 to \$600—A smart thermostat can adjust the temperature by learning your energy use habits over time, which saves you money and keeps you more comfortable. It can also be controlled through a smartphone app. Just make sure you're going to use all of its functionality before taking the leap.



A solar backpack is an easy way to bring portable energy for your small electronic devices. Photo Source: "Backpack with a Voltaic solarpanel at Adisgladis" by Hannu Makarainen / CC BY-SA 2.0

3. Solar backpack. Price: \$30 to \$325—Walking or biking to the office, the field or a mountain lake? It may sound crazy, but you can actually make the most of the sun's energy with a solar backpack. These handy devices collect and store enough electricity to power a phone, tablet or even a laptop. The solar panels stitched onto the back of the packs are flexible and waterproof. Best of all, they have all the features and functionality of their traditional non-solar cousins.

4. E-bike. Price: \$250 to \$9,000—Electric bikes, or e-bikes, are regular bicycles with an electric motor that can be engaged as needed. E-bikes are becoming increasingly popular with people who face challenging terrain, bike to work and don't want to work up a sweat, or perhaps find regular cycling too physically challenging. Studies also show that e-biking can bring many of the same physical benefits as non-assisted pedaling. They even

come in foldable versions. One downside is they are heavier than regular bicycles.

5. Electric scooter. Price: \$80 to \$3,000—The \$49 foldable, foot-powered scooter that exploded onto the scene a decade ago has grown up in a big way. In some larger cities, electric scooters are now available to rent at various locations, found and paid for via app. Or you can buy one to use for your daily commute or as a fun way to simply scoot around the neighborhood. Higher-quality versions will have longer range, larger tires and better suspension – along with a higher cost, of course. The catch is that they're still largely confined to paved surfaces.

6. Energy efficient tablets. Price: \$40 to \$4,000—You may already have at least one tablet in your home, but have you considered how energy efficient it is? Try this: Instead of using your TV to binge that new show, consider an ENERGY STAR-rated tablet, and you can use seven times less power! Simply look for the ENERGY STAR label when you're shopping for new tablets.

Looking for an efficient gift that costs practically nothing? Enjoy a good book and a cozy evening at home, which requires no energy use at all. Don't forget to put on your favorite sweater and pair of fuzzy slippers so you can lower the thermostat a couple of degrees. Now that's an energy efficient evening worth repeating! 💡

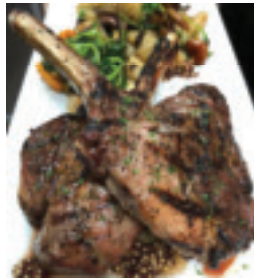


Electric scooters are perfect to use if you have a quick daily commute, or they can simply be used as a fun way scoot around the neighborhood. Photo source: "Electric Scooter - Kintone" by Miki Yoshihito / CC BY 2.0

This column was co-written by Pat Keegan and Brad Thiessen of Collaborative Efficiency. For more info on energy efficient gifts, visit collaborativeefficiency.com/energytips.



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Avoid scams during this holiday season

Staying up to date keeps you safe

IT NEVER FAILS, SOFTWARE updates seem to be released at the most inconvenient time. You know what I'm talking about. You're right in the middle of doing something and that

hijack your information. These scams work by impersonating the public Wi-Fi network. When you connect, you are actually connecting to the hacker's network who is capturing all your information

understand the conditions. Does it include the cost of delivery? What about the return policy; are you stuck with it if you don't like it? Companies that are going out of business may not care about paying the advertised rebate or even filling your order.

Make sure the checkout site is secure

Your personal information is valuable and is required to make payment online. Before entering information like your name, address and credit card number, make sure the payment site is encrypted. Check the website address and be sure it starts with <https://> and not just <http://>. You can also look for the padlock icon near the address which indicates it's encrypted.

Don't shop from links sent to your email

You are likely to notice an increase in the number of unsolicited emails that hit your inbox as we approach the holiday season. Some of these are welcome, some not. If you happen to see a good deal from an unsolicited email, don't be tempted to click the link to the product from the email. Instead, visit the website using your internet browser of choice and search for the product directly. If you can't find the advertised offer, this may be a good indication it is a scam.

As online shopping continues to gain popularity, make sure you are practicing safe online shopping techniques. Look for positive reviews and beware of products with poor or no reviews. If in doubt, don't be afraid to pick up the phone and verify with the seller. No deal is worth risking your hard-earned money or private information. 💡



message pops up on your computer or phone screen that reads "update available." You know you should probably install the update, but you tell yourself it can wait until a more convenient time, and then it never gets installed. Updates contain important security and bug fixes that help protect you. Make sure to keep your devices current by installing updates as soon as possible.

to and from the internet, including personal information and credit card numbers.

Only shop on trustworthy websites

The internet is infinitely wide and the number of companies that you can do business with is endless. Use caution when doing business with a new or unrecognizable online company. Beware of pop-up deals from unknown companies. Unless you have time to research and verify the company, look for deals elsewhere.

If it's too good to be true, it probably is

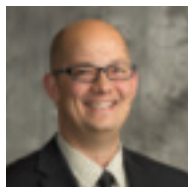
Deals too good to be true should raise a red flag. Make sure you read the fine print and

Free Wi-Fi isn't always free

Meeting up at the local coffee shop with your friends seems like a great opportunity to socialize and get some online shopping done at the same time. After all, they have free Wi-Fi, right? Wrong! Businesses that offer public Wi-Fi are targets for hackers looking to



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 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 of 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 1-800-591-2946. 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 1-800-591-2946 today.

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Decorate safely this holiday season

THE HOLIDAY SEASON OFFERS great moments for building memories, but when it comes to decorating, it's also the perfect time to think about safety.

many of the activities that have become family traditions.

"It's important to use common sense when you're dealing with holiday decorating, particularly with

lighting, candles and electrical wiring," said Bruce Bouch, a U.S. Fire Administration fire program specialist. "Holiday decorations are designed for temporary use, and that means they are essentially disposable."

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), the top three days of the year for candle fires in the U.S. are Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and New Year's Day. NFPA statistics also indicate that one of four Christmas tree fires are caused by electrical problems.

