

Illinois Country Living



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Illinois Country Living

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Illinois Country Living is a monthly publication serving the communications needs of the locally-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives of Illinois. With a circulation of more than 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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Keeping power flowing calls for innovative approaches

A VARIETY OF FACTORS like extreme weather and increased use of renewable energy are affecting the electric utility industry so much that there's even a new way to talk about it: resilience.

You might be surprised to learn that “resilience” isn't exactly used to describe the major changes affecting electricity service. Instead, it's about actionable steps electric utilities are taking to keep power flowing.

Just a few years ago, “reliability” was the term of choice. Reliability meant trimming trees near power lines and keeping squirrels from chewing up electrical equipment. Attention to those priorities worked. The average American's electricity stayed on 99.9 percent of the time. That reliability record is still holding up, but it's under pressure on several emerging fronts.

More powerful and frequent natural disasters and even the growing fleets of electric vehicles call for all electric utilities to learn new ways to do their job. These days, maintaining the power grid means planning for sudden and large-scale disruptions.

If you're not sure what the difference is between “reliability” and “resilience,” you're not alone. Even utilities can have slightly different definitions. Most tend to agree that grid resiliency is the ability to withstand and recover from disruptive events and to predict and adapt to ensure consumers have the reliable power they need in a time of new energy challenges.

A less-formal definition from the Future Electric Utility Regulation Advisory Group compares electric service to a boxing match: “Reliability is when you can take a punch. Resilience is how fast you get up off the canvas after you've been hit hard.”

Electricity is more important than ever to our daily lives. At the same time, weather events can suddenly take that essential electricity away from

large numbers of people. Utilities need to be ready to get back up off the canvas quickly. That's what they're doing, from burying power lines to outage recovery plans that get the most essential services back online first. Last year, Congress passed and the White House signed a law that includes a \$10.5 billion Grid Resilience and Innovation Partnership Program.

Here are other ways electric utilities are building resilience.

Coordinated planning

Cybersecurity is an example of government and utilities working closely together, sharing information to protect against the latest cyber threats. In other cases, one size does not fit all.

Electric cooperatives in particular point out that resilience means paying attention to regional and local differences. Raising substations higher off the ground might make sense in flood-prone areas while wrapping utility poles with fire-resistant coverings could be considered where wildfires are a threat.

Continued modernization

Electric utilities are investing in building power lines that connect to new sources of renewable energy to diversify power sources. They're also investing in digital equipment and sensors that can more quickly detect and resolve power outages or other problems.

The growing numbers of electric vehicles plugged in overnight could be seen as an energy drain on the grid when the batteries in the electric cars are charging. However, those same batteries, when fully charged, could be a source of reserve power to supply the home in case of a large, unplanned outage.

There's no doubt that major changes to the way we generate and consume energy are happening. But utilities, including electric cooperatives, are answering the call with innovative solutions to serve their local communities. That's called resilience. 📍



Paul Wesslund writes on cooperative issues for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the Arlington, Va.-based service arm of the nation's 900-plus consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives.



Bundling Illinois' Bridges; Building Illinois' Success

Illinois farmers have long benefited from our robust transportation network. This exclusive network of highways, railways and waterways exists nowhere else in the world and allows Illinois agricultural products a competitive economic advantage in the global marketplace.

One of the foundations of this network includes rural bridges which allow farmers access from the field to their destination point for delivery. But the bridges of Illinois are showing signs of stress due to deferred maintenance and poor condition. Recent estimates indicate that approximately 8.5 percent of Illinois bridges are rated poor or worse. The Illinois repair backlog includes 2,273 bridges identified as structurally deficient and an additional 1,191 bridges with posted restrictions on size and weight of vehicles that can use them. The estimated cost to repair these bridges is \$4.8 billion, a number that seems to be climbing by the day.

The poor condition of these rural bridges impacts Illinois farmers directly through increased costs to take products to market and a reduction in the

resiliency of our transportation network, both of which erode our global competitive advantage.

We have the product; moving it to its end destination is just as critical.

The Illinois Soybean Association (ISA) has been engaged in public outreach and education programs directed at transportation stakeholders and local decision makers on the merits of bridge bundling. As state and federal funds become available as part of the Federal Infrastructure Bill, ISA continues using our voice to bring awareness to bundling projects and using economies of scale by issuing a single contract for the replacement, rehabilitation, or repair of multiple bridges to reduce costs. We are actively working with county engineers across the state to inform and better understand their perspectives on how a successful bridge bundling program can be implemented.

Follow our efforts at <https://www.ilsoy.org/bridge-bundling>, and contact us today to let us know about a rural bridge in your area.

Funded by the Illinois Soybean Association Checkoff Program.

Because at the Illinois Soybean Association we understand that growing a superior product isn't enough.

We've also got to deliver it to the world efficiently, safely, and reliably.



The sounds and smells of the season

The lively sound of carols and storytelling around the table, the familiar smell of pine and grandma's freshly baked cookies, the sparkle of softly falling snow and the little ones' breathless anticipation of Santa's arrival (and unwrapping gifts) — let the sounds, aromas and visions of the season be the memories you cherish.

Merry Christmas from our cooperative family to yours!



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Cooperatives

DECEMBER CHECKLIST

Set it and forget it.

Use an automatic timer to manage your outdoor holiday lights. It's less hassle and it saves energy.



Hydrate. If you use a live tree in your home during the holidays, remember to check



its water level regularly. A hydrated tree is a happy and safe tree.

Pack the car. Keep extra warm clothing, blankets, an ice scraper, food and water in your vehicle in case of an emergency while on the road.



Tip of the month. Did you know LED holiday lights use 80 percent less energy than incandescent string lights? Deck your halls with brighter energy savings.



Line school concludes

Mid-November marked the end of the fall semester of line school at Lincoln Land Community College, facilitated by the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives' (AIEC's) safety department. Through the LLCC program and the Illinois Rural Electric Apprentice Program (IREAP), students and co-op employees received a crash course of hands-on line-work training from climbing to overhead and underground electric distribution. Courses were taught by AIEC staff, retired and current lineworkers, and industry professionals. For more information, go to aiec.coop/departments/safety-and-training.💡

Middleton selected as new president/CEO for RECC



Sean Middleton

After 23 years of service to the consumer-members of Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative (RECC), Auburn, David Stuva is set to retire in January 2023. With his upcoming retirement, the RECC board of directors announced the selection of Sean Middleton as the co-op's new president/CEO, effective Jan. 19.

"On behalf of the RECC board, we feel we have found the right person to lead RECC and steward our cooperative into the future. Middleton is a proven leader with a wealth of cooperative and industry experience, and we have total confidence in his leadership," said Melvin Repscher, board chairman.

Middleton worked more than 23 years at Illinois Electric Cooperative in Winchester,

where he led all new technology and innovative pursuits as the manager of engineering. He most recently served as director of strategy and operations for Finley Engineering Company, where he championed cooperative and municipal client causes on a nationwide basis by solving smart grid and other technology challenges.

"It is a tremendous honor to be appointed president/CEO of RECC," Middleton said. "RECC has been providing reliable electric service for cooperative members in central Illinois since 1937. The opportunity to lead an iconic company that plays such a vital role in central Illinois, where I grew up, is truly humbling. I am excited to step into this new role and build on our historic legacy while actioning our vision for the future."💡

Sudoku

by Myles Mellor and Susan Flanagan

Complete the grid so every row, column and 3x3 cube contains every digit from 1 to 9 inclusive with no repetition. Solution on page 33.

