

FEBRUARY 2022

# Illinois Country Living

Building a  
**foundation  
for growth**

FEATURE  
**Creating their  
forever home**

FINEST COOKING  
**Say cheese!**

SNAPSHOTS  
**Bridge the gap**

**CO-OP  
NEWS**



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# Illinois Country Living

FEBRUARY 2022  
VOLUME 79, NO. 10

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# What the CDL is happening?

Regulatory changes may further impact work force and supply chain issues

**THE IMAGES OF CARGO** ships stacked with freight containers bobbing off the coast of California last fall and the giant container ship that blocked the Suez Canal last spring are still fresh in most



In general, to drive a 26,001-pound single vehicle or a vehicle with a gross combined weight rating of 26,001 or more pounds, a CDL is required. This includes semi-trucks, truck and trailer combinations, bucket trucks – which includes our trusty cooperative lineworkers – as well as school and passenger buses.

Up until recently, to receive a CDL in Illinois, a person had to first obtain a Commercial License Permit – this allowed a person to learn to drive while accompanied by someone with a CDL. After two weeks of having the permit, a person could take a written exam and skills test through the Illinois Secretary of State's Office.

Beginning February 2022, the requirements to receive a CDL will change. The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) will require entry level trainees to receive certification from a training provider registered with the FMCSA – think

community colleges, vocational or driving schools.

Certification requires completed mandatory theory (knowledge) and behind-the wheel courses. Trucking schools can cost anywhere between \$3,000-\$7,000 and take 3 to 5 weeks to complete. Anyone looking to upgrade their CDL or obtain one for the first time must now comply with these new regulations.

With supply chain disruptions caused by transportation issues as well as trucker shortages – the American Trucking Association estimates a shortage of 80,000 drivers in 2022 – it appears as if relief for the industry will not come anytime soon.

Again, there are many issues affecting the supply chain at this time. The new CDL mandate will not be the main cause of transportation issues, but it certainly may be another disruptor in the field.

And, just in case you were looking to get your CDL as a gift for that someone special for Valentine's Day this year, be prepared to have to go back to school to get it. 💡

consumer's minds. We all have felt some of the effects from these situations – such as empty store shelves, long waits for furniture orders to be fulfilled and higher prices. We still are not out of the woods.

We haven't yet felt the impacts of bad weather, lack of skilled workers or delays due to the Omicron variant. Depending on the source of information – from the New York Federal Reserve to Forbes Magazine – the supply chain issues may have peaked or they are expected to last long into 2022.

The supply chain is heavily reliant upon transportation – planes, trains, ships and trucks – for the distribution of goods. The semi-trucks driving down highways and rural routes bring us our food, paper products and building materials. They haul grain and beans.

Tanker trucks deliver fuel to service stations. And what do all those transportation drivers have in common? They have a Commercial Driver's License (CDL).



**Brenda Carter** is Vice President of Regulatory Compliance at the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives and assists co-op members with compliance issues.

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 192,000, the magazine informs cooperative consumer-members about issues affecting their electric cooperative and the quality of life in rural Illinois.

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# Eye Doctor Helps Illinois Legally Blind To See

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



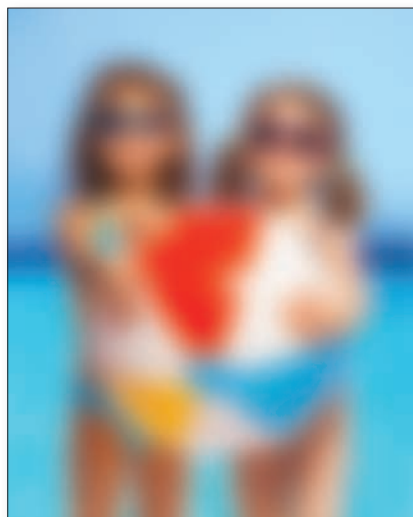
**F**or many patients with macular degeneration and other vision-related conditions, the loss of central visual detail also signals the end to one of the last bastions of independence: driving. A Mascoutah optometrist, Dr. Marianne McDaniel, is using miniaturized telescopes that are mounted in glasses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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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## FEBRUARY CHECKLIST

### The gift of life.

During American Heart Month, find a blood donation center in your area.



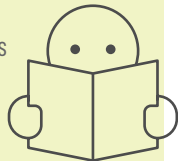
### Plowing through.

Never crowd a snowplow or travel beside one, stay far behind it and pass with caution.



### Grab a book.

Research shows that reading reduces stress and aids in sleep readiness.



### Tip of the month.

Air leaks in ductwork can account for 20-30 percent

of wasted heat - have a professional test for leaks.



## New year, new positions

Ushering in a new year brings with it new faces taking up the managerial reins at four Illinois cooperatives.

Wayne-White Counties Electric Cooperative's (WWCEC), Fairfield, new president/CEO is Chris Hopfinger who takes over duties for the recently retired Daryl Donjon. Hopfinger was previously WWCEC assistant manager/system engineer.

Joe Heyen is the new president/CEO at M.J.M. Electric Cooperative, Carlinville, upon the retirement of Laura Cutler. Heyen was the cooperative's director of engineering and operations before his selection by the M.J.M. board of directors.

Josh DeWees, Spoon River Electric Cooperative, Canton, manager of line clearance and operations, was selected by the board of directors to replace retiring President/CEO Bill Dodds.

The Tri-County Electric Cooperative (TCEC), Mt. Vernon, board of directors chose Luke Johnson, former Clay Electric Co-operative, Inc. (CECI) CEO, Flora, to fill the vacancy created with the retirement of General Manager Marcia Scott.

The board of directors of CECI tapped Operations Manager Matt Conklin to temporarily fill the vacancy left by Johnson to fill the co-op's general manager position. <sup>1</sup>



Chris Hopfinger



Joe Heyen



Josh DeWees



Luke Johnson

## Where is it?



It's a new month and time for a new hidden object search. January's rubber duckie was hidden on page 14 on the guy wire in the bottom lefthand corner of the photo. Two winners' names will be drawn

from all entries received by Jan. 20, announced in next month's issue and an ICL Tervis tumbler will be mailed to the winners.

February's hidden object is a bust of Abraham Lincoln in honor of Illinois' favorite son and Presidents Day. Symbols can vary in size and will never be on this page, pages 18a, b, c or d, or in an ad.

Entries must include your name, address, and name of your electric co-op (non-members are also eligible) and the page number and location of the symbol. Visit [icl.coop/hiddenobject](http://icl.coop/hiddenobject) and fill out the entry form or mail a postcard to Illinois Country Living, Hidden Objects, 6460 S. 6th Street Frontage Road East, Springfield, IL 62712. We will NOT take letters or entries via phone call. All entries for that month must be postmarked or received via email by the 15th. Winner's names and the location of the symbol will be published in each month's issue of Illinois Country Living. January's winner had not been drawn yet when we went to print.

Good luck! <sup>1</sup>

## Sudoku

by Myles Mellor and Susan Flanagan

Complete the grid so every row, column and 3x3 sub contains every digit from 1 to 9 inclusive with no repetition. Solution on page 3

Level: Medium

1			4	5		6		
				3	2	8		
				6	9	2	3	
				7		4		6
	3			4			5	
6		9		8				
	9	5	6	1				
		1	8	2				
		8		9	7			2

## Every step counts

Take heart. February is American Heart Month and a good time to take stock of your activity, or, for some of us, the lack thereof.

Many people have good intentions to move more, but then the day unfolds with little else other than chair time. You get to work and have that sit-down meeting, a nice co-worker brings in doughnuts (“What the heck?” that voice in your head reasons, and the heavy treat makes you sluggish), and the day is filled with several work fires to put out. You vow to move more tomorrow, but as they say, tomorrow never comes.

Instead of waiting for another day, find easy ways to increase movement today. The American Heart Association offers seven easy ways to boost your activity level with no gym membership required (although a gym is also a good way to get moving).

- 1. Grab the leash and walk your dog.** Both you and your four-legged friend will be healthier for it.
- 2. Take your kid (or spouse or friend) for a walk.** It is a great way to get face time without screens.
- 3. Try a 10-minute home workout.** Exercising in shorter increments can improve your health because the time spent moving adds up. People usually have an extra 10 minutes here or there throughout the day but may not find a solid 30 minutes or an hour to exercise.
- 4. Walk and talk.** Or walk and work. Walk while you are on the phone or



## small steps equal BIG STRIDES

Increasing activity improves your physical and mental health, stress levels, sleep, productivity, and more!