The global safety certification company, United Laboratories, classifies holiday lighting as a seasonal product designed for no more than 90 days of

use. While the actual holiday season runs about six weeks, weather and busy schedules mean outdoor holiday lighting displays are put up early and taken down late, exposed to the elements the entire time.

"It's always important to inspect holiday lights each year before you put them up," said Bouch. "You may find that there are pinches or torn areas on the insulation."

Open, exposed wiring or any signs of fraying or pinching are indications of weakened wiring. Those flaws are prone to breakage

and may raise the potential for heat buildup, which can cause a fire.

Bouch recommends a thorough inspection of your holiday lights to identify potential hotspots and damage to the strings.

"When you're checking everything on the wiring and fixtures, make sure you check for chewing damage from wild animals or your own pets," added Bouch. "Also look for signs that the insulation itself is wearing thin enough to expose wiring."


The U.S. Fire Administration, the CPSC and non-government safety organizations are also focused on reminding consumers that extension cords, whether labeled for indoors or outdoors, are also designed for temporary use.

"Your household wiring is a solid metal wire," said Bouch. "Extension cords are strands of thin wires that are twisted together. That pliability can allow them to break over time, increasing the chance that they could fail within so many years."

Experts also warn that candle use increases the risk of accidental fires and suggests that consumers consider battery-operated LED candles as safer alternatives. According to NFPA, candles start two out of every five home fires each year, and about 100 Christmas tree fires occur each holiday season, causing about \$12 million in damage annually.

You can reduce the risks by placing your Christmas tree away from heat sources, like vents or space heaters, and topping off the water reservoir daily.

Illinois' electric cooperatives join local firefighters, the NFPA and the CPSC in urging you to consider safety as you decorate and enjoy the holiday season with family and friends. 💡



According to the National Fire Protection Association, burning candles start two out of five home fires every year. Consider battery-operated LED candles as safer alternatives.

"There are about 200 decorating-related injuries each day during the busy holiday season," said Ann Marie Buerkle, acting chairman of the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). "Make safety a part of your family's holiday decorating this year."

Between November 2016 and January 2017, holiday decorating injuries resulted in 18,400 emergency room visits, nationwide. Local fire departments look to the holiday season as a time of increased vigilance, often tied to



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

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Caring for holiday plants



ONCE THE GARDENING SEASON wraps up, gardeners don't necessarily stop gardening, we just move it indoors. The holiday season is a wonderful time to enjoy growing seasonal plants indoors. Here are a few tips for growing and maintaining a selection of the most popular holiday plants: poinsettias, holiday cactuses and amaryllis.

Poinsettias

When choosing a poinsettia, make sure you choose a plant that has fully colored bracts (modified leaves) and tightly closed flower buds. The "true flowers" are in the center and should be tightly closed with no yellow pollen showing. The plant should have dark green foliage that goes completely down the stem of the plant.

- Make sure it is wrapped properly because exposure to low temperatures, even for a few minutes, can damage the bracts and leaves. Remember, these are tropical plants.
- Place the poinsettia in indirect light and keep it from touching cold windows.
- Keep poinsettias away from warm or cold drafts from radiators, air registers or open doors and windows.
- Ideally, poinsettias require daytime temperatures of 60 to 70 degrees F and nighttime temperatures around 55. High temperatures will shorten the plant's life. Move the plant to a cooler room at night, if possible.
- Check the soil daily. Be sure to punch holes in the decorative foil so water can drain into a saucer. Water when the soil is dry. Allow water to drain into the saucer and discard excess water.

Holiday cactus

When purchasing a holiday cactus, look for uniform green growth and a good amount of flower buds. While cactuses usually suggest high temperatures and dry air, this is not what these holiday bloomers prefer. Unlike most cactuses, these like moist soil and cooler temperatures.

- Give your plant a cool, sunny window or other location with bright, indirect light.
- Day temperatures of 70 degrees and evening temperatures of 60-65 are considered ideal.
- Avoid overwatering during flowering. Do not fertilize when plants are flowering.

The secret to getting your holiday cactus to bloom is one of air temperature. All of these cactuses

require a cool night temperature of about 60 degrees to bloom. Long nights are also important for blooming. Bring it back to a cool, sunny window as soon as buds start to show.

If you don't have a holiday cactus, consider getting one this holiday season. They also make great gifts that, with proper care, will provide beauty for years to come.

Amaryllis

Most amaryllis bulbs found in the garden center during October and November are ready to flower and have already experienced the dormancy required to flower. Some are already in pots and will be closer to blooming.

To plant a new amaryllis, place the bulb in a pot with drainage holes about one or two inches wider than the bulb in soilless media found in the garden center. The lower half of the bulb and any roots that may have already formed should be below the soil line. Water until it comes out the drainage holes.

- Place in a sunny, warm location and water sparingly.
- Turn the plant daily as soon as the flowering stalk has emerged from the bulb to maintain a straight flower.
- When in bloom, place in cooler location out of direct sun so that it will bloom for a longer period of time.

Once the flowers have faded, remove the flowering scape. Allow the foliage to grow and treat it like other houseplants, placing it outside when temperatures are warm in the spring. Let the soil dry between watering and fertilizer regularly.

Go out and buy your bulbs, soilless media and pots now for an easy to grow and brilliant holiday décor sure to light up any room. 💡



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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A GOLD STAR

to honor & remember

By Valerie Cheatham

IT'S A CLUB TO which no one wants to belong. You can't pay to be a member, but the cost is high. Instead, membership is forced upon you.

Gold Star Families become members when an immediate family member – a father, mother, son, daughter or other loved one – falls while serving his/her country in a time of conflict.

For years, gold stars have been displayed at the homes of those who lost loved ones in defense of America. The term refers to service flags flown by families during World War I. The flags held a blue star for every immediate family member serving in the U.S. armed forces. If that loved one died, the blue star was replaced with a gold one as a sign of the ultimate sacrifice that family paid.

Today, Gold Star Families work closely with Gold Star Mission to raise money for scholarships in honor of the fallen.

★ Gold Star Mothers

Nita Cross became a Gold Star Mother on March 11, 2005 when her son, Illinois National Guard Sgt. First Class Kyle Brett Wehrly, was killed in action (KIA). Kyle was the lead vehicle in a convoy in the desert outside of Baghdad when his vehicle hit an IED.