Level: Medium

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

IL ENTERTAINMENT CORNER

An Illinois professor of music theory and composition recently released his latest album, “The Complexity of Distance,” a 58-minute composition for electric guitar. Composer James Romig has been on the faculty at Western Illinois University in Macomb for 20 years. His previous release, “Still,” was a 2019 Pulitzer Prize finalist.

The new piece was composed by Romig in 2019 and is performed by guitarist Mike Scheidt of metal band YOB. “Complexity,” released earlier this year on New World Records label, features extreme distortion and amplification.

According to the liner notes, the title refers to “shifting temporal distances created by the work’s background rhythmic structure, and also references the challenges of collaboration between the Illinois-based composer and Oregon-based performer.”

It can be purchased through streaming platforms and retailers, including Amazon and the NWR label. For more information, visit jamesromig.com.

Hermetz elected to CRC’s board of directors



The results of Cooperative Response Center, Inc.’s (CRC’s) board of directors election were announced at its annual meeting in June. Illinois’

Shane Hermetz, general manager/executive vice president at Egyptian Electric Cooperative Association (EECA) in Murphysboro, was elected as the newest board member representing district 2.

Hermetz has worked in many roles during his 30 years in the utility industry. He has served in his leadership role at EECA since 2016 and has been the vice president of the Egyptian Electric Charitable Fund NFP since its creation in 2020. Hermetz was elected for one year to complete the term of his predecessor. He will be eligible to run for re-election in 2023.

CRC is a nationwide, cooperatively owned, 24/7 contact center and alarm monitoring center. Founded in 1992, CRC has steadily increased the size and scope of its operation with offices in Austin, Minn., Kirksville, Mo., Dunlap, Tenn., and Abilene, Texas. CRC serves more than 530 members and associate members in 47 states, representing nearly 12 million consumers.

Cooperative Response Center

Scholarship deadline approaching

Time is running out to apply for the 2023 Thomas H. Moore Illinois Electric Cooperatives (IEC) Memorial Scholarships.

Each year, Illinois electric cooperatives award \$2,000 scholarships to financially assist deserving students in the electric co-op family. In 2023, co-ops increased the number of scholarships given to 15.

Nine scholarships will go to high school seniors whose parent(s) are

members of an Illinois electric co-op. Four scholarships will be awarded to high school seniors enrolling full time at a two-year Illinois community college whose parent(s) are employed by or are members of an Illinois electric cooperative. The Earl W. Struck Memorial Scholarship will be awarded to a student who is the child of an Illinois electric cooperative employee or director. Applications for these scholarships are due Dec. 31, 2022.

The LaVern and Nola McEntire Memorial 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. Children 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. This scholarship is due April 30, 2023.

For more information, contact your local electric cooperative or go to aiec.coop/iec-scholarship.

SSA attorney fee cap increase

Social Security Administration (SSA) Acting Commissioner Kilolo Kijakazi announced a change to the attorney fee cap — the first in 13 years. The maximum dollar amount limit for fee agreements approved under the Social Security Act increased from \$6,000 to \$7,200.

Effective Nov. 30, 2022, SSA may approve fee agreements up to the new dollar limit, provided that the agreements otherwise meet the statutory requirements.

If a fee agreement is not filed, a representative can submit a fee petition after completing work on your claim(s). SSA will review the value of your representative’s services and let you know the fee your representative is authorized to charge and collect.

For more information about your right to representation, go to ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10075.pdf.

Sheri Richey, Social Security Administration



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Gifford

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Macomb

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Marion

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(618) 997-6577

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*30% through 2032, 26% through 2033 and 22% through 2034

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Where is it?

The winners of the October hidden object contest were Kevin Campbell of Shelby Electric Cooperative and Abby Butler of SouthEastern Illinois Electric Cooperative. Congratulations! Your ICL Tervis tumblers have been sent!

November's cornucopia was hidden on the utility pole photo featured in the Safety Check column on page 14. Winners' names will be drawn, and they will be notified. Visit Illinois Country Living on Facebook after each month's deadline for a closeup of the object's location and winners' names.

It's time for a new hidden object search. This month, in honor of the first day of winter, be on the lookout for a mitten. The symbol can vary in size and will never be on this page, a lettered page or in an ad.

Entries must include your name, address, name of your electric co-op (non-members are also eligible), and the page number and location of the symbol. Visit icl.coop/hiddenobject and fill out the entry form (also found under Contact Us on the website) or mail a postcard to Illinois Country Living, Hidden Objects, 6460 S. 6th St. Frontage Road East, Springfield, IL 62712. We will NOT accept letters or entries via phone call. All entries for that month must be postmarked or received digitally by the 15th. Winners' names and the location of the symbol will be published in each month's issue of Illinois Country Living. 💡



Rural broadband success driven by co-ops' desire to help the community

A new study shows that electric cooperatives enter the broadband business to help grow their rural communities and that their efforts are paying off.

At least 80 percent of the electric co-ops that participated in the study are seeing an increase in population, businesses or jobs in the communities where they delivered high-speed internet access, according to the 2022 Rural Electric Cooperative Broadband Benchmarking Report.

Electric co-ops listed community service and economic development as their main motivations for deploying broadband, the report says. Following closely behind was the co-ops' desire to strengthen their electric business with smart grid technologies and to expand and diversify their revenue base.

Eighty-eight of the more than 200 electric co-ops involved in broadband volunteered data for the report, which was produced by NRECA and the National Rural Telecommunications Cooperative (NRTC).

"Our members are deploying broadband to strengthen their local economies and move to

a smarter grid," the report states. "Members are creating smarter grids and smarter communities with an evolving set of technologies."

Other signs of success from co-op broadband deployment: 77 percent received favorable responses in co-op member surveys about pursuing broadband; 75 percent gained higher-than-expected take-rates for service; and many experienced positive rates of return on their investments.

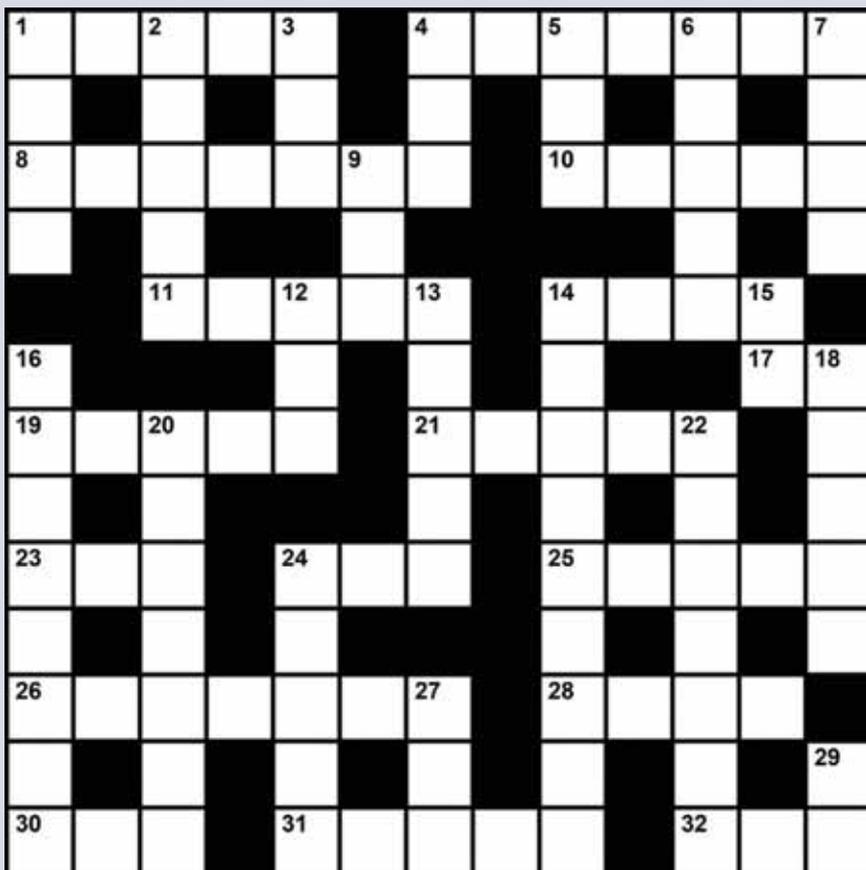
"Given the ability to access capital at favorable rates through cooperative lenders [such as CFC and CoBank], this generally indicates positive economics of the broadband business," the report notes.