- 2.5** hours of walking each week for a year is like walking across the state of Wyoming
- 1** hour of dancing every week for a year is like walking from Chicago to Indianapolis
- 30** minutes of playing tennis (singles) is like walking a 5K
- 30** minutes of grocery shopping every other week for a year is like walking a marathon
- 10** minutes of stretching is like walking the length of a football field
- 20** minutes of vacuuming is like walking 1 mile

Source: heart.org

## Did you know?

The Necco Company makes about 8 billion candy conversation hearts each year. What message will you send to your sweetheart?

- use a walking desk at work. If it is nice outside, have a walking meeting.
- 5. Tune into fitness.** Walk or jog in place, lift weights, or do yoga while you binge watch your favorite episodes.
- 6. Ditch the car.** Park farther away from the building to get in extra steps. Bike or walk to your destination.
- 7. Take the stairs, even if just for a floor or two.** The elevator may go up, but your heart rate will not as you press the floor number and listen to the nondescript, piped-in music.

Stop putting off until tomorrow what you can do today. Look for opportunities to move more. Your heart will thank you, and every step counts! 💡





enjoy  
illinois

# WANDER

*Plan a road trip* to Carbondale, Illinois and embrace your inner wanderlust. Sip award winning wines and take in the picturesque views of rolling hills and rocky bluffs among the Shawnee Hills Wine Trail. Lose yourself in the woods on one of the many hiking trails at Giant City State Park or camp, rock-climb or just relax in the endless beauty of the Shawnee National Forest. Dine out at eclectic eateries and enjoy locally sourced cuisine in peaceful patio settings. Unwind with live music and enjoy the downtown nightlife scene with drinks and cocktails on the "strip". The day could end worlds away from where it began – all without traveling more than a few miles.

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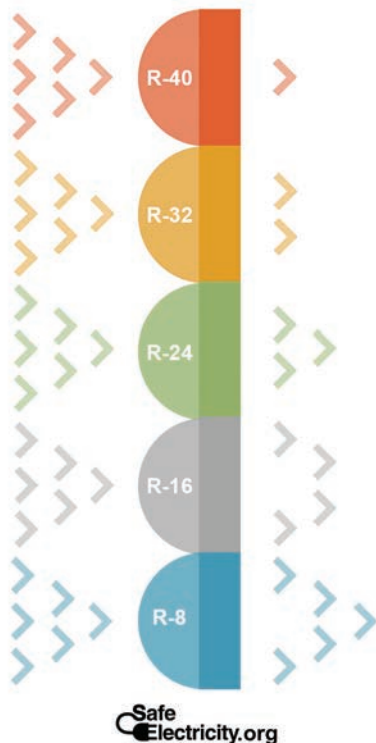
Every issue of Illinois Country Living is delivered to the mailboxes of over 191,000 homes, farms and businesses throughout Illinois. With a readership of over half a million, no other publication – magazine or newspaper – even comes close to reaching so many potential customers for your product, service or destination. Find out how easy it is to advertise and to take advantage of Illinois' Most Powerful Reach!



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## USDA invests more than \$200 million in Illinois infrastructure

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Tom Vilsack announced on Dec. 16, 2021, that the USDA is investing \$5.2 billion to build and improve critical infrastructure in 46 states and Puerto Rico. The funding will expand access to high-speed internet, clean water and dependable electric power in homes and businesses in rural America.

More than \$200 million in grants and loans will be invested in critical infrastructure in Illinois. Community Connect Grants totaling almost \$5 million were awarded to Wabash Telephone, Louisville, and Jo-Carroll Energy, Inc., Elizabeth. The grants provide financial assistance to provide broadband service in rural, economically challenged communities where service does not exist.

Electric Infrastructure Loan and Loan Guarantee Program monies of almost \$175 million will assist in financing construction of electric generation, transmission and generation facilities. Loans were given to Illinois Electric Cooperative, Winchester; Menard Electric Cooperative, Petersburg; and Hoosier Energy, Bloomington, Ind., the generation and transmission provider for Wayne-White Counties Electric Cooperative, Fairfield.

Funds, both grants and loans, were also provided for water and environmental programs for several Illinois municipal water programs including Clay County Water, Flora, and EJ Water, Dietrich.

## Choosing a Mask: Dos and Don'ts

### DO choose masks that



Have two or more layers of washable, breathable fabric



Completely cover your nose and mouth



Fit snugly against the sides of your face and don't have gaps



Have a nose wire to prevent air from leaking out of the top of the mask



CS 11/16/20 © November 11, 2021

### DO NOT choose masks that



Are made of fabric that makes it hard to breathe, for example, vinyl

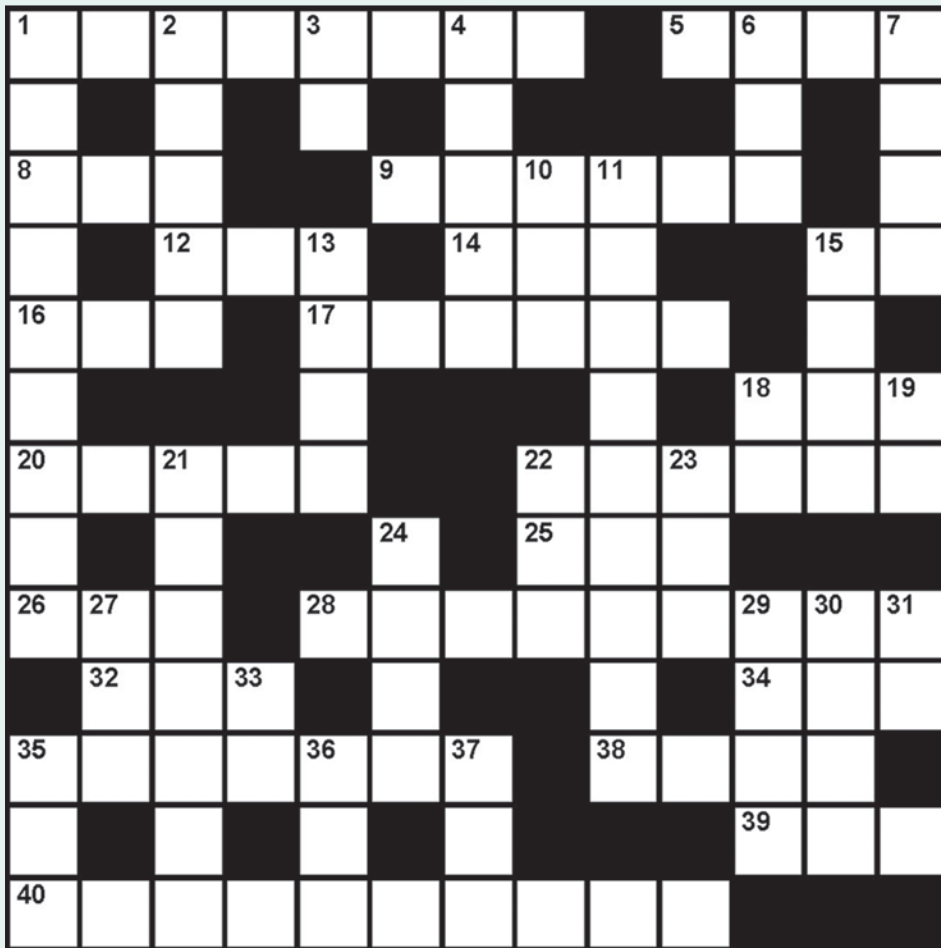


Have exhalation valves or vents, which allow virus particles to escape



Are intended for healthcare workers, including N95 respirators

[cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus)



**Across**

- 1 President during the “Roaring Twenties”
- 5 The Mexican-American war of 1848 broke out during his presidency, James \_\_\_\_\_
- 8 “The Great Depression” was one
- 9 President who signed the Kansas-Nebraska Act, Franklin \_\_\_\_\_
- 12 George W. Bush was the only president to have this degree, abbr.
- 14 Zodiac sign
- 15 Bunyan’s Babe, e.g. (farm animal)
- 16 Arrival estimate, abbr.
- 17 President who only served one year in office, Zachary \_\_\_\_\_
- 18 “...liberty and justice for \_\_\_\_\_”
- 20 Washington’s successor as president