"Kyle was a darned good soldier," says Nita. "The guys in his unit told me he stepped up when his sergeant first class came back to the states for two weeks, and he was a good commander. He would have taken all the missions he could have, but they wouldn't let him."


Kyle was excited he had a daughter. She was 6 when he was killed. "I am very fortunate because I have a granddaughter," Nita explains. "There is still a part of him left."

"It's a mother's worst nightmare," she says. "We were the first KIA in the Galesburg area, but there were another seven after. Our area got hit hard. We've been through a lot with the other families. No one was there for us because we were the first. But, that's ok. I understand, but I was there for the rest because I knew what it was like."

"I would tell the families they were going to make it through the pain," Nita says. "You don't think you are now, but you will. It made me stronger to help others. You have to learn to live with the hurt; it doesn't go away."

Nita has shared that message with multiple mothers, and they have found it to be true. They learn to live and carry on.

Another part of Nita's healing came through her involvement in events like the Gold Star 500 – a five-day, 500-mile bike ride in honor of Illinois' fallen.



"Gold Star Mothers never want their kid's names forgotten, and that's what this ride is all about. Always remember, never forget."

-Nita Cross



"I want to carry on Kyle's legacy by doing these things," she explains. "Gold Star Mothers never want their kid's names forgotten, and that's what this ride is all about. Always remember, never forget."

Nita and her husband Rick first heard about the Gold Star 500 when visiting the Illinois State Fair. The organization, Gold Star Mission, was originally formed to honor the 34 fallen Illinois National Guardsmen who had died since 9/11.

Gold Star Mission conducts an annual 500-mile bike ride in remembrance of those original 34, and for the more than 270 Illinois soldiers who have passed since that fateful September day. The group doesn't want them to ever be forgotten. To that end, funds are raised for the ride and scholarships are given out annually in the name of one of the fallen.

"Kyle's daughter received the first scholarship in his name," says Nita. "The following year she received another one in a different soldier's name. That's ok. I want all of them honored with a

scholarship. The fallen and their families are part of my family too. I stay in contact with Kyle's National Guard unit in Galesburg, go to battalion activities, and every year on the anniversary of his death, we go out to eat, meet his unit and have a candlelight vigil at the cemetery."

The journey of healing has been a shorter one for Vonda Rodgers of Normal. Her son, U.S. Army Ranger Josh Rodgers, was killed in action on April 27, 2017. Josh joined the Army immediately after graduating high school in 2013 and was on his third deployment when he was killed.

"We miss him like crazy," says Vonda. "He was born to be a Ranger. He was just designed for it and was living his dream. Even that night when his unit was taking down ISIS in the area and they came under fire from all directions."

"We miss him, and we honor him and celebrate his life through events like this [Gold Star 500]," she says. "He was a fierce friend; a tight friend. He would always stand up for his friends."

Vonda says the Normal community has been extremely supportive. The local post office is dedicated to Josh as is Airport Road. The area in Evergreen Cemetery, where Josh is interred, was named the Sgt. Josh Rodgers Veterans Field.

Josh played baseball and football and was involved in local youth sports. "After he was killed, everyone showed up to support us," says Vonda. "We formed a memorial in Josh's name to give back to youth sports in the area and we formed a scholarship and a leadership award at the high school in his name."

Through the Heroes for Habitat program of Habitat for Humanity, the family is helping to build a house in Josh's honor for a local family in need.

"The men of C Company, his ranger brothers, are all my friends now," she says. "Rangers are all cut from the same cloth, and they all carry a little bit of Josh with them. My Ranger hugs are pretty important to me. I try to go down to Fort Benning about four times a year to see the guys and visit the memorial that his name is on."





Gold Star Mothers appreciate the many hugs received from riders.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF RICK CROSS

Josh isn't the only tough one in his family. In June, Vonda, an admitted non-runner, started training for the Marine Corps Marathon in October in Washington, D.C. "The Rangers are a pretty tough group of men, so I'm taking that step forward. Your fallen hero is always important, and I'm doing it in a way that would actually honor Josh. You have to be a little bit harder than you think you can be to get through it. I think of the Army motto, 'embrace the suck,' and I keep on going," she says laughing.

★ Gold Star 500

The 2019 Gold Star 500 pushed off on Sept. 24 with 31 riders spanning from 20 to 78 years old. Their journey began in Marseilles, Ill. and took them through 34 communities, around 100 miles a day, to their final stop at the First Division Museum in Cantigny Park, Wheaton.

The grueling physical pain of pedaling a bicycle for 500 miles pales in comparison to the emotional pain of those who lost loved ones who served overseas. The riders' willingness to endure some physical pain reminds the public that hundreds of Illinois citizens have given their lives for their freedom and their families have, in Abraham Lincoln's words, "laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom."

This year's riders had a variety of weather thrown at them. Through stifling heat, humidity, wind, rain and thunderstorms, they persevered. The ride is a well-oiled machine of cyclists, hand signals, radios, lead and trail vehicles, medical assistance, bicycle repair, and takes a small army of volunteers to make sure the riders are properly fed and hydrated.

At the Bloomington rest stop, the cyclists greeted Gold Star Mothers Frances Maddox, Nita Cross and Vonda Rodgers with hugs. Maddox's stepson Sergeant Anthony R. Maddox died on July 22, 2013 while serving during Operation Enduring Freedom.

During the stop, cyclist Michael Graves was peeling off his rain-soaked jacket. The group encountered showers in Lexington that morning and he accidentally grabbed his rain resistant jacket instead of the rain proof one. "I was soaked before we got out of the parking lot," he says.

Graves rides in honor of Illinois Army National Guard Sergeant Ivory Phipps who was KIA on March 17, 2004 while serving during Operation Iraqi Freedom. "I ride every year for him," Graves says. "He was in one of my subordinate units, and I am the one that talked him into going. He wanted to volunteer, and I showed him an opportunity. He was one of the first fatalities on that deployment out of the Paris [Ill.] unit. They ended up losing 12 of their soldiers on that deployment. A lot of us that initially started



PHOTO COURTESY OF MARK SMITH



PHOTO COURTESY OF MARK SMITH



this ride personally knew those soldiers. It's just keeping their memory alive. It's so easy to get caught up in everyday life and forget about those people who have made our way of life possible."