Most co-ops in broadband are building fiber-optic networks to deliver internet access at the highest speeds for consumer-members, bolster their substation connectivity and integrate smart grid devices, the report finds. This latest report is an update to a similar broadband study done by NRTC in 2020. 💡

Cathy Cash, NRECA



Happy Holidays!
from **Illinois**
Country Living



Across

- 1 One of Santa's reindeer
- 4 What Santa brings
- 8 Kris ____
- 10 Piece of snow
- 11 Christmas visitor
- 14 Collector's goals
- 17 Supposing that
- 19 Skiing mecca
- 21 Farmyard bird
- 23 Large coffee pot
- 24 Prince of Broadway
- 25 High flying toys
- 26 African American celebration in December

- 28 "Silent Night" or "The Little Drummer Boy"
- 30 Color shade
- 31 Margarita fruits
- 32 Drink daintily

Down

- 1 Fruit ____: sweet Christmas dessert
- 2 Eight milkers in "The 12 Days of Christmas"
- 3 Price label
- 4 Crusty dessert
- 5 Santa's North Pole helper
- 6 Glorify
- 7 It often has a star on top

- 9 Started a fire
- 12 Negative prefix
- 13 Heavenly being
- 14 They hold Christmas presents
- 15 Yes, in Spanish
- 16 Jewish December celebration
- 18 Sumptuous repast
- 20 Breakfast item
- 22 Turkey dishes, for example
- 24 Nut
- 27 Goal
- 29 Raise

Solution on page 33.



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LET'S GO!

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



Galena **Holidaze Festival**

DECEMBER

3

The Annual Galena Holidaze Festival is a holiday event sponsored by the Galena ARC in partnership with Fire in the Sky to kick off the holiday shopping season in Galena. This family-friendly event will feature traveling local artisans with holiday items and local food vendors, live music including Christmas caroling, kids' activities, a downtown business scavenger hunt in partnership with the Downtown Business Association and more. Fireworks sponsored by the Galena Downtown Business Association will follow at 6:30 p.m.

Dec. 3, 2022; 11 a.m.-6 p.m.

- Outdoors on Green Street Plaza & City Hall Parking Lot, 101 Green St., Galena
Cost: Varies
galenaholidazefestival.com

Gym Bob's **Jamboree Show**

DECEMBER

4

The Christmas edition of this Branson-style show will feature your favorite classic country, '50s and '60s rock 'n' roll, and popular Christmas songs to put everyone in the holiday spirit. The show will also feature the Gym Bob's Jamboree Band and singers who have opened for national recording artists. It will be a great show for the whole family to enjoy with a special visit from Santa himself.

Dec. 4, 2022; 1 p.m.

- Gym Bob's, 44 Apostle Ln., Bible Grove
Cost: \$7
615-481-7418 or gymbobs.com



Belleville **Christkindmarkt**

DECEMBER

8-11

DECEMBER

15-23

Shop the ninth annual Belleville Christkindmarkt this holiday season. This open-air German Christmas market on Belleville's Public Square will feature unique European and handcrafted items, delicious food and drinks. On Dec. 10, there will be a giant snow globe photo booth from noon to 4 p.m. and a German folk dance group Dec. 17-18, noon to 3 p.m. Free horse-drawn trolley rides will be available Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays through Dec. 18.

Dec. 8-11 and 15-23, 2022; 11 a.m.-8:30 p.m., Sundays 11 a.m.-6 p.m.

- Belleville's Public Square, IL-159 and Main St., Belleville
Cost: Free admission
bellevillechristkindmarkt.com

Christmas Lights **Trolley Tour**

DECEMBER

11-15

DECEMBER

18-22

Enjoy the holiday season on this illuminated tour just days before Christmas. While aboard the trolley, the guide will take you on a tour of the area's most stunning holiday displays. Enjoy holiday trivia, jokes and riddles while Christmas music plays in the background. While the trolleys are heated, it is recommended to bring an extra blanket. Register online.

Dec. 11-15 and 18-22, 2022; 6-8 p.m.

- Starved Rock Lodge, 2668 E. 875th Rd., Oglesby
Cost: \$25 for adults, \$20 for children 10 and under
starvedrocklodge.com/events



Logos to look for when buying gifts

ELECTRONICS ARE ON THE top of many wish lists this year. However, before you make a purchase, it is important to make sure the products have been inspected for safety.

and has been approved based on quality tests. While these marks, often found on the bottom of a product, cannot guarantee safety, they do indicate compliance with

Certification marks can be found on a variety of products, including electrical appliances, computers and electrical panelboards. The UL mark, an encircled “UL,” indicates that the product is approved by Underwriters Laboratories Standards. CSA, a logo with a C and an SA inside, shows that a product has met Canadian Standards Association testing. If it has “US”

underneath the logo, it has been certified for the U.S. market.

The circled ETL logo means that the product complies with the safety standards of Intertek Testing Services.

These are just some common safety logos to keep in mind. For a full list of nationally recognized testing laboratories, go to OSHA.gov.

In addition to the safety label, there are other safety considerations when shopping for the perfect gift. As with any present, consider the wants and the needs of the recipient. Make sure all products are age and ability appropriate.

If you are purchasing electronics for a child, make sure batteries, small pieces and cords do not present safety risks. Remember, don't purchase electronics that plug into the wall for children under the age of 10. Instead, opt for battery-powered products.

Buying refurbished electronics can cut back on the costs of a new product; however, only buy used products from brands and manufacturers that you know and trust. If the packaging seems tampered with or is already opened, make sure the product is undamaged and still under warranty. Before you purchase electronics that have already been opened, be sure all safety components are still in place.

For more information on electrical safety, visit SafeElectricity.org.



Safe Electricity shares tips on what to look for so you can ensure the electronic gifts will be safe for your loved ones.

Products packaged in boxes that do not display a brand name and do not have a safety certification mark should be regarded with suspicion. Electronics without official markings could be counterfeit, which are often cheaply made and present safety concerns. Stay away from electrical products sold at temporary venues where you will be unable to make returns.

Although these products are often less expensive than their certified counterparts, they lack the reliability of electronics that have been tested and marked by an independent laboratory. If the price is well below market value, there is a likelihood that it is a counterfeit.

A certification mark shows that a product follows safety standards

the preset standards. To help ensure the safe use of the product, consumers must also properly maintain it and follow all manufacturers' directions for use.

Safe Electricity provides the following tips to help weed out fake safety labels:

- Take a close look at the label for signs of quality. If the label is blurred or torn, don't trust it.
- Check the packaging for misspellings or incorrect information. This is a sure sign of a counterfeit product.
- Buy from brands labeled with certified safety laboratories you can trust. If you come across a safety label you are unfamiliar with, check its legitimacy online. Common legitimate marks are UL, CSA and ETL.



As Executive Director at Safe Electricity, **Erin Hollinshead** has a profound passion for saving lives through education. She holds a master's degree in public administration from the University of Illinois and a grad certificate in management of nonprofit organizations.