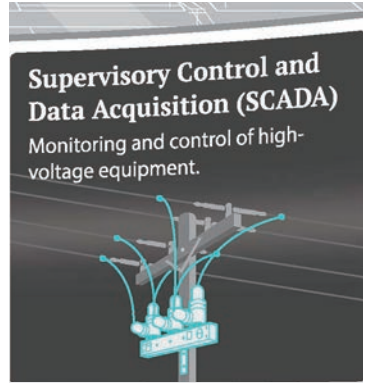
- 22 President who said “Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!”
- 25 Time just before an event
- 26 Period in a website address
- 28 President on Mount Rushmore
- 32 President who was called “Little \_\_\_\_\_” (during his term 6 states were admitted to the union)
- 34 Additionally
- 35 President famous for his stand against slavery
- 38 The only person to hold the office of the president and the chief justice of the United States, William \_\_\_\_\_
- 39 Very long time
- 40 WW II president

**Down**

- 1 Only person in American history to win two nonconsecutive terms in office as president, Grover \_\_\_\_\_

- 2 First African-American president
- 3 Driver’s license, e.g.
- 4 Joyfully
- 6 Pronoun
- 7 Middle name of 5 across
- 10 Sushi fish
- 11 One of the Rushmore quartet
- 13 Sources for cash, abbr.
- 15 Mexican pot
- 18 Silver symbol
- 19 Lane, abbr.
- 21 Is present at
- 22 NFL crew chief
- 23 Initials of FDR’s wife
- 24 Factual
- 27 First name in “Star Wars”
- 29 Secure from harm
- 30 Familiar with
- 31 Bismarck’s state
- 33 State where James Polk was born, abbr.
- 35 Grant’s Civil War foe
- 36 The O in BYOB
- 37 Recent, prefix

*Solution on page 33.*



**Court denies 6 GHz band protection for utilities**

A federal court has denied a request by NRECA and others to reverse a Federal Communications Commission (FCC) rule that opens the radio spectrum used for critical utility communications to unlicensed wireless devices that can cause dangerous interference.

In the Dec. 28 decision, the court said it was deferring to the FCC’s expertise in regulating activity within the 6-gigahertz spectrum band, which until recently had been largely reserved for licensed utility and public safety communications.

“Electric co-ops rely on the 6 GHz band to operate their SCADA (supervisory control and data acquisition) systems, deploy advanced metering infrastructure, provide broadband and communicate with teams in the field,” said Brian O’Hara, NRECA senior regulatory director.

“The court’s decision jeopardizes the functionality and reliability of those vital co-op operations.”

NRECA petitioned the FCC to develop new rules governing the opening of the 6 GHz band, to prevent interference from low-power devices like cellphones, laptops and Wi-Fi routers. The FCC was also asked to close the 6 GHz band to unlicensed users until new rules and protections are in place. 📡

**Source: Cathy Cash, NRECA.**

# FEBRUARY Datebook

## LET'S GO!

For more information, a complete listing of events or to submit an event, visit [icl.coop/datebook](http://icl.coop/datebook).



## Winter Walk in the Woods

FEBRUARY

5

It may be cold outside, but winter is a great time to get some exercise and fresh air as we take in the natural beauty of Giant City State Park. Join the Natural Resources Coordinator for a leisurely stroll through the winter woods. Trail length ranges from .75 mile to 2 miles.

Feb. 5, 2022; 10-11:30 a.m.

- Giant City Visitor Center, 235 Giant City Rd., Makanda  
Cost: Free, registration required  
618-457-4836

## Argenta Ice Festival

FEBRUARY

12

Watch Olympic gold medal winner Aaric Kendall amaze during live ice carving demonstrations and enjoy his many carvings along Elm Street from the comfort of your vehicle all day and evening. From 11 a.m.-1 p.m., join us for a Chili Cookoff or warm up with a bowl in our Community Center. Food and drinks are available at local establishments.

Feb. 12, 2022; all day

- Elm and North Streets, Argenta  
Cost: Free  
217-779-5238



## Winter Carnival Weekend at Eagle Ridge

FEBRUARY

18-19

Have "snow" much fun with the whole family while making memories at this annual event. The outdoor winter celebration features all types of winter activities including Fire and Ice winter shows, ice turkey bowling, s'mores making, ice carving stations, an ice bar featuring marshmallow shots as well as the new indoor golf simulator. Eagle Ridge's Nordic Center will be accessible to all resort guests and includes a range of products and services and rental equipment for outdoor activities.

Feb. 18-19, 2022; 8 a.m.-9 p.m.

- Eagle Ridge Resort & Spa, 444 Eagle Ridge Dr., Galena  
Cost: Free  
815-777-5000

## Maple Syrup Festival

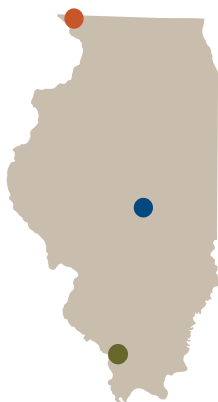
FEBRUARY

26-27

Enjoy two full days of family fun including maple syrup demonstrations, pancake breakfast, interpretive hikes, lumberjack demonstrations, children's activities, vendors, artisans and more. Pancake breakfast is 9 a.m.-1 p.m. and while the festival is free, there is a cost for breakfast.

Feb. 26-27, 2022; 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

- Touch of Nature Environmental Center, 1206 Touch of Nature Rd., Makanda  
Cost: Free  
618-453-1121





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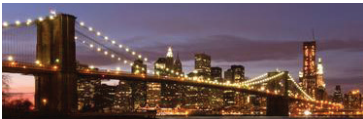
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## Upgrade detected

**IF THAT OLD SMOKE** detector, stained with paint or discolored with years of household grime, could send you a silent message, it might say, “Please replace me.” Those lifesaving warning devices designed to alert us to smoke and fire were never meant to last forever.

monoxide detectors are designed with a timeframe or useful lifespan of 10 years, according to Shawn Mahoney, a National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) technical services engineer.

“Once they start to reach their end of life, consumers may notice

detectors represent good investments in your family’s safety. Nye says, “Consumers who have working smoke alarms in their homes die in fires at about half the rate of those who do not have them. Install working carbon monoxide detectors on every level of the home and outside of sleeping areas. CO detectors are designed to sound the alert before carbon monoxide reaches life threatening levels.”

Design improvements are another reason to consider replacement of older units. Ionization smoke alarms made their debut in the consumer market in 1970. Photoelectric smoke detectors were first patented in 1972, and the first 10-year lithium battery-powered smoke alarms hit the market in 1995. Since then, units using the best features of all three technologies have become popular.

Many states have upgraded building codes to require hard-wired smoke alarms with battery backup power and carbon monoxide detectors in all new residential construction.

As fire codes have evolved to require smoke alarms near cooking appliances, manufacturers have improved the technology. NFPA’s Mahoney says, “They can distinguish between an actual fire event in the home and cooking fumes, reducing the incidence of nuisance alarms.”

Features for residential alarms and detectors are available to enhance the safety of the hearing impaired, says CPSC’s Nye, adding that those include bed shakers and strobe lights offering another level of alert to fire or carbon monoxide danger. 🗣️



**Carbon monoxide detectors are designed to sound the alert before carbon monoxide reaches life threatening levels.** Photo Source: Abi Begum



**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.

“The National Fire Protection Association and Underwriters Laboratories suggests replacing smoke detectors every 10 years,” says Nicolette Nye, a public affairs specialist with the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). Both organizations cite sensor degradation rates of 3 percent per year for their replacement recommendations.

“After 10 years, there’s a 30 percent potential failure rate,” says Nye, who also cited a CPSC recommendation that consumers look for smoke alarms certified by Underwriters Laboratories designated by the symbol UL or the Electrical Testing Laboratories, marked with the ETL logo.

Both smoke alarms and carbon

alarm signals—typically a chirping sound that is either a low battery or an indication of the device’s end of life, meaning it’s time the unit was replaced,” says Mahoney.