Before the cyclists remount their bikes at each stop, they take a few moments and announce the names of all fallen soldiers from the immediate area, all in an effort to help live their motto, "Always remember, never forget."

As the group tightly weaves their way along the rural roads and city streets of fallen soldiers' communities, it's not unusual for an entire school's children to line the path waving flags. Citizens, fire and police department employees often wait to greet them as they ride past.

In Carlock, schoolchildren waved flags and chanted, "U.S.A., U.S.A.," as the cyclists came around the corner for their next rest break. The riders waved to them and many got off their bikes and gave the children high fives.

Cyclist David Risley, one of the more "seasoned" riders, remarks, "I have goosebumps all over my body. Seriously, this happened yesterday at an elementary school. We have the uncle of one of the fallen soldiers [Ranger Josh Rodgers], riding with us this year. He had to pull over. He was too

emotional and couldn't ride any farther. You just tear up. These kids are cheering for what we're riding for, and I don't know whether they fully understand what they mean when they wave those flags or what the flag stands for, but they know it's something special. And, they are right!"

One of the cyclists, Jacob Harris of Pawnee, received a Gold Star scholarship, twice. He first heard about the ride and scholarships from a veteran involved with Gold Star Mission. "Even before they had the first Gold Star 500, I knew I wanted to be a part of it," Harris says. "The first year I applied for the scholarship and won it. Then last year, I won it again but also rode the last 50 miles with the rest of them. This year, I've been on the whole thing, other than having bike issues and getting tired on one leg. I did one hundred miles yesterday and am going strong today.

"This cause is one of the best out there. For me personally, the scholarship had nothing to do with the money – it had everything to do with the name of that soldier that was on my scholarship. Same as last year, while learning every little detail about their lives, it kind of gives you a good mold of what you should strive to be like."



When one of the riders begins to fall behind, others are there to lend support.

PHOTO COURTESY OF RICK CROSS

★ Gold Star Mission

David Helfrich, president of Gold Star Mission, says, “It’s important that the Gold Star Families know that we have not forgotten what these men and women did for us. The American public must never forget.”

Helfrich adds that Gold Star Mission pays tribute to fallen soldiers and their families, encourages and builds selfless service, enlists public support for Gold Star Families, and provides unique programs to honor fallen heroes.

Established in 2017, the organization has awarded more than \$70,000 in scholarships. It expects that amount to be more than \$100,000 when it holds its annual Scholarship Award and Appreciation Dinner in March 2020, when it presents the scholarships and recognizes its volunteers.

What started as a desire to provide scholarships for surviving children has evolved into a widespread effort to assist Gold Star Families and others in need in order to preserve the memory of fallen soldiers.

The organization also hosts a Run for the Fallen half marathon, 3k and 5k run/walk each May within the Winnebago County Forest Preserve and the General Logan 200, a one-day 200-mile ride from Chicago to Springfield.

★ Apply for a scholarship

Gold Star Mission is a 501(c)3 organization and allocates funds raised through its events to support its scholarship fund. Multiple scholarships of \$1,000 each are awarded annually, each in the name of one of Illinois’ fallen service members.

The scholarship application period runs from Nov. 1, 2019 to Jan. 15, 2020.

Recipients are notified by mail and they and their families are invited to the annual dinner along with all Gold Star Families, scholarship recipients, riders, volunteers and donors.

Application requirements can be found at www.goldstarmission.org.

If you are interested in volunteering or donating to the cause, visit the website. 📍



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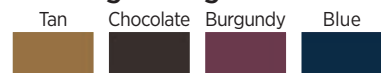
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Treasure, not trash: Serving an invisible population

By Lisa Cherry

VALERIE BEGUIN PAINTS A picture of the scenes she encountered as a former investigator with Illinois Department of Child and Family Services:

A phone call is made to the Illinois Child Abuse Hotline, which initiates an investigation within 24 hours. The anonymous caller reports seeing his neighbor severely beating her 9-year-old son. An investigation with the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) initiates the process of determining risk. Collateral contacts are completed; the reporting neighbor informs the investigator he has witnessed three similar beatings of this child in the past month.

With this knowledge, the DCFS investigator travels to the home with a law enforcement officer and interviews all members of the household, ultimately concluding that the 9-year-old is at severe risk due to his injuries and must be removed to safety immediately. The boy's belongings—pajamas, toothbrush, favorite stuffed animal—are swiftly gathered and tossed into a garbage bag. Chaos erupts as the mother realizes her child is being taken into temporary custody. Within 48 hours, the juvenile court system becomes involved, and plans are developed to improve the situation in the home pending the child's return.

The parents of this child are fully cooperative. They work toward the return of their son, participating in mandatory counseling and parenting classes teaching alternative disciplinary

methods. DCFS recommends to the court that the child returns home and will monitor the household closely. The Juvenile Court System agrees, and the child can return home.

This situation is reminiscent of the first time Valerie had to remove a child from his home. She watched him fill a black trash bag with the few belongings he could carry.

That image stayed with her after she retired following 20-plus years with DCFS and countless similar situations.

Fast forward to today. Valerie, her son Bob and husband Dan Duback now lead a grassroots nonprofit called Fostering Dignity from their home in Towanda. Their mission is to bring comfort to a victim of child abuse at the time he or she is most vulnerable. They accomplish that mission by giving the victim a backpack to carry his or her belongings—instead of a garbage bag, with its obvious connotations.

She explains her time at DCFS: “You can imagine the flood of suppressed memories—most heartbreaking, a few inspiring ... For me the task of removing a child from an abusive environment never felt like a victory. The awareness that any child existed in a situation so harmful and destructive that the only solution is to remove that child from everything he knows is incomprehensible. Your responsibility as a DCFS investigator is to protect a victim from ‘imminent danger’ and place him in a licensed foster home or with a safe relative. Imagine that



child putting his belongings in a trash bag while leaving everything familiar, a stranger taking him to a foster family of strangers. No child should ever receive the message that his precious belongings are garbage. A life so fragile, so confused and abused ... We need your help to serve this invisible child."