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46635

Winterization tips for energy savings



Windows can be a source of drafts and wasted energy. Weatherstrip and close windows tightly to prevent warm air from escaping your home.

WINTERIZING IS AN IMPORTANT step to keep your home cozy and your bills low. These tried-and-true methods will ensure your home is ready for colder weather.

Insulating

By insulating your home's water pipes, you can raise the water temperature inside the pipes by 2 to 4 degrees, according to the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). This allows you to turn down the heat on your water heater, saving energy and money.

Start by insulating the pipes coming out of the water heater. If you have a gas water heater, keep pipe insulation at least 6 inches away from the flue. Insulate hot and cold lines. The latter can prevent condensation and freezing pipes. Insulating your water heater can save 7 to 16 percent on water-heating costs, DOE says. Insulation kits are available at hardware stores. Don't obstruct the pressure relief valve, thermostats or access valves.

Air sealing

Air sealing and insulation are a great combination for minimizing

home energy use. Insulation is like a warm sweater for your home, and air sealing is the windbreaker. All cracks, gaps and holes in a typical home can be like having a window open. Air sealing eliminates those leaks. You can do it yourself or hire a professional.

Window sealing

Windows can be a source of drafts and wasted energy. Close windows tightly. Add weatherstripping around them to prevent warm air from escaping your home. Caulk the gaps where the window trim meets the wall and window frame. Add curtains to make the room feel warmer.

Storm windows are a lower-cost option for upgrading single-pane windows. They are available with low-emissivity coatings, which insulate better, and are available for installation either from the inside or outside.

Fireplace dampers

When I was little, my dad told me it was too cold to have a fire. I remember thinking that made no sense, but he was right.

We had an open, wood-burning fireplace—not a wood stove. A fireplace can draw the warm air out of the house, cooling it down or causing your heating system to use more energy.

Your fireplace adds ambiance to your home but isn't necessarily effective at heating it. If you have a wood-burning fireplace, close the damper when your fire is extinguished. An open damper in the winter is an easy exit for the air you paid to heat.

Adding tempered glass doors to a wood-burning fireplace can create an extra buffer between the cold outside and a cozy living space.

Some gas fireplaces require a damper to remain permanently open so gas can vent out of the home. Check the specifications of your unit to ensure safe operation.

Check filters

Maintaining a clean filter in your furnace is one of the best ways to keep it running efficiently and prevent costly repairs. Check your furnace or ductless heat pump filter monthly during peak heating season. ❄️



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



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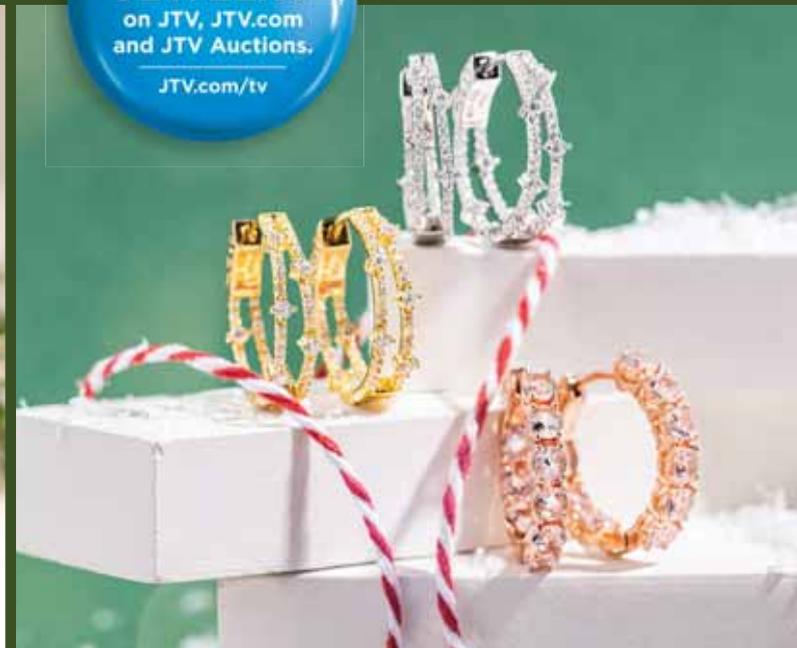
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Fully charging an EV battery requires the same amount of electricity needed to power a home during peak energy use times. Photo courtesy of Stan Petersen, Pixabay

How electric vehicles impact the grid

2022 SAW A RECORD increase in electric vehicle (EV) sales, and experts are predicting that by 2035, many major vehicle manufacturers will only produce electric models.

A 2021 study by the Department of Energy showed that increased electrification, or replacement of direct fossil fuel use with electricity, would account for a 38 percent increase in electricity demand by 2050, and EVs will play a major role in this increased electrification.

The need for more electricity will have a major impact on the nation's grid, which means power supply and grid infrastructure must be carefully planned to accommodate the increased demand for electricity.

EV charging presents new challenges in maintaining the electric grid. Fully charging an EV battery requires the same amount of electricity needed to power a home during peak energy use times. However, EV charging is a concentrated pull of energy over an extended period, which can add stress to the local power grid by

increasing the amount of electricity a utility has to provide.

Additionally, the neighborhood transformer needs the adequate capacity to handle the increased load. EV charging can shorten the lifespan of transformers by straining and overloading their capacity if they are not matched to a neighborhood's energy needs.

Electric co-ops are currently identifying ways to manage this new pattern of electricity use, though exact strategies will vary based on each utility's unique needs. Analyzing energy load patterns or identifying where and when the local grid has spikes in demand can provide electric co-ops with data on where to place higher-capacity transformers.

This analysis can also provide a picture of overall energy use and patterns to help forecast energy consumption for the future. Planning system maintenance and upgrades are also part of that long-range forecasting; however, this has been recently complicated by supply-chain issues with transformers, with wait times upward of one year.

EV owners can play a role in reducing energy costs and system stress associated with charging. Charging at night is a great way to ease electricity demand in your neighborhood. Typically, electricity demand and wholesale energy rates are lower during nighttime.

Another potential change on the horizon is a new energy peak time. EV drivers that plug in to charge as soon as they return home from work would create even more electricity demand during this busy time of day. But if EV drivers use a timer to schedule charging at night, the electricity demand could be spread over a longer period to reduce stress on the grid. This would be especially beneficial for neighborhoods with multiple EV drivers.

EVs are only expected to increase in number. Electric co-ops and EV owners both have roles to play in accommodating increased demand. If you own an EV, let your electric co-op know so they can better plan energy demand for you and your neighbors. 💡



Katherine Loving 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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IT'S ELECTRIFYING!

Rivian owners share their experiences

By Les O'Dell

BRIAN HOLLIDAY HAS LEARNED to allow extra time for any errand he runs in his new vehicle. Whether it is a quick trip to the grocery store in his Fayette County community of Vandalia or a visit to a favorite restaurant in Belleville or Effingham, he has started leaving time to answer questions.

It happens every time he drives his new truck. Every single time.

"People are fascinated with it. The first thing they ask is, 'What is it?'" the junior high school assistant says, relaying the normal conversation.

"It's a Rivian," he answers.

"Oh, who makes it?" people will ask.

Again, he answers, "Rivian."

"Then they ask me where it's made. 'China?' Then I tell them they are made just up the road in Normal, Ill.," he adds.

Holliday is what many would call an "early adopter." A fan of new technology, he is one of the first people in the nation (and definitely one of the first in downstate Illinois) to own an R1T – one of two models of completely American-made electric vehicles produced in the Prairie State by Rivian. His experience mirrors that of other Rivian owners.

