

JANUARY 2023

Illinois Country Living

THE HOUSE HUNTER

FEATURE
Safety education
saves lives

FINEST COOKING
Meal prep for lunch

GREAT OUTDOORS
Nature's sweetest reward

CO-OP
NEWS

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Electric Cooperatives

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- Over \$296 Million in Illinois land sales the past two years
- Over 43,877 Illinois acres sold in the past two years
- Over 531 Illinois transactions in the past two years



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Illinois Country Living

JANUARY 2023
VOLUME 80, NO. 9



PHOTO COURTESY OF KINMUNDY LOG CABIN VILLAGE

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Cover photo courtesy of Kinnundy Log Cabin Village

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PHOTO COURTESY OF PEGGY CARTWRIGHT, ON THE MAP 360



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Serving Illinois' electric cooperatives

MY GRANDFATHER USED TO tell me how our family somehow scraped together \$5 in 1939 to join the electric cooperative and how electricity greatly improved their lives on the farm. I didn't know then that the electric cooperatives in Illinois would play such an important role in my life.

I am honored that the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives' (AIEC's) board of directors selected me as the next president/CEO of the statewide organization. To introduce myself, I want to share a bit about my background, the path that led me to this position, and my goals for continuing the success of the AIEC.

I was raised in the small farming town of La Moille, Ill., and I still help my father on our family farm when time allows.

My wife and I met when we were undergrads at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. I then graduated from Drake University Law School in Des Moines, Iowa, and began practicing law. My practice included representing energy companies when they proposed utility projects. With my agriculture background, I also represented landowners when a utility project was proposed on their property.

I later became the general counsel of the Illinois Department of Agriculture, which administers more than 100 statutes and regulates Illinois' largest industry. My previous experience was quite helpful when Illinois enacted legislation to mitigate the impacts on farmland from utility projects.

In 2018, I left state government to be the general counsel at the AIEC. This position has

allowed me to learn the statewide association inside and out. It also allowed me to work with and learn from Duane Noland, the president/CEO since 2005. I have benefited greatly from Duane's experience and leadership, and now it is one of my goals to make this a smooth transition.

Just like my grandfather back in 1939, you are a consumer-member of your electric cooperative, and the 25 distribution electric cooperatives in Illinois are members of the AIEC. Five generation and transmission cooperatives and several telephone cooperatives are also members.

I am fortunate to be CEO of the AIEC, a well-respected organization with a long history of providing support, expertise and unity of purpose for its member cooperatives. For AIEC to continue its success, I think we must focus our efforts in four main areas.

First is member satisfaction. Electric cooperatives — and thus you, the members — are the reason AIEC exists. We must listen to and understand the needs of electric cooperatives and deliver the best results possible. Second, we must succeed in retaining and hiring talented personnel. Third, we have to succeed financially by having stable budgets and being good stewards of our funds. Finally, we have to succeed with the Illinois legislature and administrative agencies. Our model of providing electricity on a not-for-profit basis and being regulated by our members has worked well since the 1930s.

It's quite interesting how life can turn out. When my family scraped that \$5 together back in 1939, they could not have predicted that in 2023, I would become the fifth CEO in AIEC's 80-year history. I look forward to working hard for the membership and leading a great organization. 📍



Craig Sondgeroth is the President/CEO of the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives.

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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January wind and ice can be brutal to the electric system, and dangerous for those who work on it. If you have an outage, please be patient. Help is on the way. Line personnel who try to rush outage restoration could make costly mistakes that might hurt them, their co-workers and co-op members, or worse. Working steadily and deliberately means everyone goes home safely each night.

*For more information about power outages and electrical safety,
contact your local Touchstone Energy cooperative.*



JANUARY CHECKLIST

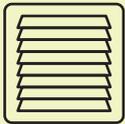
Take a test. Most home fires occur during winter months. Test smoke alarms monthly to ensure they're working properly.



Give some space. If you're using space heaters to warm a small area, remember to use the 3-foot rule to reduce the risk of a home fire.



Change the filter. A clean furnace filter ensures better indoor air quality, reduces heating costs and improves the heating system performance.



Tip of the month. Cut your energy costs by setting your thermostat to 68 degrees F or lower during winter months.



Warm coats, warm hearts

Co-op gives coats to children in need

For 16 years, McDonough Power Cooperative has provided brand new winter coats to children in its service territory. Each year, the co-op's staff members work with elementary schools in the service territory to determine the need in order to purchase, sort, pack and deliver the coats.

"In the spirit of concern for community, the board continues to say 'yes' to the program each year," said Energy Services Manager Kelly Hamm. "We don't get the opportunity to stay and distribute them at every school, but when we do, seeing those little faces light up when they get their new coat is truly a special experience."

This year, the cooperative provided nearly 260 coats, which were delivered in early November. Since the inception of the program in 2006, more than 3,700 children have benefited from the program.

The Coats for Kids program is powered by the McDonough Power Cooperative Cares Fund, which is made up of funds from scrap metal sales, employee and director donations, and CoBank's Sharing Success grant. Headquartered in Macomb, the cooperative supplies power to members in portions of Fulton, Hancock, Henderson, Knox, McDonough, Schuyler and Warren counties. 💡



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.

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

IL ENTERTAINMENT CORNER

Many notable authors have called Illinois home. **L. Frank Baum** (1856-1919), known for his “Wizard of Oz” series, was working as a newspaper reporter in Chicago when the first book came out in 1900. More than 100 years later, a yellow brick “road” was laid at the site of his former home in honor of the author, along with a nod to the story’s most famous line, “There’s no place like home.”

Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961), who penned the classics “The Old Man and the Sea,” “For Whom the Bell Tolls” and “A Farewell to Arms,” was born in Cicero (now Oak Park) and later lived in Chicago. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1954.

Ray Bradbury (1920-2012) lived in Waukegan during his early years. Bradbury, author of “Fahrenheit 451,” was once referred to as “the writer most responsible for bringing modern science fiction into the literary mainstream” by The New York Times.

First editions and signed copies of their work, as well as titles by other significant Illinois authors, can be viewed at the Illinois State Library in Springfield. 📖

Sondgeroth named president/CEO of AIEC



Craig Sondgeroth

The board of directors of the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives (AIEC) named Craig Sondgeroth as the organization’s new president/CEO.

“On behalf of the board of directors, I’m proud to announce the selection of Sondgeroth as president/CEO of the AIEC,” said Scott Ury, who is chairman of the AIEC board and is on the board of directors for Southern Illinois Electric Cooperative. “Craig understands cooperative values and is a proven leader. As a board, we feel we have found the right person to lead the statewide association and Illinois electric cooperatives into the future.”

Sondgeroth joined the AIEC in October 2018 as the general counsel, providing leadership and legal expertise for the 30 electric cooperatives in Illinois. He is the fifth president/CEO in the organization’s 80-year history.

“I am honored that the board of directors chose me to lead the AIEC,” Sondgeroth said. “I look forward to working with our talented staff so we can continue to provide great services to Illinois electric cooperatives.”

Sondgeroth grew up on a farm in La Moille, Ill. He earned a Bachelor of Science from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and a law degree from Drake University. Prior to joining the AIEC, Sondgeroth worked in a private law practice

representing agricultural businesses and was the general counsel and chief of staff for the Illinois Department of Agriculture.

“I am excited to lead such a well-respected organization,” Sondgeroth said. “As the general counsel for the AIEC for the past four years, I have been fortunate to work with and learn from Duane Noland.”



Duane Noland

Sondgeroth will take on this new role upon the retirement of Noland on Jan. 6, 2023. Noland has served as the organization’s president/CEO since December

2005, following a career in the Illinois General Assembly. He served two terms in the Illinois Senate and four terms in the Illinois House of Representatives.

“Craig has a diverse background in law, energy issues, agriculture and association management,” said Noland of his successor. “He will be an outstanding leader for the electric cooperative program in Illinois.”

“Electric cooperatives have an admirable purpose — they provide electricity on a not-for-profit basis and the members have democratic control,” Sondgeroth said. “This business model has worked well since the 1930s. I believe strongly in the value the AIEC provides to Illinois electric cooperatives, which in turn, benefits rural Illinois families like mine.”

Based in Springfield, the AIEC provides legal, communications, safety training, legislative and other services to 30 electric cooperatives. AIEC member-cooperatives serve more than 302,000 farms, homes and businesses in 90 counties, with 63,000 miles of line. 📍

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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.

www.mascoutaheycare.com

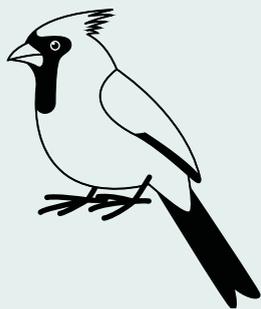
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Where is it?

The winners of the November hidden object contest were Mary Danley of Coles-Moultrie Electric Cooperative and Gayla Meyer of SouthEastern Illinois Electric Cooperative. Congratulations! Your ICL Tervis tumblers have been sent!

December's mitten was hidden in the Datebook section on page 12. 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. Jan. 5 marks National Bird Day, so we are celebrating the Illinois state bird – the northern cardinal. 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. 

Wilson elected to Touchstone Energy board



Mike Wilson

Mike Wilson, vice president of member and community relations at Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative (EIEC), was elected to the board of directors of Touchstone Energy Cooperative, Inc. He was elected by acclamation at the organization's annual virtual business meeting on Dec. 1, 2022.