The NFPA not only recommends batteries be replaced once a year, but also urges you to test the unit once a month as an added precaution against failure. Chirping, prompted by a drained battery, will typically stop within seven days, and when that happens, the unit stops functioning.

“If you’re just waiting to hear the sound and not testing regularly, there’s a possibility you’re going to miss it, especially if you have battery-only systems,” Mahoney says.

According to the CPSC, smoke alarms and carbon monoxide

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## New tech alert: Iron-air batteries

AS THE ELECTRIC GRID continues to evolve, new technologies are being developed to help advance the grid of the future. One of these technologies is a new form of battery storage technology called the iron-air battery, which could potentially provide long-duration energy storage for hundreds of hours.

Current battery technologies can only offer storage for tens of

excess energy to be used when the sun isn't shining or the wind isn't blowing.

The battery technology itself is made up of thousands of small iron pellets that develop rust when exposed to oxygen. This process discharges the battery. When the oxygen is removed, the pellets revert back to iron, which then charges the battery.

per kWh. That price is about one-tenth the cost of lithium-ion battery technology, which is currently the cheapest battery technology on the market.

Individual iron-air batteries are about the size of a washing machine, making it easy to group many batteries together into a larger, scalable system. The size of the battery module group can vary, depending on the storage needed at a specific site. This means the batteries can be placed in a variety of areas, from rural to urban, to meet energy needs.

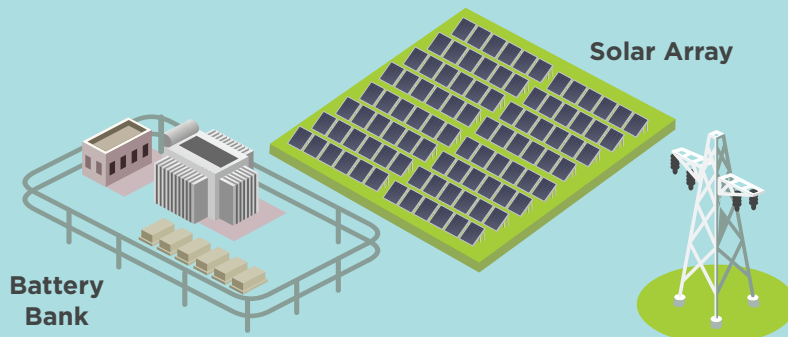
While this technology may be a solution for long-duration energy storage, the battery is not yet ready at the commercial level—although it is close. Form Energy estimates the battery should be ready for mass production by 2025. As a pilot project to test this groundbreaking technology, Form Energy is working with Great River Energy, a generation and transmission cooperative located in Minnesota. The 1 MW/150MWh project is anticipated to go live in 2023.

Given the importance of long-duration energy storage for future of the grid, other start-ups are also looking to develop long-duration battery storage technology.

Time will tell if the iron-air battery, or any other long-duration battery, becomes successful as a new emerging technology. In the meantime, electric utilities can start to understand where this technology may potentially fit within their own systems to make the grid more resilient and reliable. Whether this technology becomes mainstream or not, utilities will continue finding ways to provide affordable, long-duration storage as the electric grid continues to change. 💡

### THE FUTURE OF ENERGY STORAGE

A new form of battery storage technology, known as the iron-air battery, could potentially provide long-duration energy storage for hundred of hours. Long-duration energy storage will be crucial for adding more solar and wind energy to the electric grid since renewable energy is dependent on the weather and may not always be available when needed.



hours, meaning the innovative iron-air battery could provide energy for roughly 10 times longer than existing grid-scale batteries. This new technology could help ensure grid reliability even with extreme weather, such as hurricanes or powerful thunderstorms.

Long-duration energy storage will also be crucial for adding more solar and wind energy to the grid since renewable energy is dependent on the weather and may not always be available when we need it. New iron-air batteries could provide the missing link by storing

According to Form Energy, the startup company developing this new technology, this process is known as the principle of “reversible rusting.” Since the battery technology mainly uses the abundant and cheap resources of water, air and iron, the technology is relatively low-cost. These resources also make the technology relatively safe since there are no heavy metals, and also make the batteries simpler to recycle.

A key feature of these batteries is their low cost, with Form Energy promising a price of less than \$20



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



# Finally . . . a better mobility solution than Scooters or Power Chairs.

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If you have mobility issues, or know someone who does, then you've experienced the difficulties faced by millions of Americans. Simple tasks like getting from the bedroom to the kitchen can become a time-consuming and potentially dangerous ordeal. You may have tried to solve the problem with a power chair or a scooter but neither is ideal. Power chairs are bulky and look like a medical device. Scooters are either unstable or hard to maneuver. Now, there's a better alternative . . . the Zoomer.

*My Zoomer is a delight to ride! It has increased my mobility in my apartment, my opportunities to enjoy the-out-of-doors, and enabled me to visit the homes of my children for longer periods of time. The various speeds of it match my need for safety, it is easy to turn, and I am most pleased with the freedom of movement it gives me.*

Sincerely, A. Macon, Williamsburg, VA

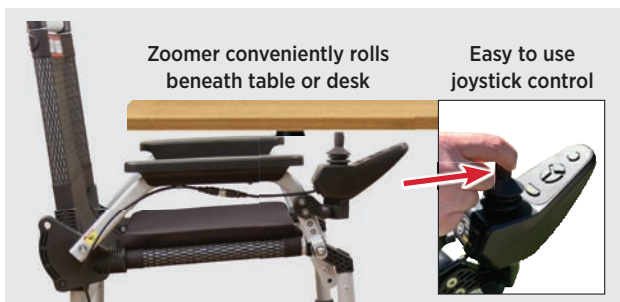
After just one trip around your home in the Zoomer, you'll marvel at how easy it is to navigate. It is designed to maneuver in tight spaces like doorways, between furniture, and around corners. It can go over thresholds and works great on any kind of floor or carpet. It's not bulky or cumbersome, so it can roll



right up to a table or desk – there's no need to transfer to a chair.

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## Energy-saving, budget-friendly tips

**Q:** I don't have a big budget for energy-efficiency upgrades. Can you share budget-friendly, energy-saving tips?

The same goes for windows. Windows are typically the least-insulated surface in a room and can



Adding an area rug to a hard-surface floor can make your home feel warmer. Your pets will enjoy the coziness, too. Photo: Mark Gilliland, Pioneer Utility Resources

**A:** YOU DON'T NEED a lot of money to save on energy bills. Decreasing monthly bills and being more efficient at home is something we all should practice. Here are some budget-friendly energy efficiency tips targeting one of the biggest energy users in the home – the heating system. Heating and cooling account for nearly half of a U.S. home's energy consumption.

### Add coziness to your home

One way you can feel warmer in your home without turning up the thermostat is by making your home cozy. The way our bodies perceive the temperature of a room is based more on the surfaces in the room than the air temperature.

In general, harder surfaces feel colder. For example, a tile floor will feel cooler than your fabric sofa. Adding an area rug to a hard-surface floor can make us feel warmer, even with the same setting on the thermostat.

feel cold in winter months. Adding or closing curtains can help the room feel warmer.

### Check the windows

Make sure windows are closed and locked. Locking windows pulls the sashes tighter together, reducing gaps that allow air to flow through and cause drafts. If your sash locks don't form a tight fit, adjust them or add weather stripping.

There's a variety of window weather stripping products available for less than \$20. Most are simple to install and only require tools you most likely already have around the house, such as scissors and a tape measure.

Some are more permanent solutions, and others are intended to be used for one heating season and then removed. Temporary solutions such as caulk strips, putty, pull-and-peel caulking or window insulation films can be used if you rent and can't make permanent changes.

### Seal the doors

Weather stripping doors is an easy do-it-yourself project. Make sure doors seal tightly and don't allow drafts to pass around the edges or under the door.

Be sure any doors leading to an unheated space (outside or into a garage) are sealed tightly. If you see light around the edges or underneath the door, or feel air movement when the door is closed, you are losing energy.

Doors need to open and close easily. Expect to do a bit of adjusting after installing weather stripping. If not installed correctly, it can make the door hard to close. Making it too loose defeats the purpose.

### Close the damper

If you have a fireplace, make sure the damper is completely closed when not in use. Leaving the damper open is like leaving a window open. The air you just paid to heat your home will go right out the chimney.