When afforded the opportunity to present their cause to like-minded groups like the Kiwanis Young Professionals and Youth Engaged in Philanthropy (YEP), Rotary and Guardians of the Children, she often begins with a 5-minute exercise to illustrate just what these children are experiencing in that moment. She has audience members write down five of their favorite things—smell, person, place to be, possession and taste—whatever they may be. Then, one by one, she has them cross each item off their list.

"That's what these kids are experiencing," Valerie says. "Imagine what they're going through. Everything familiar has been taken away. I will never know if that backpack made a difference for that kid, but the investment of \$5 is certainly worthwhile."

In late August, Fostering Dignity set up an informational booth at the Sweet Corn Festival in Normal. Amid beautiful weather, the festive mood and abundant food and fun, Valerie says many people were strongly affected when learning of their mission. Some were reminded of their own history involving DCFS.

"One lady stood in the booth with tears streaming down her face, frozen," she says. "Other people shared stories of their experience, some as foster children who remembered placing their own belongings in a trash bag, while others shared stories as foster parents receiving children into their care arriving with their precious belongings in trash bags."

Fostering Dignity was officially launched in 2013, when time and resources finally became available. Prior to that, she and Dan, with little idea where to begin, consulted with an attorney. They eventually learned about the Illinois Prairie Community Foundation, a public charity that, among its many services, acts as fiscal sponsor for small nonprofits.

The foundation's oversight and guidance include the receipt and processing of donations. Being a part of the foundation also offers small local nonprofits like theirs credibility, says Valerie.

She and Dan give credit where credit is due. "Our project would not be possible without Cheryl and Bill Budde ... The Budde family has

voluntarily delivered thousands and thousands of backpacks throughout Illinois to DCFS field offices. This enables child abuse investigators to have the backpacks on hand at the time they are removing a child from an abusive environment. Cheryl and Bill have been wholly invested in our mission via fundraising and supporting every phase of Fostering Dignity from the very beginning."

"No child should ever receive the message that his precious belongings are garbage. A life so fragile, so confused and abused ... We need your help to serve this invisible child."

The project itself is dedicated to the memory of Valerie's former DCFS supervisor, James Tapen. "[He] empowered me to do the best job I could as a DCFS investigator and caseworker. Jim was driven by his love for children, consistently inspiring me to make decisions 'for the greater good of the child,'" she says. "Members of Jim's team always knew where they stood with him. [There was] no need to decipher hidden messages. He taught by example to 'say what you mean and mean what you say.'" She adds that having had his strong, decisive leadership was the team's biggest asset in a tense environment where critical decisions had to be made daily.

Valerie and Dan take advantage of every opportunity to share the message. "I look online and in the community," she says. "I make random calls and ask people, 'Any chance I can meet with you for an hour?'" She says they are thankful for every opportunity they've been given to share their mission. "We are grateful to Corn Belt Energy for the opportunity to educate Illinois residents through this [story]."

Dan adds, "We have gotten to know so many locally." Those people include other nonprofits working in the community, like Labyrinth House, which helps women build skills and feel dignity so they don't return to prison or jail. "After you dig in, you clean your glasses," he says, "and really see the need."

"I was green," says Valerie about launching a nonprofit. But she says that shouldn't discourage others with ideas on how to meet various needs in their own community. Her advice to others wanting to do some good: "First, find a gap that exists where people lack services. Then—persevere." 



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Via Paypal: Go to [fosteringdignity.org/donate](https://www.fosteringdignity.org/donate).



Bishop Hill Bakery & Eatery

By Karen Binder

EVEN FROM THE HANDSOME outside, one can tell it's warm and tasty inside Bishop Hill Bakery & Eatery. After all, it has its own daily bread menu.

Started in 2005, Jim and Cheri Campbell and son Tom opened the Henry County restaurant in homage to their roots. "On my dad's side, there are many generations who lived here in Bishop Hill," Tom says. The tiny town of 128 is a former Swedish colony.

A graduate of the American Baking Institute in Kansas and a veteran of Sara Lee and other food ventures, Tom oversees the baking and kitchen and is joined by his wife Malissa and three of their six children who currently work summers and weekends.

There are two items that will always be found here – Swedish food favorites and consistent availability of those favorites.

"About four years ago, a couple had driven about an hour for lunch and arrived right before 2 p.m. They were so disappointed that we had sold out of the spinach bisque. It sells two-to-one over our other soups. They were fine with it, but I decided then that I didn't want to run out," Campbell says.

Beginning with their baked goods and lunch menu, such European favorites as the bisque, Swedish rye and rusks blend right in to offer a tasty addition to the local heritage. It's worth it to plan sightseeing around town or visiting one of the region's many festivals. Go to www.bishophill.com to learn more. In the meantime, ponder what will land on your plate.

Daily bread

The daily bread menu is a daily bestsellers menu, Campbell says. There was a day when he did offer more rotating bread choices, but the demand for the favorite ones continued growing. Campbell had to trade the variety for more quantity of the popular sellers. These fresh-from-the-oven delights can also include seasonal favorites.

There's always Swedish rye bread, which sets itself apart because of its little bit of honey and a lot of molasses. There also are rusks, sometimes called "skorpa." This version is a twice-baked shortbread, much like biscotti, and comes in cardamom or Swedish almond flavors. The colony white and honey whole wheat breads not only are available through the bakery but also can be found on the restaurant's sandwich menu.





Popular menu items include the spinach bisque and chicken salad sandwich on Swedish rye.



Clockwise from left: Strawberry rhubarb, coconut cream and apple pies.



Clockwise from left: Freshly made spinach parmesan, Swedish rye, colony white and honey whole wheat breads.

As for other bakery selections, the case starts the day full of scratch fruit pies, coconut cream pie, cinnamon rolls, chocolate lover's torte featuring chocolate cake, creamy chocolate mousse topped with a thin chocolate ganache and shaved chocolate. You can also find dems made of buttery, flaky dough with cinnamon, streusel and glazing; lemonberry stacks made with a shortbread crust, lemon cream cheese, lemon custard and a sprinkle of strawberries, raspberries and blueberries. While you're there, don't forget to get a blueberry or white chocolate raspberry scone or choose from a wide array of cookies including a Swedish favorite, the ginger molasses pepparkakor.