"It is an honor to be on the board of Touchstone Energy and help grow, guide and champion the value of membership in this national network," said Wilson. "I am proud to bring my experience, both with the national brand itself and with co-op leaders across the country, and I'm excited to work with my fellow directors and the Touchstone Energy team as we engage and support our member co-ops. I look forward to representing the interests of the membership at the national brand of electric cooperatives."

A 25-year electric co-op veteran, Wilson oversees the member-facing departments at EIEC, including member services, billing, communication, marketing and key accounts, and he has been active at the national and regional levels. He is the former chair of both the Certified Cooperative Communicator program board and the Council of Rural Electric Communicators. Wilson also serves on the board of Cooperative Balloon Associates — the organization that manages the Touchstone Energy Hot Air Balloon and mascots program.

The Touchstone Energy board of directors consists of 13 members responsible for setting policy, establishing long-term goals, monitoring general operations, approving the organizational outcomes and allocating resources. 

USDA funding for rural energy systems

As the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prepares to implement new programs from the Inflation Reduction Act that offer billions for electric cooperative projects, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association

(NRECA) weighs in on how to optimize these opportunities for co-ops.

"We encourage the department to make these opportunities truly supportive of the co-op mission to deliver reliable and affordable power to their members," said Russ Wasson, NRECA senior director of regulatory affairs.

Among the new programs is a \$9.7 billion grant and loan program designed specifically for electric co-ops for a range of eligible projects, including carbon capture, renewable energy, storage, nuclear, and generation and transmission efficiency improvements.



Renewable energy projects are eligible for the new USDA grant program Assistance for Rural Electric Cooperatives.

This Assistance for Rural Electric Cooperatives program allows each co-op to pursue funding based on its unique circumstances. Co-ops would be able to receive a grant for as much as 25 percent of their project cost, with a maximum of \$970 million for any one entity.

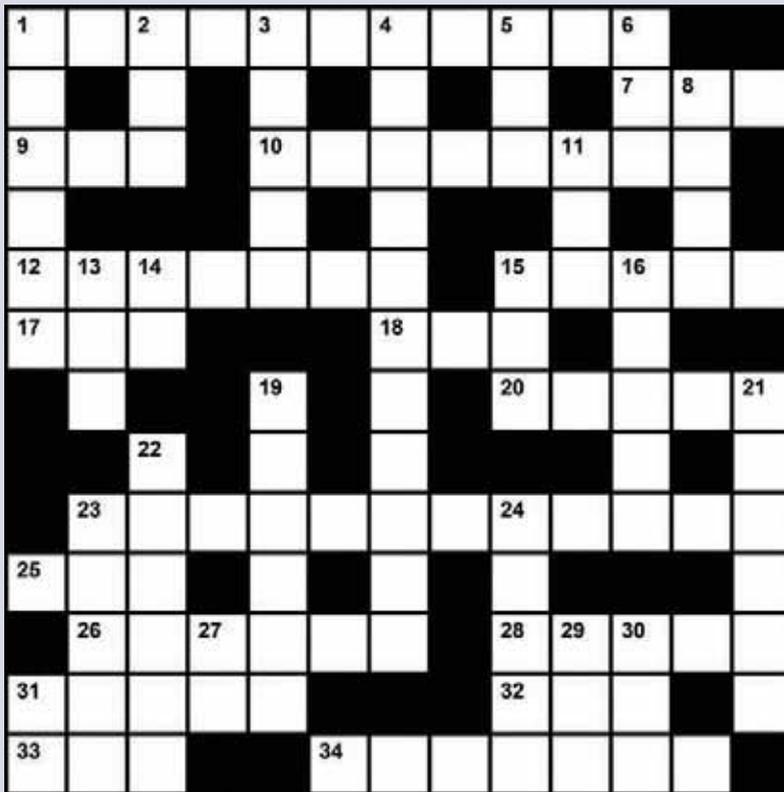
The law also created a \$1 billion forgivable loan program to deploy renewable energy resources. The law gives a \$2 billion boost to the Rural Energy for America Program, which offers grants and loans for rural efficiency improvements and renewable energy systems.

NRECA submitted recommendations to the USDA on Nov. 28, 2022 to share how these federal funding programs can be more efficient, effective and practical for co-ops.

"These programs provide significant increased capabilities for co-ops as they invest in their systems," Wasson said. "These programs were included in the Inflation Reduction Act due to years of sustained engagement between electric co-op leaders and lawmakers.

"With our nearly century-old partnership with USDA and this extraordinary funding, we will continue our work that began in the 1930s for the future benefit of those folks at the end of the line." 

Cathy Cash, NRECA



Across

- 1 New Year's pledges
- 7 Article in German
- 9 Fresh
- 10 Recollections
- 12 Steeps with flavor
- 15 Escapade
- 17 Angler's gear
- 18 ___ Paulo, Brazil
- 20 Words to the music
- 23 It's sung on New Year's Eve, 3 words
- 25 Flash drive, abbr.
- 26 Celebratory ceremonial procession
- 28 Charades expert
- 31 Small change

Down

- 1 _____ in New Year (celebrate the start of it), 2 words
- 2 Viewed
- 3 Green citrus at the bar
- 4 Where the New Year is celebrated on TV, 2 words
- 5 Rowboat equipment
- 6 Catch on
- 8 Vacation location often

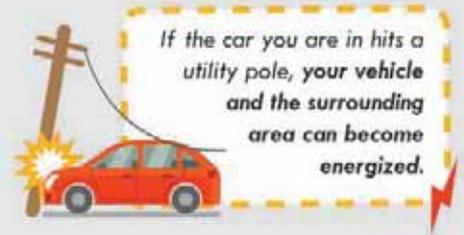
- 11 Retirement account
- 13 Formerly known as
- 14 Measurement of distance, abbr.
- 15 Army rank, abbr.
- 16 Whoop it up
- 19 Chicago airport
- 21 Toasting word
- 22 Popular cigars
- 23 "Quaking" tree
- 24 Fun activities for kids and adults
- 27 Nurse (abbr.)
- 29 "Apple cider" gal
- 30 Coffee container
- 31 Circle ratio

Solution on page 33.

KNOW WHAT TO DO



if in an Auto Accident with Power Lines



Even if you do not touch lines or equipment, you can still be killed or seriously injured.



1. Do NOT leave the car, and warn others to stay away.

2. Call 911 to have the utility notified.



3. Wait until a utility professional has told you it is safe.



The **only** reason to exit the vehicle is **if it's on fire.**

If the car is on fire, jump clear of the vehicle: **with feet together, and without touching the car and the ground at the same time.**



Continue to **hop away** with your **feet together** as far as you can.



Learn more at SafeElectricity.org

LET'S GO!

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



Alton Eagle Ice Festival

JANUARY 7 Celebrate the wintering American bald eagles' return to southwest Illinois. Events will be held at FLOCK Food Truck Park, National Great Rivers Museum and the Audubon Center at Riverlands. At FLOCK, there will be food trucks, music, ice carvers, and an eagle meet-and-greet and photo op. Eagle-watching shuttle tours (\$15 per person) depart from the Alton Visitor's Center. Go to the website for details.

Jan. 7, 2023; 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

- FLOCK & Food Truck Park, 210 Ridge St., Alton
Admission: Free
618-465-6676 or riversandroutes.com/events/alton-eagle-ice-festival-2023

Illinois Snow Sculpting Competition

JANUARY 18-21 Presented by the Rockford Park District, teams from around the state compete for the right to represent Illinois in the U.S. National Snow Sculpting Competition in 2024. You may drive or walk through the park. Visitors are encouraged to take the time to walk to maximize their experience and view sculptures from all sides.

Jan. 18-21, 2023; Sunrise-10:30 p.m.

- Sinnissippi Park, 1401 N. 2nd St., Rockford
Admission: Free, but donations welcome
ilsnowsculpting.com



Stories of Survival

JANUARY 22 Stories of Survival is a traveling exhibit from the Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center that showcases more than 60 personal items brought to America by survivors of the Holocaust and genocide. Each artifact is dramatically showcased alongside oversized photographs by renowned documentarian Jim Lommasson with handwritten responses by survivors or their family members. Jan. 22 is the last chance to see the exhibit at this location.

Open through Jan. 22, 2023; Daily 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

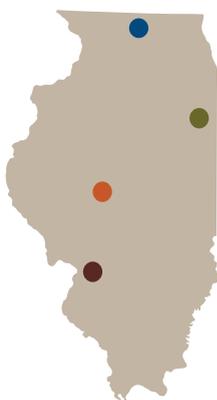
- Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, 212 N. Sixth St., Springfield
Admission: \$15
presidentlincoln.illinois.gov

Illinois Guitar and Gear Expo

JANUARY 29 Vendors and dealers from across the country converge in the Midwest to buy, sell and trade new, used and vintage guitars and gear. Musical instruments, sound equipment, vinyl records and more will also be available. Attendees are invited to sell and trade their hidden gems. Enjoy meet-and-greets with professional guitarists as well as lunch from a food truck.

Jan. 29, 2023; 11 a.m.-3 p.m.

- Kankakee County Fairgrounds, 213 W. 4000 S. Rd., Kankakee
Admission: \$10
illinoisguitarexpo.com



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3:30-4:30 pm | Virtual



PRESENTER

Bonnie Landwehr, LCSW is a licensed clinical social worker and behavioral health program supervisor with SIU Medicine's Department of Family and Community Medicine.

To register or for more information, contact Bonnie Landwehr at 217.757.8115 or email blandwehr54@siumed.edu.

