

WIEC NEWS

P.O. Box 338 ■ Carthage, Illinois 62321 ■ www.wiec.net ■ 800/576-3125

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

Post Offices are the heart of hometowns

It sits in the middle of town, an unassuming post office that shares accommodations with the old Feed Mill. The original Post Office building sits next door but is now being used by the Village for a City Hall. The stores on the Main Street of town are now abandoned. It's a lonely looking place. The last census projected that West Point, Ill. has less than 200 people.

With the United States Postal Service (USPS) losing money for the past several years, there is talk of permanently closing little rural post offices. The West Point Post Office probably does not generate enough revenue to justify keeping its doors open. The rural carrier route is now routed through Bowen. The tentative hours that are now posted, reflect that the post office hours will soon be cut drastically. Larry Wood, President of the West Point Village Board has complained to USPS officials that the minimal counter accessibility will be providing a hardship to his rural community.

If you look deeper, this little post office does more than sell stamps. It is the heart and soul of West Point. Without it, West Point could turn into one of the many forgotten ghost towns of Hancock County. When a post office is gone, so is the town's identity.

The West Point Post Office is not your typical "urban" post office.

Continued on page 16b ►



▲ Main Street of West Point, Ill.



◀ Larry Wood, President of the West Point Village Board in front of his village's post office.



Western Illinois
ELECTRICAL COOP.
A Touchstone Energy Cooperative

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Carthage, IL 62321
www.wiec.net | 800/576-3125

OFFICE HOURS
8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Monday - Friday
DURING OFFICE HOURS,
OR AFTER HOURS
TO REPORT OUTAGE

217-357-3125
800-576-3125

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MAP LOCATION CONTEST

Every month we are printing four member's map location numbers in the newsletter. If you find your map location number call the WIEC office by the 25th of the following month, tell us where it is and we will give you a \$10.00 bill credit. Keep on reading the WIEC News.

◀ *Continued from page 16a*

Funeral arrangements are posted on the counter, as well as “new baby” announcements and a notice on the wall for the Annual Easter Egg Hunt. There is an article from the local newspaper about, “The Black Hole of Meth.” The article is yellowed and curled and has been there for many years. Above it is a quote from a book by Louis L’Amour that encourages the citizens of West Point to “rise above” their present situations, and to strive to do better.

It is the place where children gather for the Annual Halloween party sponsored by the City of West Point. The children are the future of this little town and they know they can go into the post office for praise and a smiling face. Larry Wood says, “If they have their report cards, they are always happy to hear “kudos-great job!” from the Postmaster, Patsy Davis. Everyone needs praise, and they get it at the post office.”

Just like most communities, there has to be a gathering spot for friends. With no restaurant or coffee shop in West Point, the post office is that spot. It is the place where the “old timers” gather and share memories with those who take the time to listen. They tell of the stories from the wars they

fought and the hardships that they endured while growing up.

Small town post offices all over rural America are facing the possibility of reduced payroll, reduced hours and closings as the USPS tries to reduce its budget deficit. However, one point that should be remembered is that these local post offices offer more

This little post office does more than sell stamps.

than stamps and mailing packages. They are the lifeline of their communities. They provide immeasurable customer service and are a valuable asset to their communities. This does not cost the USPS a dime, but to the citizens they serve, they are priceless.

Board President Wood sums it up best, “The West Point Post Office may not contribute significantly to the USPS revenue, but having that post office here makes a difference. Big Government may forget West Point, but the post office and its employees will long be remembered by the people in our little communities. And getting rid of these offices will be doing a terrible disservice to rural America.”

See pages 20-21 for related story.



Energy Efficiency

Tip of the Month

Electronics account for 8.1 percent of your home’s energy use. Cut costs by plugging items into a power strip and turning the strip off when not in use. “Smart” power strips are another good option — when one master device like a TV is turned off, it cuts power to other selected items (DVD players, gaming consoles, stereos, etc.).

Source: U.S. Department of Energy

Let the pros find your energy leaks

Okay, so you are not a do-it-yourself-er, but are still concerned that you are wasting energy and money. Why not schedule an energy audit and let the pros help you pinpoint where you are wasting money. Precious warm or cold air is sneaking out and taking your money with it. By plugging those leaks and stopping those drafts, your (5810-9) energy consumption should be reduced and the comfort level of your home improved.

To set up an energy audit, call WIEC office and we can get the process started. A professional from GreenUP Technology will call and make an appointment with you to walk through your home. After the audit, members are sent specific recommendations where their home needs additional insulation or sealing.

Remember, audits alone will not make your home more energy efficient. The recommendations must actually be done to notice a reduction in your energy consumption and to improve the comfort of your home.

Call our office for more information or to set up an appointment.