Jon Haeme lives near Kempton in northern Ford County. He gets the same reaction.

"If I go shopping in Kankakee or Pontiac, people will come up to me in the parking lot and ask me what it is and where it is made. I tell them it is from right down the

road," he says. "It's funny because people have no idea about Rivian, but then they are all excited and want to get a good look at it."

Haeme says his truck – among the first 2,000 produced in McClean County – often is the center of attention.

"It's not that I really want [the attention], but it's fine. I like talking to people," he adds.

Lots of people have been talking about Rivian, and the manufacturer has gained lots of attention since the R1T became the first all-electric consumer pickup truck available in the U.S. Founded by now 39-year-old mechanical engineer, car enthusiast and environmentalist Robert "R.J." Scaringe in 2009 as Mainstream Motors, the company first focused on electric, autonomous cars.

By early 2017, focus shifted away from automobiles to SUVs and trucks, and the company, since renamed Rivian, purchased the former Mitsubishi auto plant in Normal to be its manufacturing hub. A year later, it unveiled vehicles at the Los Angeles Auto Show in 2018. Production was set to begin in 2020. Almost immediately, consumers were interested.

Haeme was one of them. He says he had always wanted an electric vehicle and was initially interested in the better-known Tesla. "I had always said to myself, if they would just come out with a truck, I'd go for it, because I use a truck all of the

time," he recalls. "When Rivian said they were going to be the first to come out with a truck, I was in. The fact that they were building them in Normal was the icing on the cake."

It was news of the nearby manufacturing facility that introduced Haeme to the company. "I found their website and signed up to get notifications and announcements from Rivian. When they said in November





Brian Holliday's Rivian is the talk of the town. He and his wife Ashley are photographed with their new truck on the cover.



Above: Jon Haeme poses next to his Rivian truck.

Right: Rivian's efficient dry capture paint process uses less than a gallon of paint per vehicle. The Rivian manufacturing plant is located in Normal.

2018 that you could put a deposit down and preorder a truck, I jumped on it and did it the very first day – even before they showed the truck at the L.A. Auto Show,” he says.

Haeme's order landed in Rivian's inbox not long before an order from Kyle Shultz of Springfield.

“I had a buddy who had a Tesla, and I had ridden in it. I was doing some research on them, and then I saw Scaringe do the big reveal at the L.A. Auto Show on YouTube. I actually preordered one the next day,” he says.

Shultz admits he acted on a whim. “It was a \$1,000 refundable deposit,” he recalls. “The fine print was that they weren't necessarily going to use it to build anything; it was just to hold your place in line, and if they didn't manufacture, you'd get it back. I didn't think they'd make it because I knew how hard it was to reach production.”

He says the more he followed the company's efforts to bring the electric trucks to market, the more excited he became. “Captivated” is the way he remembers feeling. In fact, Shultz, a self-proclaimed “tech guy,” was so taken with Rivian, he started a podcast all about the company. The podcast, called Rivian Stories, morphed into a YouTube channel and a website (rivianstories.com).

Shultz became what he calls a “fanboy,” not only of the vehicles but of the company itself, even before he owned one. Now he is recognized for his leadership role in what many refer to as “the Rivian community.” He says it is a group of “big boys with toys.”

“It's people like me – those in their 30s to 60s who don't necessarily love cars, but they love adventure; people who love the outdoors, who love performance and technology.”

“It's the most remarkable pickup truck we've ever driven.”

Rivian vehicles

It's that technology that has drawn attention. “It's the most remarkable pickup truck we've ever driven,” wrote editors of MotorTrend magazine when the publication named the R1T its 2022 Truck of the Year. “The Rivian R1T would win praise if it were merely a credible pickup truck that is also an electric vehicle, but it's far more,” the magazine continued.

Shultz explains, “When people think of electric vehicles, they think of something slow without any power – something wimpy. These Rivians, when you see one in person, have an amazing stance and size, but beyond that, the performance is just mind-blowing.”

Pop the hood on a Rivian truck. You will not find a traditional motor, nor will you discover the electric components. This compartment is strictly for storage. Instead of a single motor, the truck features four electric motors – one at each wheel. Each of them produces upward of 415 horsepower, allowing Rivian to offer eight driving modes on all terrains.

“It's really three cars in one. There's an all-purpose drive where it handles more like a luxury SUV, but then you switch to sport mode and the suspension and steering are stiffer and the throttle is mapped more aggressively. It will corner like a Ferrari, only you can accelerate more quickly than in a sports car,” Shultz says.

He is not exaggerating. Rivian claims its truck will go from zero to 60 mph in three seconds – perhaps the quickest acceleration of any production vehicle in the world.

“It's basically a sports car and a truck all wrapped up in one vehicle,” Holliday says. “It can do all kinds of crazy things, and it can do whatever you want. It's something else.”

Electric trucks from central Illinois

The fact that the trucks are produced nearby is a selling point for many of Rivian's Illinois customers. While the company will not release the number of vehicles sold in the state, it is certainly growing, as is the production facility. The 2.6-million-square-foot plant (some of which is powered by the local electric cooperative, Corn Belt Energy) includes a paint shop, robotics, stamping machines and other production equipment and employs more than 3,000 people in Normal, along with thousands more at their California headquarters and Michigan research and design facility. The company recently told The Pantagraph newspaper that it was expanding its central Illinois footprint.

"We're adding on to the west side of our manufacturing plant, growing our production and warehousing footprint by 650,000 square feet, soon," Maura Freeman, plant communications coordinator for Rivian, told the Bloomington-Normal newspaper. "It's an exciting time in Normal as we continue to grow and deliver vehicles all over the country."

The growing company has indicated that they also have plans for a new 500,000-square-foot warehouse expansion to be built about 6 miles from the manufacturing facility.

"Rivian was initially drawn to the former Mitsubishi factory in Normal by the liquidation sale of equipment from the plant," recalls Senior Manager of Plant Communications Zach Dietmeier. "Upon arrival, the charm, intelligence and energy of the surrounding community aligned extremely well with our company values. We saw a home for our manufacturing in which we could scale and thrive."

"The central location and proximity to advanced logistics allow regional suppliers to lean into Rivian. Our location and focus unlock supply relationships. Next, the transportation possibilities of rail, highway and shipping hubs allow for quick and efficient distribution around the nation and globally. Last (but certainly not least), the central location within reach of Chicago, St. Louis and Indianapolis attracts talented workers from across the Midwest."

Illinois appealed to Rivian, and Rivians appeal to Illinoisans, as well as people across the country.

"The market is a little bit of everyone," says Schultz. "It's not just people worried about climate change. It's way more than that; it's just people who see the value of what Rivian is doing and where it is going." 💡

The truck also has an off-road mode. "You are on an air suspension, so it raises you up to 15 inches of ground clearance, and it can send any extra power to any of the wheels since they all have their own motor. "You just have an unbelievable advantage in any kind of off-roading, because you have all kinds of power and torque to go wherever you want whenever you need it," Schultz adds.

Haeme says he bought his Rivian for errands and working around his property, not for hill climbing or performance, yet he appreciates its abilities. "When you drive it, it is so quiet, but it has instant torque. It's the fastest vehicle I have ever owned. I didn't buy it for that reason, but it is pretty cool. I mean, it gives you butterflies when you punch it."

The trucks are not only about performance, though. Creature comforts abound.

"There are just dozens and dozens of details that make for a special owner experience – the lifestyle, the feel, the textures, the user interface, everything. It just checks all of the boxes," says Shultz.

He adds that technology and electronics are "light years ahead of any other car." For him, "It's like an iPod on wheels," and he says it is worth waiting for.