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WINTER STORMS BRING BITTERLY cold temperatures, high winds, and ice and snow. Such weather can cause hazardous road conditions, downed power lines and extended power outages. Knowing what to do before severe winter weather strikes will help keep you and your family safe and warm during and after.

Start preparing by updating and restocking your emergency kit. Every kit should contain these basic items: water (one gallon per person per day for three days), non-perishable food, battery-powered or hand-crank radio, flashlights, extra batteries, a first-aid kit, moist towelettes, warm clothing and blankets. A full list can be found on the website ready.gov/kit.

Paying attention to the National Weather Service and local media can help keep those in the path of a winter storm aware of impending severe weather. It is important to know the differences between various watches and warnings.

- **Winter Storm Watches** signify stormy conditions, including heavy snow, freezing rain or sleet, that are likely to occur within the next few days. You should be alert, as this means adverse conditions could begin within the next 12 to 48 hours.

- **Winter Storm Warnings** call for stormy conditions to begin within the next 24 hours. Those in the range of the warning should be mindful of the impending conditions and consider canceling any travel plans.

- **Blizzard Warnings** advise those in the affected areas to seek refuge immediately due to high levels of snow, strong winds and resulting near-zero visibility to those traveling on the road.

The Federal Emergency Management Association tells us that winter storms are deceptive killers because most deaths are indirectly related to storms. Many hazards can remain after the storm is gone. Heavy snow and accumulating ice can easily bring tree limbs down onto power lines, cutting off power to homes and businesses.

If the electricity goes out, first notify your utility of the outage, and please be patient while co-op personnel work diligently in severe weather to get the power back on.

If you are using an alternative heating source during an outage, know how to use it safely. Be sure to dress warmly, cover windows at night, close off unneeded rooms, and place draft blocks at the bottom of doors.

When the power is restored, there will be a power surge. To protect your circuits and appliances, switch off lights and unplug appliances. Leave one light switched on as a quick reminder that the power is on.

Due to the potential for a winter storm to bring down power lines, individuals should only venture outside if necessary. Downed lines could be submerged in snow and ice, making them difficult to see. If you must go outside, use caution and treat all downed and hanging lines as if they are energized. Stay away, warn others to stay away and immediately contact your electric co-op.

If travel is necessary, be especially cautious driving, and keep an emergency kit in your vehicle. Its supplies should include a windshield scraper, a first-aid kit, a cell phone charging adaptor, booster cables, a blanket and a flashlight with extra batteries.

Never drive over a downed line because that could pull down the pole and other equipment, causing additional hazards. If you see a downed line, do not get out of your car. The safest place is inside the vehicle. Contact the electric co-op immediately.

For more information on electrical safety and weathering winter storms, visit SafeElectricity.org. 



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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Like millions of older Americans, I struggle with mobility. For years, I watched my quality of life slip away, as I was forced to stay home while friends and family took part in activities I'd once enjoyed. I thought I'd made some progress when I got a mobility scooter, but then I realized how hard it was to transport. Taking it apart and putting it back together was like doing a jigsaw puzzle. Once I had it disassembled, I had to try to put all of the pieces in the trunk of a car, go to wherever I was going, and repeat the process in reverse. Travel scooters were easier to transport, but they were uncomfortable and scary to drive, I always felt like I was ready to tip over. Then I found the *So Lite™ Scooter*. Now there's nothing that can hold me back.

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New year, smarter home

THE TERM “SMART HOME” has been used a lot in recent years. If you’re curious about what makes a home smart and how it can boost energy efficiency to save money, you’ve come to the right place.

to use less energy or use energy when it costs less. There are many ways to start implementing smart technology at home.

Upgrades for the whole home

Because heating and cooling account for the most energy use in a home, these systems are the best place to look for energy savings.

Smart thermostats offer features and functionality that can help save energy and money without effort, including learning preferences and automatically setting temperatures. Geofencing is a feature that uses your phone’s location to gauge your

distance from home and adjusts the temperature accordingly.

Smart thermostats also let you control the thermostat from anywhere with an internet connection, and automatic software updates use new algorithms to maximize energy savings. Features vary by product, so choose the one that’s right for you.

Smart window coverings can help save energy both in the winter and summer by operating based on the temperature of the room or a preset schedule.

Smart lighting can help you remotely control lights in your home, based on occupancy or a preset schedule. Lighting also can be paired with home security systems.

You can use smart outlets and power strips to control devices from outside the home or manage use based on load. For example, you can plug your computer and devices into a load-sensing power strip that turns off peripheral devices, such as

monitors and printers, when your computer is not in use.

Smart streaming

Many people use Wi-Fi to stream TV shows and movies. Smart TVs with built-in streaming functionality offer the most efficient way to stream content. If your TV cannot connect to the internet for streaming, opt for a streaming media player, such as Roku or Apple TV. They use 15 times less energy than a gaming console to stream the same shows and movies.

Save on suds

Smart washing machines can be scheduled for off-peak energy times (when most people use less energy), which helps if your electric rate is based on the time of day energy is used. Smart clothes dryers can shut off automatically when clothes are dry.

Cook up savings

There are many options for smart appliances in the heart of the home. Smart refrigerators offer energy-saving features, such as notifications when the door is left open. Digital screens show the contents to keep you from opening the door.

Smart ovens let you preheat when you are on your way home or check if you forgot to turn it off while away. Toasters, range hoods, microwaves and countertop ice makers are among the growing list of smart kitchen gadgets available.

More smart home technologies are on the horizon, bringing additional ways to operate the various systems, devices and appliances in your home.

As you think about ways to make your home smarter, remember to look for products that use the same smart home apps, which will make these new technologies even easier to manage. 💡



Smart window coverings, such as these Serena Smart Roller Shades, can help save energy in the winter and summer with app capabilities and preset schedules. Photo courtesy of Serena by Lutron

“Smart” was originally an acronym for self-monitoring analysis and reporting technology. This refers to technology that can be programmed for automation or controlled remotely using Bluetooth or Wi-Fi from a smartphone app or online. A smart home is one with automated control of appliances and systems, such as lighting fixtures and heating and cooling systems.

People choose to automate their homes for many reasons, including convenience, energy efficiency and security. Just because a product is smart, don’t assume it’s energy efficient. Added connectivity, lights and touchscreens can increase your energy use. Always look for the ENERGY STAR logo when shopping, which certifies the products meet standards for energy efficiency.

Energy savings typically come from automating the systems, devices and appliances in your home



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



Americans can finally grow thick, lustrous hair

“This will help your thinning hair and receding hairline in just 30 days” says top US Doctor

Clinical trials show a new hair loss breakthrough can help both men and women naturally regrow a thick, full head of hair – without drugs, surgery, or side effects

Thousands are rushing to get a new hair restoration method based on surprising new studies from the University of California.

It is the world's first and only hair loss solution that revives dead hair follicles. And studies confirm it helps men and women regrow a thick, full head of hair, even after years of balding.

Now, with news of this breakthrough spreading like wildfire — the manufacturers are struggling to keep up with overwhelming demand.

That's because, unlike other methods, it is prescription-free, drug-free, and has no side effects. And while hair transplants can cost \$4,000 or more, this new approach costs pennies on the dollar and doesn't involve going to the doctor's office.

Instead, it leverages cutting-edge technology to prevent hair loss, fills in embarrassing bald spots, and **Re-Nourishes** thinning hair — with results you can see and feel in 30 days or less.

As Jeanne F. from San Diego, CA reports: “When my husband began to use this product, all he had on top of his head was fuzz. His hair began to grow after 30 days and now it is about 2 to 3 inches long!”

Surprising Truth About Hair Loss

It is commonly believed that hair loss is hereditary.

Unfortunately, most people think there is nothing they can do to stop it. However, while many doctors will tell you that thinning hair, a receding hairline, and bald spots are due to your genetics, this is not the whole story.

“While genetics play a role, it's not the main reason you lose hair,” says Dr. Al Sears, the nation's top anti-aging doctor. “And surprisingly it's not just your age, thyroid, hormones, stress, or a vitamin deficiency, either.”

The latest scientific research reveals that hair loss is primarily

caused by the stem cells in your hair follicles dying.

“This discovery is a true breakthrough because by reviving these stem cells on your scalp, you can stop hair loss dead in its tracks and trigger new hair growth, even in areas that have been thinning for years,” explains Dr. Sears.

Now, at his world-famous clinic, the Sears Institute for Anti-Aging Medicine in Palm Beach, FL, Dr. Sears and his team have used this game-changing discovery to develop a brand-new hair restoration formula that is taking the country by storm.

Sold under the name **Re-Nourish**, it is flying off the shelves with men and women of all ages raving about the results it delivers.

Breakthrough research proves this discovery helps fill in bald spots, re-nourishes thinning hair, and leads to noticeable growth in as little as 30 days.

“I have seen a significant improvement in hair growth. Previously, you could see thinning areas at the back of my head and now hair has grown over it,” says Peter W. from Ontario, Canada.

And Susan D. from Fort Pierce, Florida reports, “My hair was thinning. So, I began to use **Re-Nourish** every day on the front part of my scalp. Now I have thicker hair.”

Regrows Hair In Just 30 Days

Scientists now know that stem cells are the lifeblood of your hair follicles.

Research from the University of California shows they're the reason you're able to grow hair. However, these stem cells aren't always active. In fact, studies reveal they're only active during certain phases of the hair growth

cycle.

“Your hair grows in three phases,” explains Dr. Sears. “First, you have the anagen phase, the hair growing phase. Then the catagen phase, when hair gets ready to shed. And finally, the telogen phase, where your hair is pushed from the follicle and falls out.”