The only exception, some gas fireplaces need to remain open for gas fumes to exit the home. If you have a gas fireplace, check the owner's manual for more information on the damper position.

### Layer up

It can be tempting to adjust the thermostat to increase your comfort. Putting on a comfy sweatshirt can have the same impact without increasing your energy use. Slippers can help, too.

The next time you consider turning up the thermostat a few degrees, try some of these tips first to stay warm and leave increased energy bills out in the cold. 💡



Miranda Boutelle is the director of operations and customer engagement at Efficiency Services Group in Oregon, a cooperatively owned energy efficiency company.

## There she is, perennial of the year

**SUN-LOVING, DROUGHT-TOLERANT,** low-maintenance, dependable and year-round interest. Doesn't this sound like a perfect perennial to add to your garden?

Little bluestem was selected as the Perennial Plant Association's 2022 plant of the year and is a favorite of many gardeners. The association votes to showcase a low-maintenance plant with multi-season interest, that's relatively pest-free and can be grown in a wide range of climates.

Native to Illinois and North American prairies, it thrives in sunny locations but grows in a wide range of growing conditions, including poor soil and drought conditions. This grass is often used in native gardens or prairie restoration, and its 5-foot-deep fibrous root system makes it great for erosion control. When used in the landscape, it creates the biggest impact when planted in large groupings mixed with other perennials and shrubs.

Its year-round interest in the garden makes it the perfect addition to any landscape. Little bluestem forms an upright, 1-foot diameter mound, growing 4 to 5 feet tall depending on the cultivar. It gets its name from the fine-textured, blue-green summer foliage.

In August, small flowers turn into clusters of white fluffy seed heads that stand above the foliage. After a frost, the foliage transitions into a gorgeous bronze-orange that persist into winter, adding unique color, texture and interest to the winter landscape.

It is a warm-season grass, so it will thrive during the warmer months of June through September. New foliage will not grow from the base of the plant until the air and soil temperatures warm in late spring. It is low-maintenance and generally has no pests or diseases.

In April, cut back the brown foliage to 3 inches above the soil for the new flush of green foliage to grow. Clumps of the grass can be

dug up and divided every few years in the spring. Replant the divisions in a new spot or share with a friend. (Note: if you suspect jumping worms in your garden, avoid sharing divided perennials.)

Little bluestem is also a host plant for nine different skipper butterflies, giving them a source of food and place to lay their eggs. The winter foliage acts as a food source and offers protection from the cold for birds, insects and small mammals.

There are several cultivars of little bluestem, including The Blues with striking blue foliage, Blaze which has bright red fall color, and Twilight Zone, with foliage full of purple and silver shades. Don't confuse little bluestem with big bluestem which has similar growing conditions but can grow to 9 feet tall.

Past Perennial Plant Association Plants of the Year to also consider are calamint, Japanese spikenard, betony, ornamental onion and butterfly weed. 🌱



Brittnay Haag is a Horticulture Educator for the University of Illinois Extension serving Livingston, McLean and Woodford counties. Her work focuses on youth horticulture education through school gardens and Jr. Master Gardener programs.



# Creating a **FOREVER HOME** of their own

By Colten Bradford

**A HOUSE ONCE STOOD** in rural Paris, Ill. Dating back to the Civil War era, it was stripped of its windows, staircase, fireplaces, light fixtures and everything of value, and abandoned in the 1980s. Left to the elements, the house slowly deteriorated during the three decades that followed as nature reclaimed the land. Then during summer 2019, Mike and Cat Eads decided to breathe new life into the once grand estate.

“When we bought it, you honestly could not see into the property at all,” Cat explains. “There was no drive. There was an overgrowth

of trees. We walked the property before we put in an offer and just fell in love with its potential.”

of trees. We walked the property before we put in an offer and just fell in love with its potential.”

Mike is a master mechanic and part-time deputy, and Cat is a school administrator. They became weekend warriors as much of their time outside of work became dedicated to creating their new home.

“I’m the visionary between us, and Mike works hard to see the vision come to fruition,” Cat says. The 8-acre property, now on EnerStar Electric Cooperative lines, could have been compared to a jungle surrounded by farmland. Initially, the Eads spent much of their free time clearing the property of overgrown foliage, buildings beyond repair and items left by previous owners.

“We just go out and work ourselves to death,” Cat says. “It is a huge project, but we wanted some rural property ... the peace of country living was something we desired.”

As they cleared their way to the large farmhouse in the back of the property, they knew renovating the home wasn’t an option and could never be restored to its former glory. Having been abandoned for so long and left to deteriorate, there was no way it could be saved.

“It was rotten,” Cat describes. “Complete walls had split open. Animals had been living in it, and rain and snow over all that time had just taken a toll on it. We couldn’t save the house.”

The Eads salvaged what they could with the intent to repurpose

in the new home they are building. They managed to save several doors, as well as corbels (decorative wood brackets) that were attached to the top of the house and carved wood rope trim on every outside corner. “We saved what we could, hoping to use it in the new house,” Cat says. “We hope to bring some of the old into the new build.”

The Eads then completed the difficult task of demolishing the 150-year-old house.

“It was heartbreaking to tear it down,” Cat says. “Lots of people say, ‘Oh, it is such a shame you tore it down,’ but if you actually saw it, there was absolutely no way it could have been saved. If it was maintained through the years, it could have been salvaged, but that was not the case.”

As they cleared the property to make room for their new home, they tore down a total of four structures, and along the way, many discoveries were made. They’ve found architectural pieces from old buildings, three old jail cell doors, glass bottles, boulders and much more.

“There are literally millions of rocks on the property,” Cat says. “Huge boulders that we struggled

***“We just go out and work ourselves to death. It is a huge project, but we wanted some rural property ... the peace of country living was something we desired.” – Cat Eads***

Mike and Cat Eads purchased the Civil War era property to create a rural space of their own. They are documenting their journey on a Facebook blog with thousands of followers. The Eads recreated a photo of the original owners, the Perishos.



Photo courtesy of Lynn Good

with a backhoe to move, and we're not exactly sure how they came about being on the property.

"It has been an ongoing discovery. You don't realize how much leaf and stick decay adds to the surface soil. When we thought we'd have an area cleaned up, we would get a hard rain and find some beautiful knobs or tiny jars or glass bottles that we've driven over with heavy equipment multiple times and somehow survived."

However, Cat believes they're nearing the end of their discoveries as they've finished clearing the areas for their work and living spaces. They plan to leave the rest of the property untouched for wildlife.

"I've enjoyed it for sure, but it was a learning process," Cat says about her beehives. "We need pollinators, so part of my plan was to have hives. . . . The whole thing was a little scary, especially when you have two hives of bees in the back of your car."

The property is a stopping point for monarch butterflies during their migration.

"The first year we were here, we thought it was crazy," Cat says. "There were hundreds and hundreds of monarchs, and to help [them] continue their migration successfully, it was important to develop pollinators and plant life that serves as food sources for the butterflies."

a certified monarch garden by the North American Butterfly Association, and several others.

"Each organization is a little different with their qualifications," Cat says. "A water source is always important."

With that in mind, they decided to add an acre pond to the once dry property. As luck would have it, a natural spring under the property filled the pond. They then stocked the pond with native plant life and fish, which are thriving.

However, the fish aren't the only animals enjoying the water source. Throughout their time on the property, the Eads have been observed by the watchful eyes of the red-tailed hawks living there.



**Salvaging what they could from the old house, including corbels and doors, the Eads plan to mix the old with the new in their new home.**

"Natural preservation is super important to us," Cat says. "We are just temporary caregivers of the land."

To do that, Cat enrolled in courses at her local University of Illinois Extension office and became a master gardener. "I've always loved gardening," she says. "I'm big on pollinators and promoting and increasing plant life for pollinators. . . . Our goal is to always work to increase the native plant species that should be in Illinois."

One of the first structures placed on the property was Cat's gardening shed, which was a surprise gift from Mike. From there, she can focus on helping pollinators like bees and butterflies. Behind the gardening shed are her beehives, which were installed in May 2021.

Cat was quickly able to develop her pollinator garden, and she credits her friends in the community for thinning out their own perennials and giving them to her.