Sometimes the wait for a Rivian is lengthy. Like with any startup company, production complications and supply chain issues delayed the delivery of many vehicles. Rivian reports that they have delivered 15,332 vehicles as of the end of September 2022. Newspaper accounts indicate the company now has orders for 200,000 vehicles.

Haeme had to wait for more than three years to get his Rivian. "Oh my gosh, though, it was worth the wait," he says. "I absolutely love it."

He says the cost of his truck – one of the first 2,000 built by the company – was comparable to a nonelectric pickup truck.

Schultz had to wait longer than other Rivian buyers – measured in years rather than months – because he chose the R1S, an SUV built on the same platform as the truck. He was among the first five people in the world to purchase an R1S.

Holliday's wait was not as long. He drove to Normal to pick up his truck at the factory less than a year after he ordered it. Rivian gives Midwestern buyers the option of having their vehicles brought to them or they can take delivery at the plant – many choose this option. Rivians are purchased online or through a smartphone app; they do not have a network of dealers.

"It was a great process," Holliday recalls. "They showed me around the factory and took me on a test drive, then we were all set."





HOLIDAY TREATS

for techies

By Dan Gerard

CHRISTMASTIME IS HERE, AND you just might be in the market to buy something special for a loved one. While some people are easy to shop for, I understand that techies can be a little more difficult. Here's a list of some of the top tech gift ideas to take a little stress out of your holidays. While some go-to tech gifts include drones, action cameras, phones, smartwatches and smart home devices, there are many tech gifts that are unique, fun and useful.

VR headset

Virtual reality (VR) headsets aren't brand-new technology, but they certainly aren't in most households. This head-mounted technology immerses the wearer in a virtual world.

While I have experienced VR headsets in the past and was aware of their capabilities, it wasn't until recently that I had the opportunity

to experience one for purely entertainment purposes. VR headsets have come a long way and offer an experience like no other entertainment console.

Whether you are looking for a business and productivity experience or just a new immersive way of gaming, a VR headset might be the way to go. One VR headset worth checking out is the Meta Quest 2.

Air pump

This one is for weekend warriors or those who like functional tech gadgets. The Airmoto is a hand-sized portable air pump that claims it is capable of 120 pounds per square inch (PSI). That means it can air up footballs, basketballs, bicycle tires, ATV tires and even car tires.

It's fully charged after 2 hours and will provide about 40 minutes of use. All you need to do is

set the desired pressure, connect it and press start. It has a nice digital display and can also be used to check the tire pressure in your vehicle. Did I mention this thing is small? You can easily put it in your pocket, purse or backpack.

Digital gaming table

The Arcade1Up Infinity Game Table is something the entire family can enjoy. I don't know about you, but my family has a mess of old classic games with the boxes torn and falling apart. This new 32-inch digital gaming table will let you get rid of all those unsightly, oddly stacked board games.



It includes all the classics like Monopoly, Scrabble, Trivial Pursuit, Chutes and Ladders, Candy Land, Yahtzee, and many more. It also has puzzles, card games and coloring books all in one device. With more than 40 games, it is sure to keep family game night going for a long time to come. It can be used with or without the included table legs, so it can be used flat on a tabletop or set up coffee-table style.

Portable projector

Have you ever wanted to carry a 100-foot television with you wherever you go? Now you can, and you can carry it with one hand. While there have been miniature projectors in the past, there have been none that I would consider worth having until now.

The newest Anker Nebula Capsule II is a truly portable all-in-one TV/projector. It has built-in smart TV functionality, just like your normal smart TV. It also has a built-in speaker and is capable of HDMI, wireless and Bluetooth connections.

With this projector being slightly larger than a soda can, you can take it almost anywhere. It provides a

true 720p HD picture at 200 ANSI lumens, so it provides a crisp image in a low-light environment. Enjoy two and a half hours of TV or gaming before needing to recharge the internal battery. It would make a great addition to backyard bonfires, camping trips or just about anywhere you might want a big screen.

Dash cams

While Europeans have embraced the use of dash cameras in their cars for far longer than Americans, we are catching up. I have noticed an increase in the adoption of dash cameras over the past few years, and I can see why. Not only do they provide instant replay footage in the event of a car accident, but they also detect motion and vibration

when your vehicle is parked, automatically triggering the camera to record any activity when you are not around.

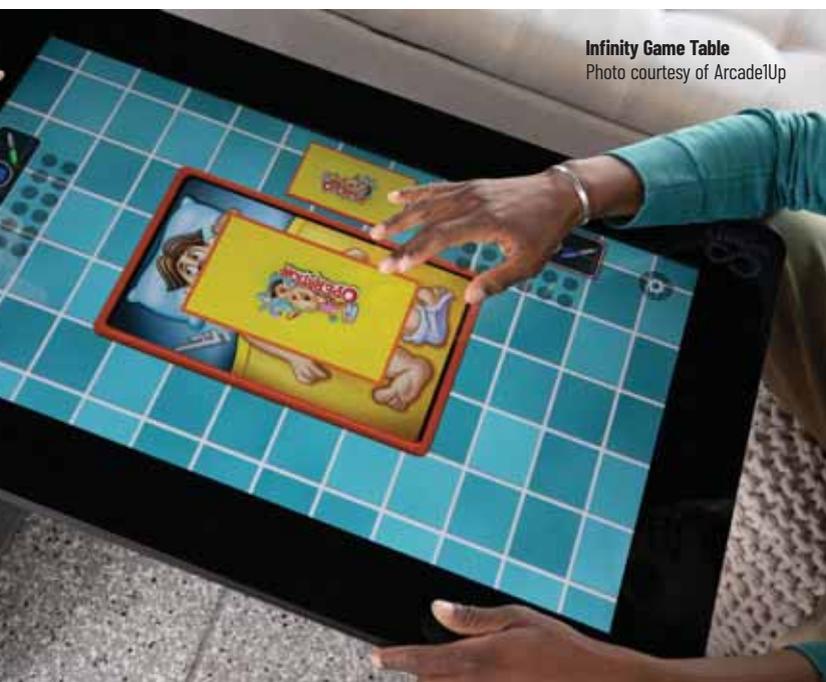
Newer dash cameras with GPS functionality can also record location and speed, interface with smartphones to provide alerts, and allow you to share your recordings. While a dash cam can be a great asset for settling insurance claims, it can also complement road trips you take with your family and friends by saving memorable footage of all your adventures.

While there are many dash cam options out there, they are generally easy to install – you just need space on your dashboard or windshield to mount the camera. In a recent article, CNET recommended two dash cams that retail for less than \$150: the Garmin Dash Cam Mini 2 and the Nexar Beam.

As with any technology purchase, be sure to do your research first before buying, and only buy from trusted sellers, especially if you're shopping online. 💡



Dash cameras
Photo courtesy of boumenjapet - stock.adobe.com



Infinity Game Table
Photo courtesy of Arcade1Up

Walking the dog can relieve holiday stress

THE DAY WAS COLD and cloudy, and a thick mist hung in the air that coated me immediately upon emerging from my home. Before plodding outside to face the dreary day, my wife and I were discussing holiday plans, gifts, meals and

lifelong camping trip. We lived tremendously close with nature, and as a result, our brains are wired to give us positive emotions and decrease negative feelings or stress when we occupy natural spaces. Multiple studies ranging from

indicating a 20 percent improvement in one's capacity to focus, which is on the order of a clinical dosage of prescribed medication like Adderall, Ritalin or Dexedrine.