As you get older it becomes harder for your hair follicles to complete this three-phase cycle. The results? Your hairs get stuck in the telogen phase. This is when they start falling out and stop regrowing, no matter what you try.

This process doesn't happen overnight, says Dr. Sears.

“At first, your hair dries out, becoming brittle, thin, and harder to style. Then, you start finding hairs on your pillow and down the drain. Finally, you're left with bald spots that age you prematurely.”

Fortunately, **Re-Nourish** puts a stop to this. It revives the dead stem cells in your hair follicles and reactivates your hair's three-phase cycle, triggering new growth in as little as 30 days — even in areas that've been balding for years.

Reawakens Dead Hair Follicles

For years, scientists couldn't figure out why hair follicle stem cells died.

However, a study from the University of California finally found the answer.

It has to do with T-cells — an important immune cell in your body. The researchers discovered these T-cells are the only way to command hair follicles to grow new hair.

More importantly, they showed that T-cells helped revive the stem cells in your hair follicles — spurring new growth, filling in bald spots and natural hairline.

Re-Nourish uses a unique blend of all-natural ingredients. By spraying it on your hair once per day, scientific studies show you

can revive dead stem cells and improve the appearance of thicker, fuller hair.

For example, the key nutrient of **Re-Nourish** was tested on a group of severely balding women.

After 6 months, nearly 70% of the women saw significant improvement in hair growth. Their hair was noticeably fuller, thicker, and healthier looking. Most exciting of all, they grew new hair on parts of their scalp that had been bald for years.

In another study, Italian researchers gathered a group of both men and women with thinning hair and applied the core ingredient of **Re-Nourish**. After 12 weeks, they reported a staggering 74% increase in hair growth.

“It's really mind-boggling that my hair started growing back,” says Zan R., another **Re-Nourish** customer.

With results like this, it's no surprise that demand for **Re-Nourish** is soaring. Thousands of men and women are scrambling to get their hands on the limited supply available.

Re-Nourish is not currently available in any store at any price. But we've secured a small batch for our readers.

Try Re-Nourish 100% Risk-Free

To secure the hot, new **Re-Nourish** formula, buyers should contact the Sears Health Hotline at 1-800-926-4213 TODAY. “It's not available in retail stores yet,” says Dr. Sears. “The Hotline allows us to ship directly to the customer.” Dr. Sears feels so strongly about **Re-Nourish**, all orders are backed by a 100% money-back guarantee. “Just send me back the bottle and any unused product within 90 days from purchase date, and I'll send you all your money back.”

Call NOW at 1-800-926-4213 to secure your supply of **Re-Nourish**. Use Promo Code ICLR123 when you call. Lines are frequently busy, but all calls will be answered!

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Don't get swindled by scammers

FINANCIAL SCAMS SEEM TO hit my email inbox on a daily basis, not to mention all the fraudulent texts and phone calls I receive despite adding my number to the "Do Not Call List." To make matters worse, websites and applications track our browsing, purchasing and location history, which attackers leverage to create extremely effective personalized scams.

Most scams have a compelling story about why you need to pay. Scammers pretend they're calling from the government, a business, utility, tech company or even a charity. Sometimes they will even call about a family emergency. Recently, there has been an increase in calls with an alert about a virus on your computer that needs to be fixed. In almost every instance, they pressure you to make an immediate payment.

We constantly need to be on the lookout for fraud and scams, and as attackers increase their skills, they are becoming more and more difficult to spot. Here are a few tips to keep in mind that may prevent you from becoming a victim.

There are many red flags that indicate someone is trying to scam you. If they tell you that you must load money on a gift card, that's a scam. If they want to send you a check to cash and have you send the money back, that's a scam, and you will be on the hook for the money after it is discovered that the check is fake.

If they require immediate payment through a money transfer company like MoneyGram or Western Union or have you go purchase cryptocurrency, those are scams. If there's a sense of urgency that involves immediate payment, it is likely a scam.

Is it too good to be true? That's a question you should ask yourself when determining if something is a scam. Often, if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Scammers will try and rush you into deciding, so you don't have much time to give it any thought. This should be a red flag indicating that you need to take a closer look and verify the facts.

We have seen many scammers impersonate electric cooperatives.

They typically call and say if you don't pay your bill, they are going to shut off your power. Often they will tell you to purchase a prepaid debit card to make payment to avoid disconnection. They will also give you a short amount of time to make the payment.

Your electric cooperative will never require payment with a prepaid debit card. Members with delinquent accounts will receive an advance disconnection notification. Taking the time to slow down and digest what is in front of you before making any decisions will help bring clarity to the situation.

When in doubt, err on the side of caution. Sometimes it is a good idea to do a search for the company in question and simply call and verify. Just be sure you look up the number yourself and don't call the number they provided.

Next time you find yourself questioning whether or not something is a scam, take a moment to slow down and assess the situation. If you are suspicious, always get a second opinion from someone you trust. 💡



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



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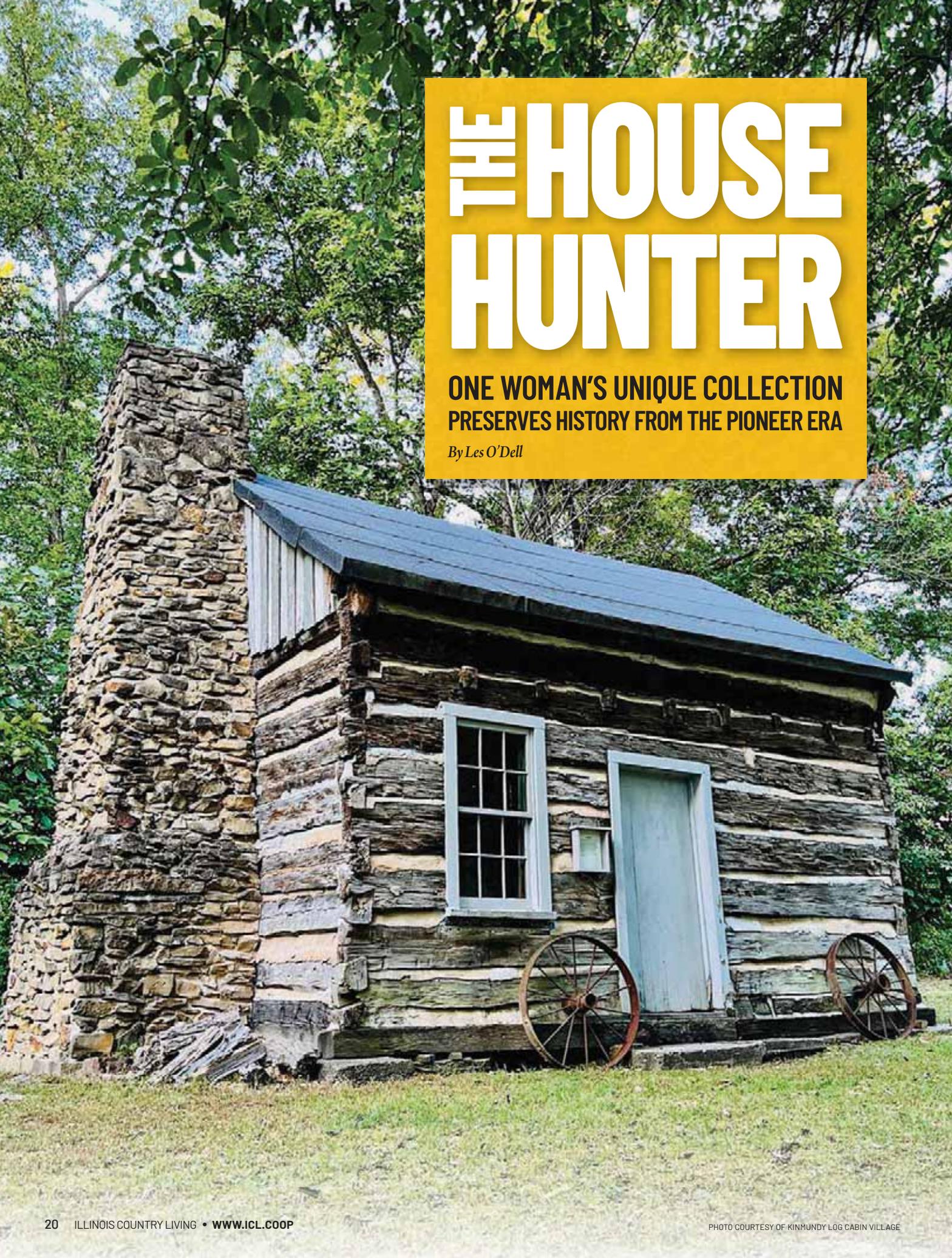
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THE HOUSE HUNTER

ONE WOMAN'S UNIQUE COLLECTION PRESERVES HISTORY FROM THE PIONEER ERA

By Les O'Dell

ERMA INGRAM BEGAN A unique collection in the 1950s. While others gathered stamps or coins, Ingram, a resident of the Marion County village of Kinmundy, opted for something a little more substantial — log cabins. Not models or figurines, but actual log cabins.

Her collection not only preserves history but also delights and educates visitors to this day.

When she started, others were embracing the new technology and lifestyle of post-war America, but Ingram realized that the log cabins of the previous century were rapidly disappearing. She set out to do something about it. As plans for the development of the nearby Stephen A. Forbes State Park included the demolition of several cabins, Ingram began a one-woman mission.

Well, one woman, her son and his friends. In what might have been a Tom Sawyer-like effort, Erma's son Bob convinced his classmates to help label and then dismantle a number of cabins before moving them to a 40-acre tract just north of Kinmundy, where they were painstakingly put back together, piece by piece.