"That's the gardening mindset – to share what you have with others and help them get started," she says. "We would come home from work and there'd be either new plants or 5-gallon buckets full of roots to help us start. That's why it is so beautiful already. They've had a chance to establish at an early point in our process of making our home."

The property has received several certifications including a certified bird and butterfly sanctuary from the Illinois Audubon Society, a certified wildlife habitat from the National Wildlife Federation,

"When we pull in, the hawks like to circle around and see what we're doing. I think they like what we've done, especially the pond because that's brought a lot of wildlife. We are kind of an oasis in the middle of all this farm ground."

In honor of the birds, the Eads decided to name the property Red Tail Ranch. "It is pretty cool to see them thriving in the area," Cat says. "They do nest here and raise young hawks."

The Eads' new home is a work in progress, and they aren't putting themselves on a timeline to finish. "We don't have to give ourselves a deadline," Cat says. "From our experience and talking to others who have been through the building process, that's a lot of the stress, so we



are making it as stress-free as possible. We have a home, so we don't need to hurry."

The new build will be a ranch style metal home the Eads designed themselves, focusing more on practicality than designing a showplace to best fit their needs when they decide to retire.

In the future, Cat hopes to use her garden area for educational purposes. "There are all kinds of possibilities, and we are just going to wait to see what happens. We want to share with other people, and that comes from how many people have been interested in what we're doing on social media."

In fact, Cat has documented the progress of Red Tail Ranch every

step of the way by blogging their journey online.

"It became hot news [in the area] that someone decided to do something with the property," Cat says. "People knew it sat there all this time and were encouraging us along the way and wanting to know about our progress."

Cat began posting photos and updates on her personal Facebook page, but as interest grew, she decided to create a Facebook page dedicated to the project.

"Originally, it was just a way to keep everything together," Cat says. "It was incredible how many people were interested in our story and encouraging us. People we didn't

even know started to join the page. It just grew and grew."

As of publication, the Facebook blog has attracted 6,000 followers and counting. "It surprises me, but it is also encouraging because people we don't even know say very nice things that help us when we're tired."

For updates on the Eads' journey to create their new home, search Design Forever Home & Red Tail Ranch on Facebook and YouTube and designforeverhome on Instagram. 📍

**The Eads added a pond, trees and a pollinator garden to the land. The property is an oasis for wildlife and certified by many organizations.**

# Building a foundation for growth

## Home to Market Act

by Valerie Cheatham



**DEREK AND LIBBY ERVIN** of Glacier's End farm, Johnston City, have an unlikely journey from suburban Chicago to southern Illinois. The couple inherited his grandparent's farm in Southern Illinois Electric Cooperative territory. With no farming experience, they

tried to navigate growing their own fruits and vegetables and looking at ways to start a small business. They took a farm beginnings class in 2016, which is when they were first introduced to the Illinois Stewardship Alliance (ISA) while researching cottage foods.

"While figuring out what we wanted to make, we discovered the stewardship alliance," says Derek. "The alliance backed the original legislation and has a guide that helps producers navigate the industry. That's how we got connected with them."

The Alliance wanted small food producers to have input on new regulations and reached out to cottage producers

including the Ervins. They served on a sub-committee making recommendations for the new bill, lobbying for the legislation and testifying before a legislative committee. The legislation expands sales avenues.

Their advocacy on behalf of cottage food producers earned them recognition as the first recipients of the ISA's Illinois Local Food Changemakers of the Year.

In 2017, Glacier's End began selling hickory syrup and apple butter, and their offerings have expanded. Beginning with two or three products, they now make a line of hot sauces, pickles and other fermented items, shrubs, syrups and jams. Shrubs [drinking vinegars] are an infusion of fruit, sugar and vinegar and have many health benefits.

"Originally, only direct [face-to-face] sales were allowed. We had to prepare our products in a commercial kitchen to sell it to customers at fairs and festivals," explains Derek. "With the new legislation, cottage foods can be prepared in home kitchens, sold at those locations or fairs, festivals, pickup, delivery or online, and shipped within the state of Illinois. It's a game changer for all of us."

The Ervins say for someone wanting to start a small food business, selling at farmers markets is valuable. "It gives you the ability and flexibility to find your identity





as a small business and define what you do well,” says Derek. “We are considering going on to wholesale our products but starting small like this has really allowed us to find our voice and hone our skills at what we do best. It took several years for us to find it.”

“We have several categories we do and use a lot of fresh ingredients,” Libby says. “We may end up with 30-35 shrubs each year using a variety of fruits. If we were a wholesaler, we would need a huge plan for every product and jump through a lot of hoops to make them. Right now, we have flexibility.”

As seasons change, they harvest different fruits and vegetables to use in their products. Adding items purchased from other farms gives them the ability to use seasonality to their advantage.

### Illinois Stewardship Alliance

For years, farmers and cottage food producers (products made in a home kitchen) have struggled to market their products. On Jan. 1, that changed when the Home to Market Act took effect. It creates new sales pathways for small businesses. Illinois shoppers can now support their neighbors by purchasing artisan foods previously only available at local farmers markets.

According to Molly Pickering, deputy director of the Illinois Stewardship Alliance, cottage food producers previously had few avenues to market their products year-round and selling from their homes was prohibited.

The Alliance was a natural fit to push new legislation because many cottage food producers are farmers. It seeks to advance Illinois farmers to earn a living by responsibly stewarding the land and feeding communities. It pulls together local food producers and those interested in helping all citizens find access to healthy foods and build community.

In 2020, as the alliance pushed for new legislation, the state virtually closed due to COVID-19 and no legislation was moving forward. In addition, many farmers markets were delayed.

“It was risky,” says Pickering. “Those thinking about selling at farmers markets were worried how many people would come and if they could recoup the expense of having a booth. They had nowhere to sell their products.”

If producers had access to a commercial kitchen, they could sell at fairs and festivals, but according to Pickering, 99 percent of the time they couldn’t sell outside of farmers markets. There was also the question of what to do with fresh produce. Preserving food adds value to farmer’s products and extends its shelf life, giving them something to sell over the winter.

Pickering explains, “They can take their bumper crop of cucumbers and, instead of going into a compost pile, turn them into pickles and have another revenue stream. ... Having a strong cottage food industry is a way to open up more sales avenues for farmers and a way to keep money in the local economy, which is part of our mission.”

In 2021, the ISA partnered with Rep. Will Guzzardi (D-39), to pass the new legislation helping home cottage businesses and small farms reach new customers. The legislation passed unanimously.

### Getting started


While it’s unknown how many cottage food businesses exist in Illinois, Pickering estimates there are likely 1,000 and the new legislation could increase that number. Her advice for those interested in starting a business is to download the ISA cottage food guide.

“It tells you what you can and cannot make, where you can sell and everything you need to know about labeling your product, food safety regulations and will help you navigate the law,” says Pickering.

She adds that the University of Illinois Extension is another resource with an abundance of information about food safety, including how to keep food safe and selling a safe product. “Always check all food safety regulations before starting,” she says.

The Institute for Justice Clinic on Entrepreneurship, Chicago, has worked on cottage food laws across the nation and helps individuals navigate the law.

Pickering asks everyone to be patient with their health departments. With the new act comes a new registration process. “It will hopefully be standardized across the state, but the new law has new regulations they have to follow. New and current producers will need to go through the registration process.”

At deadline time, work was still being done between the Illinois Department of Public Health and local health departments on how to handle the process. 



### LEARN MORE

The Illinois Cottage Food Guide and beneficial information can be found at [ilstewards.org](http://ilstewards.org).

Glacier's End products are available on Facebook or at [glaciersend.com](http://glaciersend.com).

## Quest for fire

**FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS**, mankind has huddled around the glow and warmth of a fire. The flickering flames have provided light and protected us from the threat of cold,

I took a February trip down the Big Flatrock River in Indiana. Steve had permission from a farmer to look for Native American relics on an ancient campsite in the farmer's

He came out of the water spluttering, scrambled up the bank and began to violently shiver. I knew we were in a predicament. Our truck was another two hours down river and it was impossible for us to go back against the current. The nearest farmhouse was a hard hike, probably two miles away. Hypothermia for Steve was just minutes away.

I grabbed a songbird nest out of a bush and broke the dry tops off some high standing grass. I stuffed the grass into the nest and began to gather small dead twigs off the standing bushes. Pulling my Zippo lighter out of my pants pocket, I unfolded the plastic bag I had wrapped around it to ensure it would stay dry.