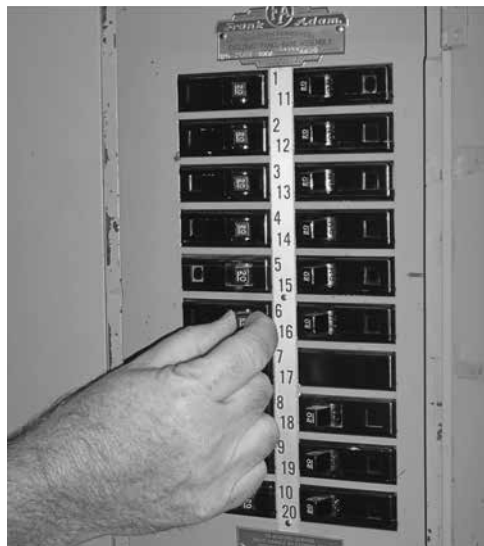
Western Illinois Electrical
Coop. would like to
congratulate the 2011
Illinois Country Mother of
the Year, Traci Sparrow of
Dallas City.

What's inside my service panel?

Home Electrical Service Panel

Every home has a service panel that distributes electricity to switches, outlets and appliances. Service panels are equipped with fuses or circuit breakers that protect the wires in each circuit from overheating and causing a fire. Older service panels use fuses, while more modern systems utilize circuit breakers.

A tripped breaker is likely the result of too many appliances overloading the circuit and should be fixed immediately. Follow these steps to turn the power back on.



Instructions for resetting a tripped breaker

1. Unplug or turn off appliances in the room.
2. Find your main breaker panel and open the cover.
3. Locate the tripped breaker. A tripped circuit breaker will be in the off position or in a middle position between on and off.
4. To reset the breaker switch it to off position and then back to on. This may restore power to the room.
5. If the problem continues, there may be more serious issues. Contact an electrician to diagnose the problem.

Fuses

Service panels installed before 1965 use fuses to protect each individual circuit. Once a fuse is blown, it must be unscrewed and thrown away.

Instructions for replacing fuses

1. When replacing fuses in your service panel, the replacement fuse should always match the amperage rating of the circuit.
2. Never replace a fuse with one (5521-58) that has a larger amperage rating. This is a very dangerous practice.

source: Electrical Safety Foundation International

Welcome New Members

Ryan & Yvette Bliss, Carthage
William E Burt, LaHarpe
C F Wilson, LLC, Nauvoo
Rodney L. Crum, Lomax
Keith Fuller, Nauvoo
Shasta Heidbreder, Niota
Honey Creek Farms, LLLP, Stronghurst

LEW LLC, Nauvoo
Julie Ann Markey, Dallas City
Sarah J. Root, Niota
William J. Shanks, Niota
Becky Sowers, Warsaw
David M. Welcher, Gladstone



**Western Illinois
Electrical Coop. will
be closed May 30th
in observance of
Memorial Day.**

Vegetation Management Schedule

We plan to have crews performing routine brush spraying beginning May 1, 2011 in all or parts of the following townships:

In Hancock County:

- Augusta, Chili, St. Albans, Walker, Rocky Run, St. Mary,
- Harmony, Bear Creek, Wythe, and Wilcox

In Adams County:

- Lima

Vegetation management — including brush spraying — is an important aspect of WIEC's goal of delivering power to you that is safe, reliable and environmentally responsible. In fact, our vegetation management program can help reduce outages caused by things such as branches falling on lines during storms, shrubbery interfering with voltage (6618-17) levels or weeds in right-of-way areas making access to equipment difficult.

Due to the advanced printing of this issue of the WIEC News, these

plans are subject to change. If there are questions or concerns, please contact our office during normal business hours at 217-357-3125 or 800-576-3125. For more information concerning our vegetation management policy, check out our website at www.wiec.net under the program tab.



Seal manufactured home air leaks to slash electric bills

Tips for the do-it-yourself-ers

If energy bills for your manufactured home seem too high, the likely culprits are air leaks. Here are some tips (5713-6) that can help you stop leaks from your home — and your wallet.

Older manufactured homes, especially those built before 1994, may be plagued by leaking ducts and inadequate insulation. Leaky ductwork can reduce the efficiency of your heating and cooling system by as much as 20 percent. A good time to check for leaks is on a windy day, when you'll be able to find drafty spots.

Experts recommend going after big leaks first. That means plugging all holes around chimneys, vents, water pipes and heating system ductwork. Seal any duct leaks with mastic. Avoid the use of duct tape, which can dry out and disintegrate when used. Adding insulation to floor, walls, and ceiling cavities can improve energy efficiency, but may be a job for a professional contractor.

Once you've sealed major leaks, look for smaller ones — around windows, doors, electrical outlets and light switches. Seal gaps around windows and doors, using caulk on non-moving

parts. And replace any worn weather stripping.

Caulk or expanding spray foam are perfect in spots where plumbing, wiring, vents and ducting penetrate through walls. Installing foam outlet gaskets behind electrical outlets and light switches — especially on outside walls — can save energy, too.

For safety's sake, make sure that all combustion appliances, such as furnaces, stoves, and water heaters, are properly vented.

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