When the holidays roll around, limpa with its distinctive anise and orange flavors and cardamom braids take center stage.

Savory favorites

Campbell doesn't hesitate when referring his customer's top picks of spinach bisque and country chicken pie.

There are gallons of spinach bisque on hand every day along with the spinach parmesan bread. The popular chicken pie is the Saturday lunch special.

"Of course, our goal is to sell out of everything five minutes before lunch ends, but it's not worth it to me to disappoint our customers who visit us for certain dishes. It's more important to make everyone happy," he says with a laugh.

The other daily specials run the gamut from The Jonas, an open-faced turkey with lingonberries, on Wednesdays; heavenly ham casserole on Thursdays; The Olof, an open-faced roast beef on Fridays; and Grandma's ham loaf on Sunday.

If that doesn't suit you, there are the iconic Swedish meatballs.

Besides the bisque, there is also a broad list of soups that change daily, such as the cream of potato, vegetable beef, or ham and bean.

As for desserts, take a glance in the irresistible bakery display case. 🍪

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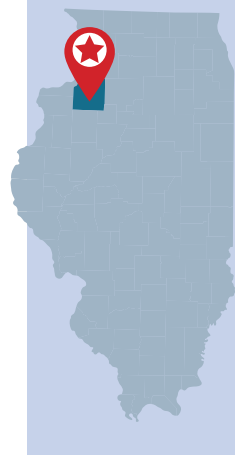
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Upcoming monthly topics

Sheet Pan Meals

Bar Food (taco bar, baked potato bar, etc.)

Pies

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.



Sweet Potato Antioxidant Salad

Submitted by: *Jennifer Sours*

Servings: 1

- 1/4 cup pomegranate seeds
- 1 tablespoon sunflower seeds
- 1 sweet potato, peeled and diced
- 1/4 red onion, diced
- 1 cup fresh spinach
- 1 dash salt
- 3 ounces chicken breasts, cooked and diced
- 1 dash pepper

Dressing:

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1/2 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon balsamic vinegar

Preheat oven to 400 F. Place sweet potatoes on a baking sheet in a single layer and roast until tender, cool. In large bowl, combine chicken, spinach, pomegranate seeds, sunflower seeds, salt, pepper and onion. Add 1 cup sweet potatoes. Whisk together all dressing ingredients. Add to salad, toss and serve. Editor's note: We used roasted pumpkin seeds in place of sunflower seeds. (Recipe from: www.fitrise.com)

Nutrition information: 562 calories; 23.3g fat; 233mg sodium; 59.1g carbohydrates; 30.7g protein.

Buttery Roasted Rutabaga

Servings: 4

- 1 pound rutabaga, peeled and cubed
- 1/4 cup onion, diced
- 1 tablespoon fresh rosemary, chopped
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 tablespoon butter

Preheat oven to 400 F. Place rack in middle position. Line a sheet pan with parchment paper. Toss cubed rutabaga with onion, olive oil, rosemary, salt and pepper and spread onto sheet pan in an even layer. Bake 20-30 minutes until tender. Heat a medium-large frying pan over medium heat. When hot, add butter and swirl to coat pan. Fry rutabaga until browned. Serve with grilled or roasted meat and a side salad. (Recipe from www.lowcarbmbaven.com)

Nutrition information: 100 calories; 6.5g fat; 24mg sodium; 10g carbohydrates; 1.5g protein.

Roasted Root Vegetables

Servings: 6-8

- 2 carrots, peeled and sliced
- 2 medium beets, peeled and diced
- 1 medium sweet potato, peeled and diced
- 2 parsnips, scrubbed and sliced
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 tablespoon fresh oregano, chopped
- 1 tablespoon fresh rosemary, chopped
- Salt to taste

Preheat oven to 400 F. Line baking sheet with foil. In a large bowl, combine vegetables. Add oil and herbs and toss until coated. Transfer to baking sheet and spread into even layer. Bake for 25-30 minutes or until tender. (Adapted from: itsavegworldafterall.com)

Nutrition information: 118 calories; 5.1g fat; 51mg sodium; 18.1g carbohydrates; 1.8g protein.



SWEET POTATO ANTIOXIDANT SALAD

Beef Stew with Root Vegetables

Submitted by: Valerie Cheatham
Servings: 10-12

- | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1.5 pounds beef stew meat | 4 carrots, peeled and sliced |
| 1 onion, diced | 1 rutabaga, peeled and cubed |
| 1 clove garlic, minced | 1 8 ounce can tomato sauce |
| 4 tablespoons olive oil | 8-10 cups beef stock |
| Flour for dusting beef | Cornstarch slurry |
| Salt and pepper to taste | |
| 3 potatoes, peeled and cubed | |

In medium bowl, place flour, salt and pepper. Add stew meat and toss to coat. Set meat aside. Heat 2 tablespoons olive oil in large pan, add onion and garlic and cook until translucent. Add remaining olive oil and meat and cook until browned on all sides. Add beef stock and tomato sauce and stir. Add potatoes, carrots and rutabaga, stir. Bring to a low boil, cover and simmer for 1 hour. Uncover and add enough cornstarch slurry to thicken slightly. Serve with hot biscuits and a salad.

Nutrition information: 388 calories; 12.5g fat; 892mg sodium; 28.2g carbohydrates; 40g protein.



BEEF STEW WITH ROOT VEGETABLES

Jicama-Apple Slaw

Servings: 10

- | | | |
|--|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 Granny Smith apple, julienned | 6 radishes, thinly sliced | 1 tablespoon cilantro, chopped |
| 1 large carrot, peeled and julienned | 1/4 large red onion, thinly sliced | 1/2 tablespoon honey |
| 1/2 small jicama, peeled and julienned | Dressing: | 1/2 teaspoon chili powder |
| 1/2 large red pepper, thinly sliced | 6 tablespoons olive oil | 1/2 teaspoon red pepper flakes |
| 1-1/2 cups red cabbage, shredded | 6 tablespoons rice wine vinegar | 1 teaspoon salt |
| | 3 tablespoons fresh lime juice | 1 teaspoon pepper |

In large bowl, combine all vegetables. In a small bowl, combine dressing ingredients until well blended. Pour over vegetables and mix. Cover and place in refrigerator for 30 minutes or overnight. Serve. (Adapted from www.familytabletreasures.com)

Nutrition information: 110 calories; 8.5g fat; 243mg sodium; 7.9g carbohydrates; 0.5g protein.