Sliding on my coat, hat and gloves, I stepped out with Murphy into the cold winter air. Instantly, he was a puppy again, a yellow lab/hound mix, his nose stuck to the ground like a vacuum, searching for scents new and different from our home. It is amazing the sheer joy a liberated dog can have.

As our walk continued, Murphy ran ahead and then returned to check on me to ensure I was having as much fun as he. I shook my head and smiled with the realization that my dog was reminding me to live in the moment.

The stresses of the day began to melt away as my lungs felt the crisp air, and my brain settled into a state that allowed me to subconsciously process the decisions that had to be made for the upcoming holiday gatherings.

When Murphy and I tromped back through the patio door, we were refreshed. During the end of the walk a plan emerged in my mind, which I then proposed to my wife. She found it agreeable, and we devised our final list of Christmas gifts and to-dos.

As we celebrate the holidays, most of us will encounter stress of some kind, but you don't have to be a gardener, farmer or landscaper to enjoy some of the best stress relief this world has to offer. Getting outside helps bring perspective to our lives as we encounter positive and stressful life events.

This Christmas, I plan on having the leash nearby, should I need to escape the throng of family and friends and consult the wagging tail of an old dog who has a nasty habit of rolling in smelly things. After all, it is the simple joys of life. Happy holidays! 💡



all the other details that come with this time of year. More than an hour of shopping online left me in a state of exasperation and stress. I looked over at our 10-year-old dog, Murphy, who gazed longingly out the front window. It was time for a walk.

Being outdoors is good mental and physical medicine, and there is mounting research to back this statement up. University of Illinois Professor of Landscape Architecture William Sullivan has examined two pathways to connect with nature and enhance wellbeing: Stress Reduction Theory (SRT) and Attention Restoration Theory (ART).

SRT builds on the notion that before modern-day living, humans spent their lives on a

health-care facilities to classrooms show that exposure to higher levels of vegetation or green space yields greater stress reduction.

ART claims that contact with nature helps individuals recover from mental fatigue, an all-too-familiar state during the holidays. Mental fatigue usually occurs after periods of focused attention, leaving someone feeling depleted and sometimes irritable or distracted. Research has shown that being exposed to trees, flowers, water, etc., can restore our capacity to focus.

Further studies have shown that children diagnosed with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) benefit from exposure to natural areas and green spaces. Many of these studies go as far as



Chris Enroth is a horticulture educator with the University of Illinois Extension, serving Henderson, Knox, McDonough and Warren counties. This column also appears in the "Good Growing" blog at go.illinois.edu/GoodGrowing.

Field Dress For Success

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The “Challenge” is the top seller at Quatro’s. A deep pan pizza featuring sausage, pepperoni, mushrooms, onions and green peppers, all covered with extra cheese.

Quatro’s Deep Pan Pizza

By Les O’Dell

CONVENTIONAL WISDOM IS THAT summers would be a slow time for a college-town pizzeria, but that is not the case for Quatro’s Deep Pan Pizza in Carbondale. Owner Steve Payne says his restaurant actually becomes busier when nearby Southern Illinois University (SIU) goes on summer break.

It’s not that locals avoid the restaurant during the school year. In fact, the restaurant is popular with both students and natives of the region alike. But what happens in the summer are vacations, and for many SIU alumni and others returning to the area, no trip to southern Illinois is complete without a visit to Quatro’s.

“We’ve seen growth in visitors and alumni year after year,” says Payne, who has owned the restaurant, located just north of the SIU campus, for more than 45 years.

What they find when they return to Quatro’s is familiar: unique deep pan pizza, a welcoming atmosphere and iconic yellow take-home cups. Odds are many of the returning visitors have those very same cups in their cabinets at home. Payne has been giving them away to dine-in customers for decades.

Payne decided to serve soft drinks at the pizzeria in yellow cups as a short-term way of marketing the

restaurant. “I figured it would be a year or two program, one and done, but they’ve just kept going,” Payne says.

He says a couple of decisions made four decades ago have proven to be monumental when it comes to the drinkware: First, he selected a premium grade of cup that is stronger and more durable. Second, he made what then seemed to be the too expensive decision to go with the “oddball” yellow color instead of the standard and less expensive white.

“It’s really paid off,” he says.

Payne estimates Quatro’s cup distribution averages 50,000 each year. That makes approximately 2 million yellow cups – not just in kitchen cabinets in southern Illinois but all over the world. He said he has heard stories of Quatro’s cups being used in Australia, Bangladesh, China and dozens of other nations. The cups are so iconic that a regional newspaper recently used them to kick off a list of 100 items that “say” southern Illinois.

While the cups may be a familiar reminder of Quatro’s for many, it is the food that keeps people coming back. The menu flagship is deep pan pizza. Payne says it is a unique pie – one he hasn’t found anywhere else.



Quatro's famous yellow cup.



Italian beef sandwich



Steve Payne has owned the restaurant for more than 45 years.

“It’s a pan pizza, but it’s not Chicago-style, although originally we started out that way,” he explains. “The problem with Chicago-style is that it takes too long in the oven – 45 to 50 minutes. We found that students and others around here were not willing to spend an hour or two waiting for a casual dining experience.”

To address the situation, within the first couple of years of business, Quatro’s simply rearranged the ingredients and toppings. By moving the mozzarella from the bottom to the top, they were able to significantly cut cooking time. One thing Payne says the restaurant has never cut, however, is quality ingredients. Everything is fresh.

“Other places may do a pan style, but they have a tendency to use precooked meats, canned ingredients and pre-blanching sauces,” he says. “Our claim to fame, if we have one, is that we’ve always used fresh cheeses and sauce. It’s not remanufactured and never cooked before; everything we do is labor-intensive, but fresh. We’ve never changed the cheese we use. It’s always been the same and from the same supplier. We aim for a level of freshness not found in

the pizza industry. I guess in a way we were farm-to-table before anyone recognized that.”

Payne said the top seller at Quatro’s is the “Challenge,” a deep pan pizza featuring sausage, pepperoni, mushrooms, onions and green peppers, all covered with extra cheese. Specialty pizzas ranging from taco to chicken Alfredo and a Philly cheesesteak pizza are also popular. Full-size pizzas are available anytime; lunch guests often select a combo: salad, slice of pizza and drink (served, of course, in the yellow cup).

While not quite as famous as the deep pan, Quatro’s also offers thin crust pizza, a variety of pastas, subs and specialty sandwiches. They are immensely popular as well. Payne reports that the restaurant sells more than 500 Italian beef sandwiches monthly. Like the pizzas, everything else on the menu is made with fresh ingredients and a never-wavering recipe.

“We want to be the ‘Steady Eddies’ for our customers. We want to be predictable, and we want to be here for when you have an inkling for something you remember,” Payne adds. 📍

LET'S EAT!

Quatro's Deep Pan Pizza

218 W. Freeman St., Carbondale
618-549-5326
quatro.com
facebook.com/Quatro'sPizza

HOURS:
Daily - 11 a.m.-10 p.m.



Treats for Santa

GROWING UP, MY SISTER and I would always leave cookies and milk for Santa and a few carrots for his reindeer. On Christmas morning, only a few bites and crumbs were left. I always wondered why Santa could never finish his cookies, but I guess everyone has their limit. If you're looking to give Santa some variety this year, enjoy these cookie recipes from readers as well as some vintage ones from Illinois Rural Electric News, a former name of Illinois Country Living, a former name of Illinois Country Living. Happy holidays! 💡

WE NEED RECIPES!