Over the next two decades, Ingram's collection grew to more than 10 cabins, most originating from within a day's drive. She outfitted each one with antiques from her personal collection, giving a glimpse of prairie life in the early to mid-1800s. Whenever possible, Ingram gleaned as much history about the structures and the people who lived in them as she could.

Not content to keep her collection private, she would give the occasional tour of what came to be known as "Pioneer Log Cabin Village" and each fall would open the grounds to the public, artisans and vendors as part of what eventually became an annual fall craft show, complete with historical reenactors demonstrating and teaching pioneer ways.

After Erma died in 2003, her son continued to maintain the village until his own death in 2016. During Bob's later years, members of the local historical society often would help with the upkeep of the cabins and with the annual fall festival, which was growing in popularity.

When he died, the property — per Erma's wishes — was deeded to Shriners Hospitals for Children. To say that the nonprofit health care organization did not know what to do with the log cabins would be accurate. In fact, they were not even aware they owned it.

"When Bob passed away, the festival was already being planned; vendors were all lined up and had already paid," explains Rick Hanks, a member of the historical society at the time. Hanks currently serves as president of Kinmundy Promotions, Inc. (KPI), a not-for-profit organization with the sole purpose of supporting the log cabin village.

"We got ahold of them to see if we could have the festival as planned, and they didn't even know they had inherited everything," Hanks recalls. "They said as long as we had the plans and the insurance, we could go ahead."

Over the next few years, the sale of the property to that local entity was negotiated, and the organization continues to maintain the structures, improve the grounds and hold public events at what is now officially called Kinmundy Log Cabin Village.

Currently, the village consists of 12 period cabins, most originally erected within a few miles from where they now stand. A majority of the cabins are single room, but some include lean-to additions.

One structure, Jacob's Well Stagecoach Inn, was originally located on the old Egyptian Trail, which ran from Rockford to Cairo, before the large cabin was dismantled and reassembled on the grounds. Upon reconstruction, only

the lower floors were rebuilt; a third floor reachable only by an exterior ladder was not included. Legend has it that overnight guests at the inn included Abraham Lincoln and Jesse James.

"That would have been when [Lincoln] was a lawyer on the judicial circuit, but there's nothing we have to prove that he ever stayed there," Hanks admits.

Whenever possible, the history of the cabins has been preserved along with the structures themselves, but with some, little is known. One such building is the Stevenson Cabin, relocated to

PHOTO COURTESY OF KINMUNDY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Above: Erma Ingram and her son Bob

Left: The Robb Cabin was found and moved to Kinmundy from 8 miles northwest of the log cabin village.

Kinmundy from south of Decatur. At Log Cabin Village, it has been repurposed as a church and one-room schoolhouse, outfitted with period-correct desks, slates, maps and other teaching tools. It is a primary stop for classes on school field trips to the village every spring. Students even get to summon their peers by ringing the bell.

Andy Waterman of Illinois South Tourism made his first visit to Kinmundy Log Cabin Village last fall. He was taken aback by the cabins, especially the school building.

"It's off the beaten path, but it's a really cool 'off the beaten path,'" he says. "It's like stepping back in time. I'm a history buff, and if it wasn't for the sound of traffic from



PHOTO COURTESY OF KIMMINOY LOG CABIN VILLAGE

Children in period costumes portray life in the pioneer era during a historical reenactment event.

Interstate 57, I would have forgotten all about the modern world for a little while.”

He says visits to the village are educational.

“You really get to see how settlers lived, and it is eye-opening,” he says. “You look in the cabin and then realize that three or four people or even more all lived together in this tiny room. Even the beds looked so tight, you can’t believe how people would sleep in them. It is special and makes me appreciate how things are [now], because we don’t have to live like that anymore.”

Hanks explains that most of the cabins are true to 18th-century living.

“The village is a group of 12 historically correct cabins,” explains Julie Green, a local educator and volunteer with KPI. “Everything is authentic. Visitors can walk into the cabins and see that they are furnished with time-period-correct furniture. During our events, everything is open and visitor-friendly so people can come in, ask questions and learn from the volunteers.”

Green’s family first became involved with Log Cabin Village as reenactors dressing in period costumes.

“We’ve made homemade butter and shared samples; my husband has demonstrated blacksmithing and how to fire a black powder rifle,” she says.

The historical reenactors, like those who serve on the organization’s board, all are volunteers and showcase a wide variety of crafts and skills during the village’s two fairs held each fall. During these events, thousands of visitors walk through the grounds, not only visiting the cabins and watching demonstrations, but also sampling the foods and perusing the crafts and other vendor booths, nearly 150 in all, that line the wooded paths throughout the village.

Hanks explains, “Whenever we have our festivals, all the cabins are manned with people who dress in period costumes. At almost every cabin, someone is demonstrating a pioneer skill, sharing about the essential life skills of the time. We also want people to go into the cabins and not only look around, but to touch the silverware, the furniture, the spinning wheels; we want them to know what it was like actually living in those cabins at that time. It is all about the preservation of a simpler, harder time.”

Outside of field trips and arranged private tours, the fall festivals — always held during the final two weekends of September — give one of few opportunities for public access to the cabins. Proceeds from the two weekends are used for the upkeep of the cabins and grounds and fund several scholarships for students at nearby South Central High School.

“We totally operate on what we make from the fall events and donations,” Hanks explains, adding that in recent years, a secondary set of events has been added to the calendar. Two weekends of a “Haunted Trail” weave through the woods and cabins, giving thrills and chills to those brave enough to take part. More than 3,000 people participated in the 2022 Halloween-themed paths.

“Some of the younger ones in our group suggested the haunted trail, and I didn’t think it would go over at all,” Hanks shrugs. “But I can’t believe how many people pay to get scared. It’s really taken off. This was our fifth year.”

Local leaders appreciate the village not only for its preservation of history but for bringing people to the community of about 800 residents.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF KINMUNDY LOG CABIN VILLAGE



INTERIOR PHOTOS COURTESY OF POLYNES FORD-MOBLEY

Exterior and interior shots of the Strullmyer Cabin. It was originally built west of St. Peter, Ill., circa 1828. Erma Ingram purchased the cabin in 1968.

“The log cabin village really is a blast from the past,” Kinmundy Mayor Angie Diss says. “It’s an awesome place and a great way to remember that people used to live like that.”

The village is making a difference not only in educating people about a bygone era, but also by benefiting the area in other ways.

“I don’t know how you equate what we do to dollars, but I know that there is an economic impact with all of the vendors and guests coming to our community and the area,” Hanks says.

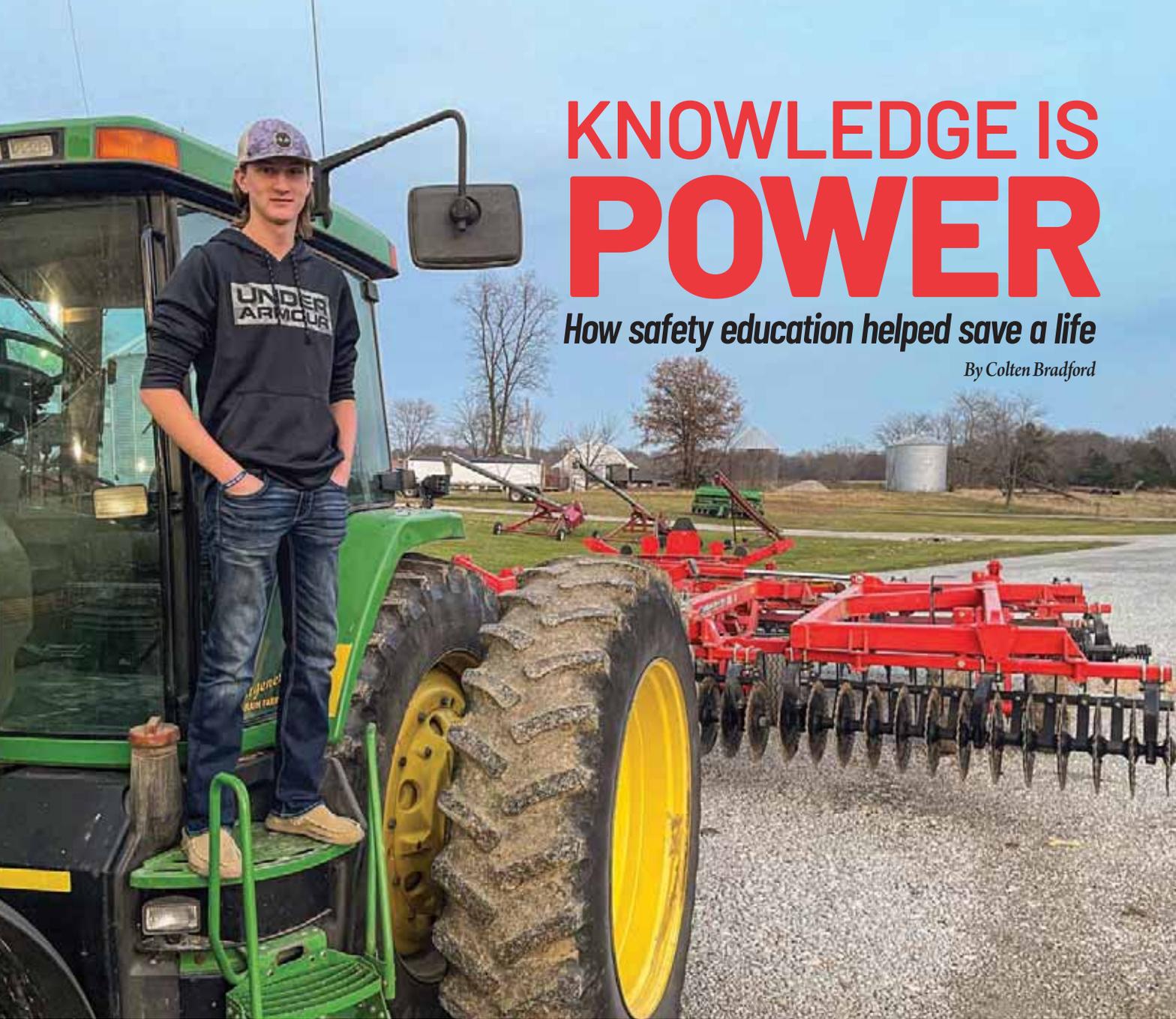
Mayor Diss agrees. “Log Cabin Village is an invaluable resource,” she says. “We get a lot of people who come through each year; it brings thousands of people to our community. It has become the thing that our community is known for.”