JICAMA-APPLE SLAW

Beetroot Hummus

Submitted by: Colten Bradford
Servings: 8

- | |
|--------------------------------------|
| 1 can chickpeas, drained |
| 1 beet |
| 1/4 cup tahini |
| 1 tablespoon lemon zest |
| Juice from 1/2 lemon |
| 1 garlic clove |
| 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin |
| 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil |
| Salt and pepper, to taste |
| 1/4 cup water |

Preheat oven to 400 F. Cut off the top of the beet and scrub. Wrap beet loosely in foil and roast until you can easily pierce with a fork, about an hour. Cool for 10 to 15 minutes and use a paper towel to rub off skin. Quarter beet and place in food processor with chickpeas, tahini, lemon zest, lemon juice, garlic, cumin, olive oil, salt and pepper. Process with 1/4 cup water until smooth and creamy. Add more water, if needed. Put in bowl, drizzle with extra virgin olive oil and cracked pepper. Serve with pita chips and fresh veggies. Optional topping, set aside a handful of chickpeas, add butter to a pan and fry for about 5 minutes until lightly browned. You can also use pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, etc. for added texture.

Nutrition information: 136 calories; 8.1g fat; 154mg sodium; 13.4g carbohydrates; 3.8g protein.

The hills are alive

I GREW UP IN Alton, just uphill from where Great River Road becomes Broadway Avenue. Back then, during the quiet of night, as I lie in bed, a resonant sound would drift up to me from the Mississippi River. Perhaps it was just the sounding of a horn on a barge's tugboat at the lock, but to my little girl ears it was melodious and calming. Now I never hear a sound like it without feeling a bit sleepy.

The cooing of a pigeon also takes me back to my childhood hometown. Next to the river at the edge

before daybreak as he was positioning himself for a hunt in Shawnee National Forest. "As the sun rose, the chuck-will's-widow quieted. Then the wild turkeys began to gobble, the sound resonating off the hills," he recalls.

Sounds can stir a memory like nothing else and are also poignant symbols. Consider the sound of a siren, a car horn or a whistle.

An incident at a nature center made me realize the significance embodied in the simple sounds of our daily lives. I was working

associate the whine of locusts or cicadas with the dog days of summer? When I was a child, the loud racket of cicadas could be proclaiming a heat index of 90, but we would still be out playing on a wooded hillside in our urban neighborhood. We were free. It was our summer break from school, and we wanted every moment to count. To me, the sound of cicadas is the announcement of the passage of time – summer is here, but beware, the end of summer vacation is near. Even now, when the first cicada sings in the barnyard trees, I think it won't be long before the school busses are running again.

Truly, the sounds of nature elicit emotion. Nothing is more cheering than a robin's dawn song, more attention-getting than a mosquito's whine or more eerie than the howling of coyotes.

I have laughed out loud at the brumph of a bullfrog and shed a tear at the scream of a baby rabbit caught by a mink. I've cheered the pent of a woodcock as its buzzy call emanated from the bottoms where the trees my family planted grow. And what a thrill to have heard the booming of greater prairie-chickens in Jasper County, an Illinois endangered species.

I once stood awestruck watching seven whooping cranes fly southward silently. I felt joy and gloom at the same time. I had missed hearing the rare birds' whoop, but I was thinking that sadly, for future generations their song may only be available as a digital recording.

Step into the great outdoors, maybe climb to the top of a hill, and listen! You may be surprised by what you hear, and the memories evoked. 🦟



of town, huge concrete silos marked the location of the Peabody Milling Company. Pigeons, probably lured into town by the promise of spilled grain, would perch upon rooftops, nest in cornices and walk about downtown while conversing with each other affably. I would hear their soft, bubbly calls as I'd exit Hayner Library or cross in front of the old Illini Hotel on my way to a matinee.

Hearing the sounds of different birds always plunges my husband into reminiscence. He tells of listening to the repetitive song of a chuck-will's-widow in the dark

on a wildflower bed and had just noticed that my stomach was feeling a bit empty when the other volunteer said, "Well, there's the whistle." Hearing only the buzzing of a bee, I looked over at him. My confusion must have shown, because he smiled and explained, "Lunchtime!" He was joking about being compelled to eat by a whistle, just as he had when he had worked at a factory. I responded, "Yes, the bell did just ring." Why? Because I'm a retired teacher.

Sounds of nature can likewise be symbolic. Who does not

Patty Gillespie is involved in education, agriculture, land stewardship and the study of nature. She writes from the heart and for the sheer joy of it.

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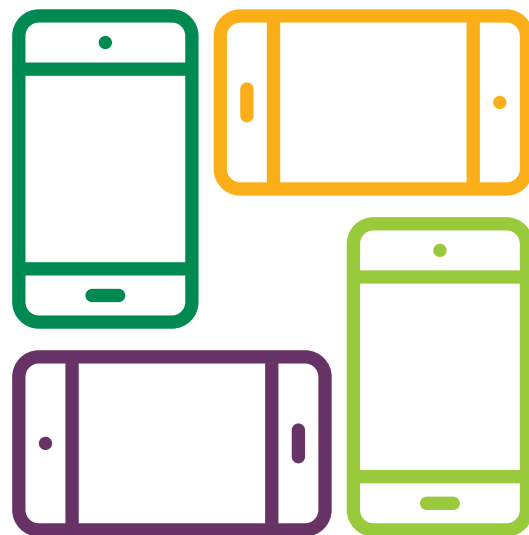
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FOUR TIPS FOR BETTER SMARTPHONE IMAGES



You don't have to be a professional to take quality photos. Embrace your inner photographer by following these four tips for better smartphone images!



Clean the camera lens.