Upcoming recipes

Jams and jellies

Recipes using a Dutch oven
Brunch

Recipes using Bundt or tube pans

Please email recipe submissions or questions to finestcooking@icl.coop or mail them to Finest Cooking c/o Illinois Country Living, 6460 S. 6th St. Frontage Road East, Springfield, IL 62712. Please include your name, address, phone number (for questions), and the name of your electric cooperative. Additional recipes can be found on our website at finestcooking.com.



Recipes are prepared, tasted and photographed by **Colten Bradford**, Illinois Country Living editor.

Glass Snowflake Cookies

Submitted by: *Jenny Lenz, McDonough Power Cooperative*
Makes 4 dozen

- 1/2 cup butter, room temperature
- 2 cups white sugar
- 4 eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 5 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 30 assorted hard candies, divided by color and crushed

Cream butter and sugar. Add eggs and vanilla and blend well. Blend in flour, baking powder and salt. Chill dough for at least 1 hour or overnight. Crush candies in color groups and set aside until ready to bake. Preheat oven to 350 F. Dust the work surface with flour and roll out the dough to desired thickness. Cut out cookies using a snowflake cookie cutter and use a small circular cutter to cut out the center of the snowflake. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper and place cookies 1 inch apart. Fill the centers with crushed candy. Bake at 350 for 8 to 10 minutes. Let the cookies cool completely before removing them from the pan as the candies need to harden. Once cooled, pipe the edge of the snowflake with frosting and let dry. Nutrition information: 162 calories; 4.3g fat; 57g salt; 29g carbohydrates; 1.8g protein.

Gingerbread Cookies

Submitted by: *Brittany Cowan, Menard Electric Cooperative*
Makes 3 dozen

- 2 3.5-ounce boxes of butterscotch pudding
- 1 cup butter, room temperature
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 2 eggs
- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 3 teaspoons ground ginger
- 2 teaspoons cinnamon
- Sugar

Preheat oven to 350 F. Cream butter and brown sugar. Mix in dry pudding. Stir in eggs. Mix all dry ingredients together and add to wet ingredients. Roll dough into balls (about 1.5 to 2 tablespoons of dough) and roll them in sugar. Place on a cookie sheet and flatten slightly with the palm of your hand. Bake for 10-12 minutes. Nutrition information: 109 calories; 5.5g fat; 92mg salt; 13.6g carbohydrates; 1.5g protein.





Lemon Whippersnaps

Illinois Rural Electric News, December 1978
Makes 4 dozen

- 1 package lemon cake mix
- 1 egg
- 2 cups frozen whipped topping, thawed
- 1/2 cup powdered sugar

Preheat oven to 350 F. Combine cake mix, whipped topping and egg in large bowl. Stir until well mixed. The dough will be wet and sticky. Drop by teaspoons into powdered sugar, roll to coat and roll into a ball. Place on cookie sheet lined with parchment paper. Bake for 10 to 15 minutes until light golden brown. Remove from cookie sheet and cool. Nutrition information: 59 calories; 1.8g fat; 77mg salt; 10.1g carbohydrates; 0.7g protein.



Snowberry Cookies

Illinois Rural Electric News, December 1966
Makes 4 dozen

- 2 cups all-purpose flour, sifted
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 3/4 cup shortening
- 1 egg
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 2 tablespoons milk
- 1/2 cup pecans, chopped
- 1/2 cup candied cherries, chopped
- 1/2 cup coconut

Preheat oven to 375 F. Sift together flour, baking soda and salt in a mixing bowl. Add sugar, shortening and egg. Mix vanilla with milk, add to flour mixture. Stir to combine ingredients, beat 2 minutes. Stir in nuts, cherries and coconut. Drop by spoonful on baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Bake 10-15 minutes. Nutrition information: 74 calories; 4.4g fat; 76mg salt; 8.1g carbohydrates; 1g protein.

Paintbrush Cookies

Illinois Rural Electric News, December 1958
Makes 4 dozen

- 3/4 cup shortening
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 teaspoon lemon extract
- 2 1/2 cups flour, sifted
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- Paint:
 - 1 egg yolk
 - 1/4 teaspoon water
 - Food coloring

Mix shortening, sugar, eggs and lemon extract well. Sift together flour, baking powder and salt, and stir in wet ingredients until combined. Chill for 1 hour. Once dough has been chilled, preheat oven to 400 F and prepare paint. Mix 1 egg yolk with 1/4 teaspoon water. Divide into two small cups and add desired food coloring to each. Roll out 1/4 of the dough at a time to 1/8-inch thick while keeping remaining dough chilled. Cut in desired shapes. Place on an ungreased baking sheet and paint with egg yolk paint. Bake 6 to 8 minutes until set but not brown. Nutrition information: 72 calories; 3.5g fat; 53mg salt; 9.2g carbohydrates; 1g protein.



Practice safety first, or you may be skating on thin ice

ILLINOIS ICE FISHERMEN ARE watching weather reports and counting down the days until it gets bitter cold, impatiently waiting for the “first ice” and the chance to go ice fishing. The first anglers to see “fishable ice” will be in the northern lakes and ponds; safe ice usually appears much later in the year for middle and southern Illinois.

While northern Illinois may see several weeks of good ice, the middle of the state may only see three or four weeks, and southern Illinois may only see a few days, if any. Illinois’ daily up-and-down temperatures bring frustration for anglers waiting for safe, fishable “hard water.”

Fishermen are not the only ones waiting for safe ice, and it’s important to keep a watchful eye for people who may venture out on neighborhood retention ponds, lakes and other waterways. Too early on the ice, even in freezing temperatures, and they might find themselves in trouble.

Every winter, thousands of Illinois residents safely enjoy fishing, skating, hiking or just sliding around on frozen ponds and lakes. However, every year people drown after falling through ice. Don’t let this happen to you or yours.

When thinking about getting on the ice, always put safety first. Believe all ice is thin ice unless proven otherwise. Here are a few tips to remember when considering standing on or walking on a frozen body of water:

- No ice without testing and confirmation is safe ice.
- Do not go alone.
- Test the thickness of the ice with an ice auger. At least four inches of ice is recommended for ice fishing, and five inches is recommended for snowmobiling.
- If you don’t know the thickness of the ice, don’t go out on it.
- Wear a life jacket or flotation coat.
- Carry ice hooks and rope gear.
- Before going on the ice, leave a note of your whereabouts with a friend or family member.
- Never attempt to test the thickness of ice while alone.

Wearing a life jacket is especially important when on ice. If you fall through, it will keep your head above the water until help arrives.

Remember, a new coating of snow, while perhaps beautiful, can make for treacherous ice conditions.

Snow can serve as insulation, causing water to freeze at a slower rate. When snow and rain freeze into ice, it is not as strong as solid, clear ice.

Another potentially dangerous situation can happen when you encounter a pet or other animal in distress on the ice. If this should occur, do not go after the animal. Instead, contact local emergency response personnel such as the fire department, who are equipped to make a rescue.

A few more tips:

- Some bodies of water can appear to be frozen solid but have thin ice in unexpected areas.
- Flowing water, such as rivers and streams, should be avoided when covered by a layer of ice.
- Similarly, water surrounded by sand may freeze with inconsistencies in the thickness of the ice.
- Underground springs, wind, waterfowl and other animals can also keep areas of ice thin.
- Dress for the cold, and enjoy the winter weather, but always make safety a priority.

Until next time, whether you’re fishing or skating, enjoy safe adventures on ice. ❄️



Jack Spaulding is an outdoors writer. Readers can contact the author by writing to this publication or email 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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UPCOMING THEMES

- February - Trains
- March - Found objects
- April - Rodents
- May - Babies (human or animal)



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Eye Doctor Helps Illinois Legally Blind To See

High Technology For Low Vision Patients Allows Many To Drive Again



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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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