The village and its reputation both continue to grow. Volunteers recently poured footings for two more cabins being donated by local landowners to be rebuilt at the village — the first cabins assembled there since 1978.

“Erma had a vision,” Green says. “Who else would have thought all of this would still be here and people would still be coming to see it all these years later? She preserved history, and we’re going to continue that because they don’t make them like this anymore.”💡

LET’S GO!

Kinmundy Log Cabin Village is located at 6260 Gesell Road, north of Kinmundy. The fall festivals are held the last two weekends of September, and the Haunted Trail events are held the last two weekends of October. Visits are available by appointment only. Call 618-267-2227 or email kdylogcabin@gmail.com. For more details, go to kinmundylogcabinvillage.com.



KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

How safety education helped save a life

By Colten Bradford

Lain Burgener participated in a class taught by Norris Electric Cooperative when he was a child. Years later, he put that lifesaving knowledge to use following a farm accident involving energized power lines.

“DAD, WE’VE GOT A problem.”

Those five words cut through the CB radio and brought the workday to a standstill on the family farm after 15-year-old Lain Burgener clipped a utility pole with farm equipment. The pole snapped in half and brought down energized power lines.

Those words could have been the last his parents Matt and Stacy heard from him if he hadn’t known what to do. Amid the flying sparks caused by the power line’s contact with the equipment and the slowly spreading ditch and field fire, Lain kept his cool. He called for help and stayed in the cab of the tractor — a tip he learned years earlier from his local co-op Norris Electric Cooperative.

On Nov. 4, 2022, all hands were on deck at the fourth-generation Burgener family farm, located south of Newton. Lain, who describes

himself as a typical high schooler who loves to fish, farm and hang out with friends, was tilling a recently harvested field.

“This could be bad,” Lain remembers thinking after hitting the pole. “There was some adrenaline going on there.” He quickly radioed his dad, which was broadcasted throughout the farm.

Two miles away, Stacy heard her son’s voice from the combine. “As soon as he came across the radio and said, ‘Dad,’ I knew something was wrong,” Stacy recalls. She immediately dialed 911, which in turn contacted Norris Electric. She and Matt dropped everything and went to their son.

“As soon as I turned the corner, I could see smoke,” Matt remembers. Luckily, a strong south wind was blowing the fire to the road, away from the tractor and field.

Lain remembers the smell of fire and the growing heat as the ditch burned next to him. "For the first couple of minutes, I was pretty hyped up. Then I figured there was nothing I could do, so I might as well not get worked up." He then settled in for what would be an hour and 45 minutes for the power lines to be de-energized.

"It was a helpless situation for him sitting in the tractor and us standing outside," Stacy says. "I didn't settle down until Norris got there and got the power shut off."

Matt remembers the feeling when he first spotted the Norris Electric truck coming to the rescue. "It was just a sigh of relief knowing the truck was there and the power would be shut off soon. At that point, I knew that everything would be OK."

"This could have been a different story," says Doug Klier, engineering technician for Norris Electric Cooperative. "Had he gotten out, [Lain] would have been electrocuted. The day could have ended in disaster. Small decisions can make a big impact." Because the power lines were live, he explains that if Lain would have stepped off the tractor, he would have become electricity's path to ground and could have been killed.

For seven years now, Klier has traveled to the counties in the co-op's service territory to teach grade-school students safety around electricity with a tabletop display. The safety events are hosted by the University of Illinois Extension office.

Klier believes Lain must have participated in one of his first courses.

In these classes, Klier covers general electrical safety around the house and what to do in the situation of a car accident involving power lines. He applies that same lesson in the case of an accident with tractors and farm equipment.

"The main thing is to stay and wait for the utility to get there," Klier says. "Let the utility handle it. If you're not a lineman, you don't know what's safe and what's not." He says Lain did exactly what he needed to do in this situation by staying on the tractor.

Lain wants to tell Klier that some kids do listen. "I'm thankful I remembered and that everything worked out."

"I am usually pleasantly surprised by some of the questions kids ask," Klier

says. "It's nice to have a little validation that the kids are actually paying attention and really absorbing what I'm telling them."

Norris Electric isn't the only co-op teaching safety in their community. Across Illinois, electric cooperatives host and participate in live line demonstrations and safety fairs to help keep everyone safe. After all, one of the core principles electric cooperatives abide by is education and training.

"We appreciate Norris Electric for taking the time to give kids awareness," Stacy says. "It paid off for our son."

"Safety is No. 1 on our farm, and we instill that in our kids. Lain has a lot of acres under his belt. He's experienced, but this can happen to the best. I've even grazed poles before. I think every farmer has probably done it," Matt says. Because of this, he's grateful for the safety courses that his electric co-op teaches students in the community. "I'm proud of Lain that he was able to take what he learned that day. When I told him not to get out, he already knew what to do."

On a day that could have ended in tragedy, the only damage left behind were small burn marks on the farming equipment where the energized power lines fell. Because of the lessons he learned, Lain was able to celebrate his 16th birthday a month later, get his driver's license and share his story in hopes of helping someone else.

"If you're in elementary school and you have a safety day, pay attention. You may not be interested at the time, but it could play a big part in your life eventually," Lain advises. "If you're any other age and you're in an accident like this, don't get out unless you really have to."

If you must exit, it is recommended that the individual leaps from the tractor or vehicle with both feet together and without touching the ground and vehicle at the same time. Then they must bunny hop away toward safety.

"Getting out of the tractor, the smell of fresh air was relieving," Lain recalls. To the Norris Electric lineworkers who answered the call that day, he says, "Thank you. Thanks for getting me out."💡



From top: Doug Klier teaches grade-school students about safety around electricity; energized power lines sparked a ditch and field fire; burn marks were left behind on the farming equipment where the power lines fell; Norris Electric Cooperative lineworkers arrived to de-energize the power lines.

Going for gold

Black-eyed Susan earns top honors in 2023

A NEW YEAR BRINGS new traditions and new practices, and for many gardeners, new plants to add to their gardens. One plant to consider this year is the American Gold Rush black-eyed Susan. It was selected as the Perennial Plant Association's 2023 Plant of the Year and is a favorite of many gardeners. Each year, the association highlights a low-maintenance plant with multi-season interest, which is pest-free and can be grown in a wide range of climates.

American Gold Rush is a hybrid nativar; there are more than 30 coneflower species native to America. Its bright golden flowers with deep brown centers cheerfully cover the compact green foliage. Deadheading or removing spent flowers throughout the summer will encourage continual blooming from July until the first frost in fall.

Robust clumps of stems and foliage, reaching 2-3 feet tall and 3 feet wide, withstand the weight of the abundance of blooms without flopping over. The leaves and stems are covered in small hairs that make the foliage appear shimmering silver in the sun.

A hardy and reliable herbaceous perennial, the American Gold Rush black-eyed Susan tolerates hot and

humid weather and will withstand a mild drought due to its extensive root system. It grows best in well-drained soil and full sun (at least 6 hours a day).

The specific cultivar was bred for resistance to Septoria leaf spot. Caused by a fungus, it results in chestnut brown leaf spots and plant decline. The spots will first appear on the lower leaves of the plant and progress upward. Other black-eyed Susan species can be susceptible to this disease in favorable growing conditions.

This perennial of the year has many uses in a variety of landscapes. It is a showstopping focal flower in perennial gardens, borders or meadows, and when planted in masses, it creates large drifts of yellow. They are also dependable cut flowers with their prolific blooms and long vase life. Coneflowers can lightly self-seed in a garden. New seedlings can be dug up and replanted in a more desirable location, or seedheads can be removed from the plant before maturing to prevent any new plants from popping up in the garden.

Pollinators are frequent visitors to black-eyed Susans. The flowers are an important source of nectar for butterflies and other pollinators. The dried seedheads create texture in the winter garden but are often enjoyed by songbirds

looking for a tasty treat.

However, one creature that does not prefer to munch on them is deer.

The American Gold

Rush is low maintenance and has few pests or diseases. Foliage and seedheads can be left to stand through the winter, but plan to remove the brown foliage in spring before the new leaves emerge. Clumps should be dug up and divided every few years in the spring to prevent overcrowding. Replant the divisions in a new spot in the landscape or share with a friend.

Consider past Perennial Plant Association Plants of the Year, as they are often favorites of many gardeners, including little blue stem, calamint, Japanese spikenard, betony, ornamental onion and butterfly weed. 💡



Brittney 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.