The bird's nest and grass ignited immediately and soon we had a roaring campfire.

Steve stripped down to his boots and boxer shorts and I gave him my shirt and jacket. We looked quite the pair with him almost bare from the waist down and me bare from the waist up. Both of us were shivering. We took bushy green branches and began to dry Steve's clothes over the fire.

An hour later, we were relatively dried out and able to get back in the canoe and head downstream.

For many years following the wintertime dunking, when we landed the canoe, I would jump out, and Steve would sit there patiently with both hands on the gunnels while I pulled the canoe further up the bank.

Sportsmen and outdoor lovers should always carry the tools necessary to build a fire when afield. You can never tell when it might possibly save a life. ♡

river bottom field. Rather than slog through a horrendous distance of soupy, muddy farmland, we decided to take the canoe.

Steve and I had put untold miles on the old canoe with nary a mishap. We were both warmly dressed and had our life jackets on over our coats. It was cold, as ice still lined the protected bays, and the temperature was just above freezing.

Landing adjacent to the ancient Native American campsite, I jumped out and prepared to pull the canoe higher onto the bank. It was our usual procedure, but somehow the message was misconstrued that day.

As I said, "Ready," and then forcefully pulled the canoe further up the bank, Steve thought I was stabilizing the canoe for him to get out... and he stood up. I virtually yanked the canoe out from under Steve as he plunged overboard into the frigid waters.

danger of savage beasts and brought us together.

Campfires have a unique ability to dissipate social barriers. Whether doctor, lawyer, professional or blue-collar worker, when sitting around a campfire and watching the flickering flames, all are equal.

When growing up, every boy in town carried a Zippo lighter. We would pride ourselves and show off by flipping open our lighter with one hand while simultaneously spinning the striker and creating a flame.

Building a campfire was never a problem. Great pride was taken laying the basis for a "one match" campfire in all types of weather. Over the years, I've built hundreds of them. Most were built strictly for enjoyment, but a few came out of absolute necessity.

One such instance occurred years ago when my friend Steve and



Jack Spaulding is an outdoors writer. Readers can contact the author by writing to this publication or email [jackspaulding@hughes.net](mailto:jackspaulding@hughes.net). "The Best of Spaulding Outdoors," a compilation of 74 of Spaulding's best articles written over the past 30 years is available on Amazon.com.

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Each year, millions of collectors and silver stackers around the world secure freshly struck American Eagle Silver Dollars. Minted in one Troy ounce of 99.9% pure U.S. silver, these legal-tender coins are hugely popular now, but may soon become even more popular! Keep reading to find out why.

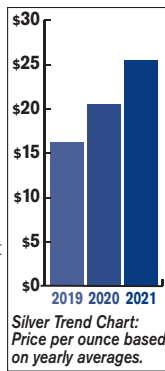
### Higher Values + Slowed Production = DEMAND!

Over the last three years, average monthly values of silver bullion have increased nearly 57%! At the same time, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the U.S. Mint slowing production of freshly struck Silver Eagles and using branch mints to help increase supply, but only in limited quantities.

### What This Means for You

Silver values are up, and silver is in high demand in the marketplace. In addition, many experts believe that the price of silver could continue to increase in the next 12 to 24 months. And while no one can accurately predict the future, there are two questions you should be asking yourself right now:

- 1) Do I own enough physical silver?
- 2) Which silver coins are right for me?



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These 2022 Silver Eagles have just been released by the U.S. Mint. They are guaranteed for weight and fineness by the U.S. government. They're the world's most liquid and secure one-ounce silver coins. They're also recognized around the world, making them easier to sell when the time is right if you make that decision in the future. Silver Eagles are the safest way to buy silver—period!

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# PrairieTABLE



New Salem Sirloin



Breads are made from scratch in-house

## Broadgauge

By Lisa Cherry

**FOR A NEW BUSINESS** in Petersburg, history and the future merge in a special way. Broadgauge, a new restaurant on the square, has opened in a historic building once occupied by central Illinois' largest merchandise and goods store. The team working behind the scenes to make it happen were brought together amid pivotal changes in their personal and professional lives. As they embraced those changes, they found the ultimate direction for the Broadgauge shifting as well.

"The vision ... it started with one [idea] and then it's just expanded," says Emily Faucon, general manager. Emily and husband Corey, previous owners/operators of Long Nine Junction, a mom-and-pop lunch spot in downtown Springfield, joined forces with building owner and Petersburg native Douglas Pope and his mother, Carol Pope.

It's fitting that their vision expanded, as the name of the enterprise literally means a railroad gauge that is wider than the standard, or "wide in area or scope." The moniker was the same name used for the dry goods store previously in the building, after being purchased by German banker John Brahm in 1872, who was rumored to have a fascination for railroads.

Douglas had been living in San Francisco, where he developed an apartment finder app. He currently works for Zillow. "[Due to] COVID, he was able to come back home and relocate permanently. He's always loved this building, and when he returned, decided to purchase [it]. His vision was to create a

restaurant/event space — somewhere the whole community could come and gather," Emily says. "Douglas approached us about a year ago. We had moved to Petersburg as well with our son.

"We experienced a business pivot because of the pandemic. We had very small community seating with eight picnic tables. We had a line out the door every day and pushed random people next to each other and it worked. But we knew we had to change things up and our son was almost 3, so we wanted to move to a smaller town and enjoy a little more time with him. It was a perfect match."

Corey is the executive chef for the new venture. Prior to Long Nine, he worked as Chef de Cuisine at Augie's Front Burner, a longtime favorite in downtown Springfield which has since closed. Also on the team, Chef Eric Smith serves featured dishes, including the New Salem sirloin, sea scallops and the Log Cabin chicken, in the evening.

"Dinner service will be more of elegant, fine dining," Emily says. Due to the overwhelming response they received during opening weekend, reservations are now required.

Talisman, the adjoining coffee shop and bakery, serves coffee and pastries in the morning and lunch midday. The bakery is physically connected to the Broadgauge restaurant through a transitional room named in honor of another former occupant, the Robbins Company. The bakery also has an emotional connection for the Faucons. Emily's



Log Cabin Chicken



Cinnamon Roll

grandparents owned B and Z bakery in Springfield years ago. “That’s always been our inspiration as well, working in this industry, working alongside each other,” she says.

Lunch is counter service. “Everyone can place their orders there. You’ll still have a server come to the table, but we’re allowing people to roam through the building [and] sit where they please. Then at 2 o’clock, lunch will close ... [and] at 5 o’clock, the Broadgauge dining room will open,” she says.

Their breads are made from scratch in-house, and they work with local farmers whenever possible. “The mission of the Broadgauge is to embrace the community and uplift everyone involved. We are trying to make those connections with everyone and ... show what Petersburg has to offer. Seasonally, we’ll change things as well. [It’s] comfort food that’s elevated,” Emily says, such as specialty sandwiches like The Judge (charbroiled chicken breast, gruyere cheese, caramelized onions, arugula salad and honey Dijon) and Old World signatures like the 1872 pot roast.

The Broadgauge dining room is a testament to the building’s former glory. “We are working with the Historic Preservation Society. So, the flooring is the same. We reverted back to the original building facade, and the mezzanine that you’re able to see in the dining room is all original. The staircase is original as well,” says Emily. “But ... we brought in the countertops, hood vent system, kitchen. We revitalized the ballroom upstairs.”



Talisman, the adjoining coffee shop

Event space is another important component of the business, and the ballroom is just one of its spaces.

Douglas also purchased the building next door.

“Originally in 1872, when this was formally known as the Broadgauge, the two buildings were connected by a bridge. Douglas decided he wanted to recreate that.

We already have the connecting bridge installed,” Emily says. “This second space will act as another venue that’s bookable, ideally for brides and bridal parties. They’ll be able to make a grand entrance into the ballroom.”

According to Emily, they are still determining what the lower level in the other building will be used for, but the back side of it will be a beer garden. Four additional venue spaces are currently under construction and an elevator has also been installed.

“We’ve had a lot of people reach out about booking weddings, and we’re getting there. We’ve hired an event coordinator. ... I’d say middle 2022, we’re going to start taking bookings for weddings and other types of private parties,” says Emily.