Your phone goes with you everywhere, collecting dirt and dust and leaving a cloudy layer that can ruin the quality of your photos. Wipe down the lens before you snap a picture. Use a soft handkerchief when possible, but a shirt sleeve works too!



Adjust the camera focus.

Smartphones automatically focus on the foreground, but that may not include your intended subject. The best way to correct this is by manually setting your camera's focus.

Tap the portion of the screen you want in focus. This results in a square or circle icon appearing over your intended subject, producing a sharper image.



Get closer.

This may seem obvious, but the closer you can get to your subject, the better. Avoid zooming in, which leads to blurry, pixelated images. That said, keep safety in mind when you're taking pictures in potentially hazardous situations.



Use natural light.

Natural light is your friend! It's beautiful, free, everywhere and constant. Natural light also lets you be more creative when playing with shadows and silhouettes.

Avoid using the flash when possible. Flash can overexpose or wash out the image colors. You can always adjust the brightness with your camera's exposure tool.



Bonus Tip: Take photos during the golden hours, the time just after sunrise or before sunset. Photographers know this is the best time to take photos because of the softer and warmer lighting the sun provides.

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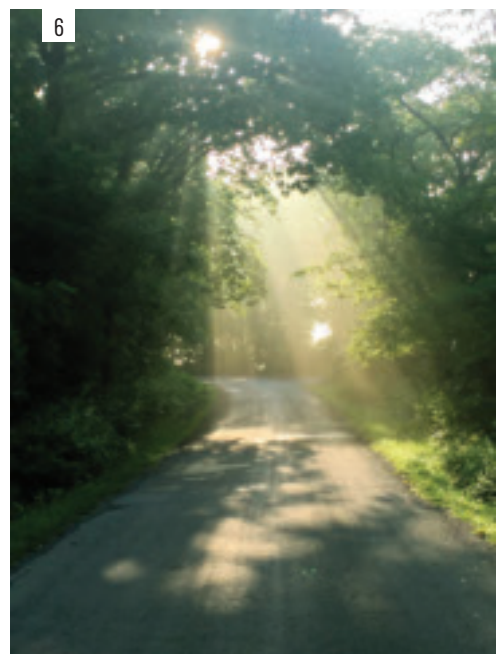
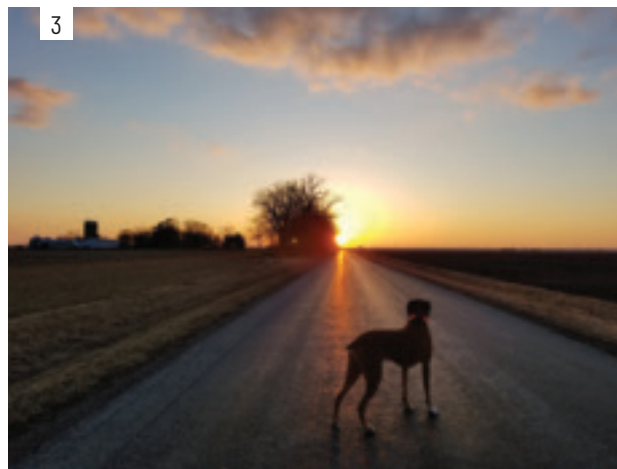
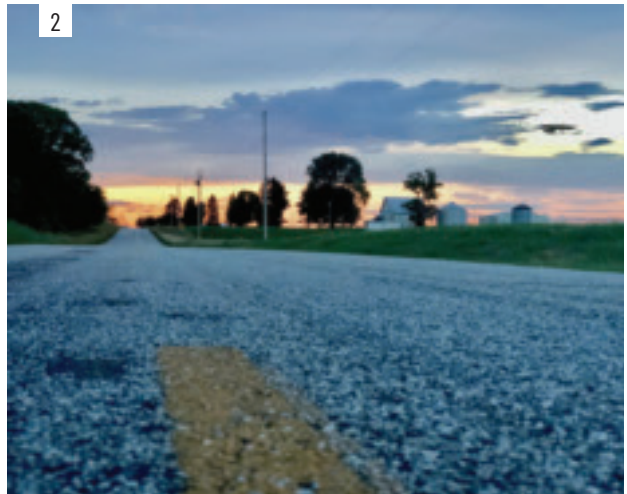
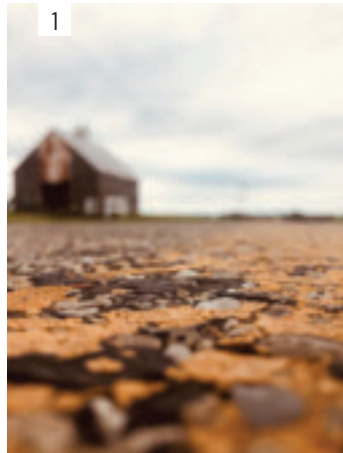
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UPCOMING THEMES

January - Snow and ice
February - Sunrises/sunsets
March - Cars/trucks/tractors
April - Vivid colors



SUBMIT A PHOTO

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Email: cbradford@aiec.coop
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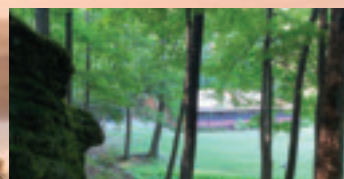
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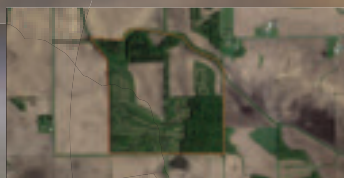
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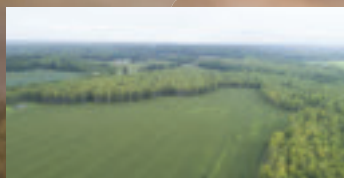
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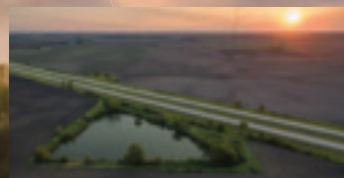
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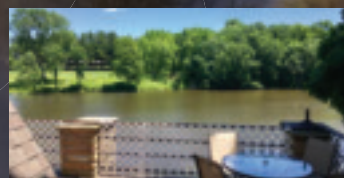
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