If your tired, achy legs and feet are preventing you from moving easily...

Now, a prickly herb has been discovered to...

BOOST BLOOD FLOW TO YOUR LEGS, FEET, AND HANDS WITH A 95% SUCCESS RATE VERIFIED BY CLINICAL STUDY

A re-discovery from the 1600s is causing a frenzy within the medical system. A weird herb has been shown in six clinical studies (and by thousands of users) to be very effective for leg and foot pain, burning and numbness – with no side effects – at low cost – and with no doctor visit or prescription needed.

This weird herb comes from a 12-foot tall tree that grows in Greece and other countries in Europe. In the old days, people noticed that when their horses who had leg and feet problems ate this herb – it was almost like magic how quickly their problems got much better. They called it the “horse herb”. Then somehow with Europe’s ongoing wars, this herbal secret got lost in time.

“It works for people who’ve tried many other treatments before with little or no success. Other doctors and I are shocked at how effective it is. It has created a lot of excitement” says Dr. Ryan Shelton, M.D.

Its active ingredient has been put into pill form and improved. It is being offered in the United States under the brand name Neuroflo.

WHY ALL THIS EXCITEMENT?

Researchers have found an herb originally from Greece that has been shown in six placebo-controlled medical studies (543 participants) to be effective and safe. This natural compound strengthens blood vessel walls and reduces swelling to stop the pain and suffering.

95% Reduction in LEG SWELLING, Verified in Clinical Study

Says Dove Medical Press & Development and Therapy

... meaning, discomfort, water retention, leg swelling, tiredness and circulation improved in 95% of test subjects



Swollen legs are a warning sign. They mean blood and fluid is forced out of the blood vessels into the surrounding tissue. This causes non-stop pain. This is where Neuroflo’s active ingredient is such a big help.

Poor blood flow in the legs and feet is one of the common problems that develops as we age. Millions of Americans suffer from neuropathy and chronic venous insufficiency (CVI), edema, and other leg/foot problems – millions have these but are undiagnosed.

Today’s treatments don’t work for a high percentage of people – and they have side effects that make them hard to tolerate or that people do not want to risk. This includes prescription drugs, over the counter pain pills, surgery and compression.

HOW IT WORKS

Here’s why you have pain now: Your arteries have weakened. Your arteries can’t carry enough blood, nutrients and oxygen down to your legs and feet. This damages your nerves and causes your burning, tingling and numbness.



The herbs in the pill Neuroflo strengthen your arteries that carry blood, nutrients and oxygen to your feet and legs. It improves your circulation so oxygenated blood goes to the nerves and repairs them. This makes your nerves grow stronger so your pain fades away and your legs and feet feel much younger again.

Katerina King from Murrieta, California says, “I had hands and feet tingling and snapping and burning feeling. It made my life very uncomfortable. I had a hard time walking, my legs felt like they each weighed 50 pounds. Once I got in my car and my feet felt so heavy I couldn’t even drive the car. With Neuroflo I have no more tingling, cold or burning painful legs and feet. It went away.”

WHAT DOCTORS ARE SAYING

“Now I finally have a natural solution I can recommend to my patients who suffer from leg and feet problems and pain. I’m delighted because previous treatments were not effective, but Neuroflo has worked for every one of my patients with no side effects” says Dr. Eric Wood, N.D.

Dr. Ryan Shelton, M.D. says “This is new and different. It works for people who’ve tried many other things before. It is natural with no side effects. Don’t give up hope for your leg and feet pain, burning, tingling and numbing. This pill is working for countless people after other treatments have failed them. I highly recommend it.”

“Neuroflo is a terrific choice for people with leg and feet issues. The clinical trials



WORKS IN AMAZING WAY: A prickly plant was used in Europe in the 1600s to revitalize ailing legs. Lost over the centuries, it is now making a comeback as US doctors rediscover its impressive results – sending relief to thousands of users with:

- Burning, Tingling, Numbness
- Painful Legs & Feet
- Swollen, Achy Feet
- Varicose Veins

in support of this herb show it is very effective for safe and fast relief,” said Dr. Wood, a Harvard trained doctor who has appeared on award winning TV shows.

Now you can get a good night’s sleep – peaceful, restful sleep – with no pain, tingling, zinging, itching or zapping. Improve your balance and coordination. No side effects – safe to take with other medications. Enjoy your favorite activities and hobbies again. Be more active, have more fun, enjoy life more. Don’t risk irreversible damage to your feet and hands. Don’t get worse and wind up in the hospital or a nursing home.

Neuroflo is GUARANTEED to work for you – or you will get full refund with a 90-day unconditional money-back guarantee. It is NOT sold in stores or online. No prescription or doctor visit is required.

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This is the official release of NeuroFlo for readers of Illinois Country Living. Therefore, everyone who calls within the next 10 days will receive 50% OFF their first order. A toll-free hotline number has been set up for local readers to call for this 50% OFF savings. The number will be open starting at 7:00 am today and only for the next 10 days.

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Outdoor patio

A “sweet” dream come true

By Kayla Adkins

MORE THAN JUST SWEETS are in store for diners enjoying a meal at Sweet Peas Grill and Bar in Geneseo. This popular tourist attraction for cross-country road trippers and locals alike occupies an ideal location off Interstate 80, about 20 miles east of the Quad Cities.

Adam Minard, owner of Sweet Peas, has nearly 25 years of experience in the restaurant industry. In the past, he has worked as a delivery driver, dishwasher, pizza maker, manager and operating partner. “The next step would be the sole proprietor of my own restaurant,” he says.

In February 2016, that next step became a reality when he purchased Sweet Peas from its previous owners. “I purchased the restaurant with the goal of rebranding and revitalizing what I believed could be a great restaurant for the small town of Geneseo,” Minard says.

Since taking over, Minard has made it his mission to prepare food he would enjoy himself – high-quality, locally sourced meals in a relaxing atmosphere. He wants the restaurant to highlight Midwest flavors, its residents and hospitality.

Travelers staying in the nearby Best Western are mere steps from Sweet Peas’ front door. However,

although popular among visitors, most diners are loyal locals. Sweet Peas attracts a variety of guests, from seniors to families to school-age kids with its casual, friendly atmosphere.

For Minard, it isn’t just about the people visiting his restaurant. It is also about family. In a way, that’s depicted right on the menu. “The Hendrix” is a half-pound Angus burger topped with applewood bacon, peanut butter and waffle fries, and served with a side of raspberry chipotle sauce. The pork tenderloin has been renamed “The Gibby.” Both sandwiches are named after his sons.

Guests can enjoy in-house dining or patio seating during nice weather. When it is too cold for the patio, there is a fireplace providing warmth inside. Sweet Peas also has a full-service bar with its own hours.

When it comes to food, Sweet Peas has a large selection of options, from appetizers and burgers to steaks and pasta to its famous chicken tenders. Those chicken tenders are famous for a reason – they are plate-sized and offered in a variety of coatings, such as beer-battered, pretzel-battered and grilled.

Tenders come with a choice of honey mustard, buffalo, garlic Parmesan, BBQ, bourbon, raspberry



Jalapeño popper chicken sandwich



Pretzel-battered chicken



Asian salad



Chocolate overload cake

PHOTOS COURTESY OF PEGGY CARTWRIGHT, ON THE MAP 360

LET'S EAT!

Sweet Peas Grill and Bar

1325 S. Oakwood Ave., Geneseo

309-944-1122

sweetpeasrestaurantbar.com

facebook.com/SweetPeasGrillBar

HOURS:

Tues.-Thurs. 11 a.m.-9 p.m.

Fri.-Sat. 11 a.m.-10 p.m.



chipotle or Boom Boom (a sweet and spicy mayo). All sauces are made from scratch in Sweet Peas' kitchen. For those wanting a sweeter chicken, maple syrup can be added for a chicken and waffles plate.

Another buzzworthy dish is the jalapeño popper chicken sandwich – a pretzel-battered chicken breast, applewood bacon, jalapeños, pepper jack and cream cheese with a raspberry chipotle sauce served with the fan-favorite waffle fries.

Dotting the menu are a handful of markers denoting "Sweet Peas House Favorites." These include stuffed green pepper soup, brisket and mac, beer-battered cheese sticks, the Sweet Peas Cuban (an 8-ounce flat-iron steak), and the "Smokin' Burger" (a half-pound Angus burger with smoked brisket, bacon and smoked Gouda topped with a bourbon glaze).

Decadent desserts like the chocolate overload cake (a triple-layer chocolate cake) or the made-from-scratch cheesecake with the choice of chocolate, strawberry, cherry or caramel topping, are also options.

Minard says the future of his restaurant has become cloudy since the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Prior, I had goals of opening multiple locations. That direction has shifted more to smaller ideas of catering or having a food truck in the possible future."

Minard was fortunate to have a supportive staff who stuck with him through the challenges during the last few years. He also thanks his community for their support. "I was so blessed to be in a small community that rallied around us and helped keep our doors open."

During the pandemic, the business shifted to carryout orders but is once again open to diners. However, the lessons learned from the pandemic have led Sweet Peas to keep carryout as an option for diners wanting to order meals to go.

Most days, Minard can be found in the restaurant checking on every table. He strives to provide great food and great service. "I feel those two things must go hand in hand," Minard says. "Again, I am blessed to have the community of Geneseo and all my loyal staff behind me. Without everyone, this dream of mine would never have come true." 📍

Prepping for lunch

SEVERAL YEARS AGO, I was grabbing a quick lunch in the Wendy's drive-thru. As I paid the cashier, he said, "Oh, it's you again." I was a bit embarrassed because he was right. It was, in fact, me again. That's when I knew I'd been spending too much time with my pal Wendy and needed to start packing my lunch. Prepping lunches for the workweek may seem daunting, but it doesn't have to be a chore or the same old turkey sandwich. It can be delicious and even nutritious. 💡

WE NEED RECIPES!