An extension of bar hours and live music are also on the horizon.

“I think we’re just trying to embrace everyone and serve the best we can. We’re grateful [for] all the love and support we’ve had from our community. We’re excited to be able to further that and keep serving everyone and just get better and better,” Emily says. 💡

## LET’S EAT!

### Broadgauge

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#### HOURS

Wednesday-Saturday  
7 a.m.-2 p.m. coffee and bakery  
11 a.m.-2 p.m. lunch at Talisman  
5 p.m.-9 p.m. dinner at Broadgauge

#### SUNDAY BRUNCH

10 a.m.-4 p.m.



## Say cheese

A COLD WINTER DAY calls for something warm and comforting and grilled cheese really hits the spot. It is a Midwestern favorite that takes you back to your childhood. Pair it with tomato soup and there's nothing better. 💡



FIGGY GRILLED CHEESE

### WE NEED RECIPES!

#### Upcoming monthly topics

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

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DELUXE GRILLED CHEESE

### Figgy Grilled Cheese

Submitted by: Jennifer Danner, Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative

Servings: 1

- 1 tablespoon fig jam
- 1/2 Granny Smith apple, peeled and sliced
- 2 slices Texas toast
- 2 teaspoons mayonnaise
- 2 slices Fontina cheese

Lather one side of each slice of bread with mayonnaise. Coat one slice with fig jam on non-mayo side. Place a few slices of cheese on the jam depending on how cheesy you want it. Layer with a few slices of apple and top with the other slice of Texas toast. Grill in skillet on stove until golden brown and cheese is melted. Nutrition information: 562 calories; 23.1g fat; 945mg sodium; 67.9g carbohydrates; 21g protein.

### Deluxe Grilled Cheese

Submitted by: Nancy Breed, Jo-Carroll Energy, Inc.

Servings: 1

- 2 slices wheat or multi-grain bread
- 2 Kraft singles American cheese
- 2 tablespoons Kraft Italian Blend shreds
- 1 tablespoon basil pesto
- Roma tomato, sliced
- Parmesan cheese, grated
- Butter

On one slice of bread layer one Kraft single, Italian blend shreds, 2 slices of tomato, one Kraft single. Spread basil pesto on second piece of bread and place on top with pesto on the inside. Butter outsides of both bread slices and sprinkle with Parmesan. Grill to golden brown on the stovetop in a non-stick pan. Nutrition information: 400 calories; 21g fat; 881mg sodium; 34g carbohydrates; 18.2g protein.

## Grilled Cheese

Submitted by: Jennifer White, Corn Belt Energy Corporation

Servings: 1

- 2 slices of bread of your choice
- Mozzarella cheese, sliced
- Butter
- Garlic salt
- Marinara sauce

Put sliced Mozzarella between slices of bread. Butter outsides and sprinkle with garlic salt. Grill until golden and serve with marinara sauce, if desired. Nutrition information: 416 calories; 25g fat; 937mg sodium; 21.6g carbohydrates; 27g protein.

## Cheesy Grilled Cheese

Submitted by: Laura Eaton,  
Southern Illinois Electric Cooperative

Servings: 1

- 2 thick slices hearty bread, such as sourdough
- 2 teaspoons mayonnaise
- Gouda, Colby Jack or Provolone cheese, sliced
- 1 tablespoon whipped cream cheese

Spread mayonnaise on the outside of two slices of bread. Spread one of the slices with whipped cream cheese and place mayo side down in skillet or griddle. Top with cheese of your choice and the other slice of bread with the mayo on the outside. Cook until golden brown. Nutrition information: 640 calories; 35.7g fat; 1492mg sodium; 41.8g carbohydrates; 37.9g protein.

## Jalapeno Popper Sandwich

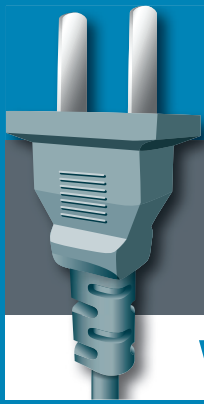
Courtesy of the best of Alabama Living

Servings: 2

- 4 slices bread
- 2 slices of Big Slice Jalapeno Cheese slices
- 1 small jalapeno pepper, thinly sliced
- 2 cheese singles
- 1 egg
- 3 tablespoons milk
- 1/3 cup finely crushed pretzels
- 4 teaspoons unsalted butter, divided

Fill bread slices with jalapeno cheese slices, sliced jalapeno peppers and cheese singles to make 2 sandwiches. Whisk egg and milk in pie plate until blended. Dip sandwiches, 1 at a time, in egg mixture, then in pretzel crumbs, turning to evenly coat both sides of each sandwich. Melt 2 teaspoons butter in medium skillet on medium heat. Add sandwiches; cook 2 minutes or until bottoms are golden brown. Add remaining butter to skillet; turn sandwiches. Cook 2 minutes or until bottoms are golden and cheese is melted. Nutrition information: 534 calories; 27.1g fat; 1062mg sodium; 37.1g carbohydrates; 24.4g protein.



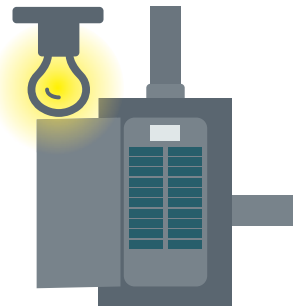


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45, 

There are approximately **45,000** home electrical fires each year.



**Half** of all home electrical fires involve home wiring or lighting equipment.



Home electrical fire deaths peak between **midnight and 8 a.m.**

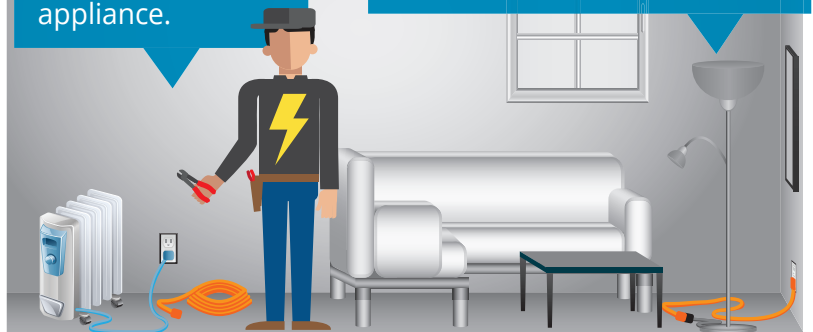


Peak months for electrical fire deaths are **November through March.**

Plug only 1 heat-producing appliance (like a coffee maker, space heater or microwave) directly into a wall outlet at a time.



Never use an extension cord with a heat-producing appliance.



Extension cords should only be used temporarily. Have an electrician install additional wall outlets where you need them.



For more information about electrical fire safety, visit [usfa.fema.gov](http://usfa.fema.gov) and [nfpa.org/public-education](http://nfpa.org/public-education).



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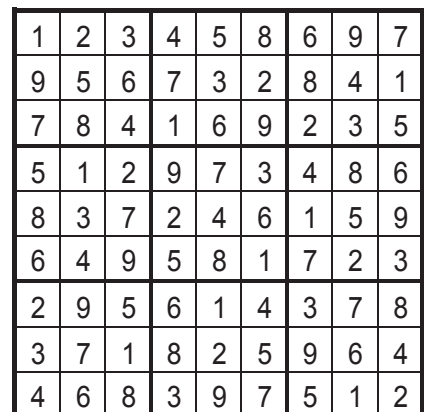
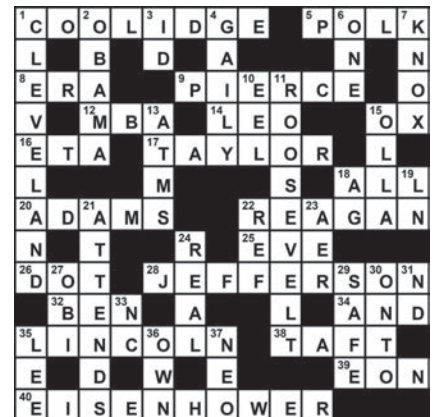
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### UPCOMING THEMES

- April - Signs of spring
- May - Cats
- June - Vacation
- July - Abstract



1



2



3



5



4



6

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