Upcoming recipes

Jams and jellies

Vegan

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.



Hummus Lunch Box

Servings: 4

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 15-ounce can chickpeas | 1/2 teaspoon lemon zest | 1 teaspoon ground cumin | 1 6-ounce jar Kalamata olives |
| 1/4 cup tahini | Juice from half a lemon | 1/4 teaspoon salt | Pita or naan bread |
| 1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil | 3 cloves garlic | 1 cucumber, sliced | |
| | 1/2 teaspoon paprika | 1 pint grape tomatoes | |

Drain chickpeas, reserving liquid. Add chickpeas, tahini, olive oil, lemon zest and juice, garlic, cumin, paprika, and salt to a food processor. Process until smooth. Add reserved chickpea liquid by the tablespoon until you have the desired consistency, about 4 tablespoons. Divide hummus into four containers and drizzle with a little olive oil and sprinkle with paprika. Divide sliced cucumber, grape tomatoes, olives, and pita or naan bread into four containers. Refrigerate until lunchtime. Nutrition information: 707 calories; 32.3g fat; 645mg salt; 85.7g carbohydrates; 26.3g protein.



Broccoli Stem Soup

Adapted from *Clean & Delicious with Dani Spies*

Servings: 5

- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- Stems from 1 large head of broccoli, trimmed and cut into thin coins
- 1 rib celery, sliced
- 1 large onion, sliced
- 2 cloves garlic, sliced
- 2 cans white beans, divided
- 3 cups chicken broth
- 1/4 cup fresh cilantro
- 1/4 cup fresh parsley
- 13 ounces Andouille sausage, sliced
- Salt and pepper, to taste

Heat oil in a large pot on medium heat. Sauté broccoli stem coins, about 5 minutes. Add in onion and celery and saute 8-10 minutes. Add in garlic and cook until fragrant. Add 1 can of beans and broth and simmer 15 minutes. Remove from heat and add the cilantro and parsley. Using an immersion blender, blend until smooth. Put back on heat and add the remaining can of beans and sliced sausage until warmed through. Salt and pepper to taste. Allow to cool and divide into containers. When it's time for lunch, reheat in the microwave and serve with crackers. Nutrition information: 225 calories; 9.7g fat; 1,175mg salt; 22.2g carbohydrates; 13.8g protein.

Mason Jar Spicy Noodles

Adapted from NutritionByKylie

Servings: 4

- 4 tablespoons soy sauce
- 4 teaspoons Better Than Bouillon chicken base
- 2 teaspoons ginger paste
- 4 teaspoons Sriracha
- 2 chicken breasts, cooked and shredded
- 2 cups frozen mixed vegetables
- 8 ounces rice or bean thread noodles
- 2 green onions, thinly sliced
- Cilantro

Place 1 tablespoon of soy sauce, 1 teaspoon Better Than Bouillon, 1/2 teaspoon of ginger paste and 1 teaspoon of Sriracha in the bottom of four mason jars. Divide the cooked and shredded chicken breast among jars. Add a 1/2 cup of frozen mixed vegetables to each. Add in 2 ounces of dry noodles and top with thinly sliced green onions and cilantro. Cover with lids and refrigerate until using. When it's time for lunch, set the jar out so it comes to room temperature. Fill with very hot water, cover and let sit for 5 to 10 minutes. Give the jar a good shake to mix the ingredients. Either pour in a bowl or eat straight from the jar. Note: Cooked chicken can be stored in the refrigerator for up to four days. Nutrition information: 638 calories; 6.5g fat; 1,722mg salt; 11.5g carbohydrates; 30.1g protein.



Roasted Sausage and Vegetables

Servings: 4

- 1 large sweet potato
- 1 sweet onion
- 1 head broccoli
- 13 ounces smoked turkey sausage
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- Salt and pepper, to taste

Preheat oven to 425 F. Cut sweet potato into large cubes. Place into bowl and toss with 1 tablespoon olive oil, salt and pepper. Place on a sheet pan and roast 15 minutes. Meanwhile, slice the onion and cut the broccoli into florets. Toss together with 1 tablespoon olive oil, salt and pepper. When the timer for the potatoes goes off, stir the potatoes and add the broccoli and onions. Roast 15 minutes. Stir the mixture and add sliced turkey sausage and roast 10 more minutes. Divide into four containers and refrigerate. When ready to eat, heat up in the microwave. Nutrition information: 287 calories; 15.6g fat; 1,154mg salt; 22.3g carbohydrates; 18g protein.

Meal Prep Soup Lunch

Submitted by: Shirley Keyes, Rock Energy Cooperative

Servings: as needed

- Carrots
- Pre-cooked frozen vegetables
- Pre-cooked quinoa
- Canned chickpeas
- Box chicken or beef stock concentrate
- Coconut aminos
- Favorite spices

Wash carrots and pat dry, no need to peel. Using a vegetable spiralizer, spiralize carrots into noodles. Thaw pre-cooked frozen vegetables. Rinse canned chickpeas. Place carrot noodles in a 20-ounce stoneware meal mug. Add thawed vegetables, quinoa and chickpeas to the mug. Refrigerate. When it is lunchtime, heat stock concentrate to the desired temperature in the microwave. Stir desired amount of spices and coconut aminos into the stock concentrate. Pour concentrate mixture over the vegetable mixture. Let the soup sit for a few minutes to heat up. Note: This recipe is completely adjustable based on personal preferences. Quantities for each ingredient are as desired.



Small wooden buckets were used to collect maple sap to be made into maple syrup. These are the last two of several hundred and have held up rather well considering they are about 120 years old. Photo courtesy of Jack Spaulding

Nature's sweetest reward

The art of making maple syrup goes back centuries

MY GRANDFATHER WAS BORN in 1872. As a young man, Grandpa made a living as a farmer and carpenter. He continued those endeavors his entire life. To help make ends meet, at the end of winter each year in late January and early February, Grandpa organized a huge "sugar camp" and tapped hundreds of maple trees to gather their sugar-rich sap. Cane sugar, if available, was expensive and considered a luxury for only the wealthy.

Grandpa's mule team pulled a wagon loaded with small wooden buckets through the woods. At each mature maple tree, Grandpa drilled holes for the spigot taps to hang one or two buckets. The spigots would direct the sap into the small wooden buckets.

It was hard and demanding work. Once the trees were tapped, the team of mules pulled the wagon loaded with barrels for collecting the sap. Leading the team through the forest each day, the sap was collected from the little buckets and dumped into the barrels.

Back at the "boiling shack," the sap was dumped into a large wooden vat. The vat held the surplus sap until it could be ladled into the boiling pot. The boilers tended a hot hardwood fire built under the boiling pot, and the sap was boiled down to the right consistency for maple syrup. It takes approximately 40-50 gallons of sap to make a single gallon of syrup. Some syrup was boiled down even more to make maple sugar.

Gathering maple sap in North America goes back thousands of years. Native Americans collected the sap and put it in hollowed-out logs. They dropped in hot rocks from a fire to boil it to a thick consistency. It was their only source of a sweetener other than wild honey. Pioneers were quick to learn the process and their cast iron metal pots greatly simplified the process.

When I was 6 years old, Grandpa taught me about making maple syrup. We tapped four large maple trees around the old farmhouse. My job each evening after

school was to collect the sap, strain it through cheese cloth and pour it into a holding barrel. After three weeks, we had collected about 25 gallons of sap.

On a Saturday, so I could help, Grandpa built a hot fire under a brass boiler and cooked the sap down. When the condensed sap was down to a gallon or so, Grandma finished it out on the stove in the kitchen. We only made about a half gallon, but I still vividly remember the wonderful taste of our own maple syrup over Grandma's pancakes.

The process goes on today in Illinois. Modern processing and collection methods have replaced most of the bucket collection, but the product is still the wonderful, sweet maple syrup we all love. If you would like to learn how to make maple syrup, check out the detailed process at wikihow.com/Make-Maple-Syrup. One of the tried-and-true Illinois maple syrup producers is Funk's Grove. Check out their website at funkspuremaplesirup.com. 



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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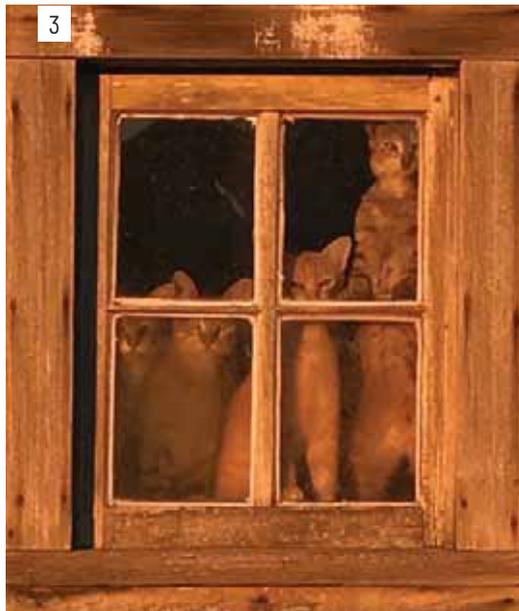
UPCOMING THEMES

March - Found objects

April - Rodents

May - Babies (human or animal)

June - Purple



SUBMIT A PHOTO

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