

NOVEMBER 2023

Illinois Country Living



Illinois' French connection

*History comes alive
at Fort de Chartres*



 Association of Illinois
Electric Cooperatives

Your Touchstone Energy®
Member 
aiec.coop

HOLIDAY TRAVEL
Lighting up the night

FINEST COOKING
Sugar-free desserts

PRAIRIE TABLE
More than just burgers

 **CO-OP
NEWS**

WE SELL LAND

TODD HENRY
Broker, Land Specialist
(815) 997-2256

MARK LEONARD
Broker, Land Specialist
(630) 746-8468

BRENT RENEAU
Broker, Land Specialist
(309) 337-0348

JASON ENDRES
Broker, Land Specialist
(309) 224-9135

TYLER SELLENS
Broker, Land Specialist
(217) 440-4624

MARLEE JO SCHULTZ
Country Home & Land Specialist
(217) 617-2194

ADAM CRUMRIN
Broker, Land Specialist
(217) 276-2334

JOE CEBUHAR
Broker, Land Specialist
(309) 333-5133

ROD SHEPARD
Broker, Land Specialist
(217) 801-5730

JOSHUA MALONE
Broker, Land Specialist
(618) 292-9183

CLYDE HUTCHINSON
Broker, Land Specialist
(618) 581-6265

CLYDE HUTCHINSON
Broker, Land Specialist
(618) 581-6265

JEFF HEIL
Broker, Land Specialist
(573) 880-6150

JOSHUA MALONE
Broker, Land Specialist
(618) 292-9183

JUSTIN MASON
Broker, Land Specialist
(618) 638-5031

CHAD WILKINSON
Broker & Land Specialist
(618) 263-8376

- Over \$346 Million in Illinois land sales the past two years • Over 47,568 Illinois acres sold in the past two years • Over 577 Illinois transactions in the past two years



WHITETAIL PROPERTIES REAL ESTATE

HUNTING | RANCH | FARM | TIMBER

WHITETAILPROPERTIES.COM

Whitetail Properties Real Estate, LLC DBA Whitetail Properties, DBA Whitetail Trophy Properties Real Estate LLC, In Ohio, DBA Whitetail Properties Ranch & Farm Auctions, Licensed in CO, MN, ND, SD, TN & WI - Jeffrey Evans, Broker, Licensed in FL, KS & MO - Jefferson Kirk Gilbert, Broker, Licensed in TX & NM - Joey Bellington, Broker, Licensed in IN - Dan Bates, Broker, Licensed in AL, GA, LA, & MS - Sybil Stewart, Broker, Licensed in TN - Tim Burnette, Broker, Licensed in TN & MS - Josh Monk, Broker, Licensed in AR - Anthony Chrisco, Broker, Licensed in NC, SC, VA - Chip Camp, Broker, Licensed in IA, NC - Richard F. Baugh, Broker, Licensed in MI - Edmund Joel Nogaski, Broker, Licensed in IL, MD, WV - Debbie S. Laux, Broker, Licensed in ID, MT, OR, UT, WA, WY & NV - Aaron Milkken, Broker, Licensed in NY - John Myers, Real Estate Broker, Licensed in OK - Dean Anderson, Broker, Licensed in KY, ME & NH - Derek Fisher, Broker, Licensed in OH - Jeremy Schaefer, Principal Broker, Licensed in NE & SD - Jason Schendt, Broker, Licensed in MS - Chipper Gibbs, Broker, Licensed in PA - Jack Brown, Broker.





Illinois Country Living

NOVEMBER 2023
VOLUME 81, NO. 7

20 Illinois' French connection

History comes alive at Fort de Chartres.

24 Lighting up the night

Drive-thru holiday light displays shine bright.

28 More than just burgers

This month, **PRAIRIE TABLE** visits **Just Hamburgers** in Paxton.



DEPARTMENTS

4 FIRST THOUGHTS
Stay politically engaged all year long
Democracy is at its finest when everyone is involved.

7 CURRENTS
This month's highlights
News/Legislation/Trends/Tips

14 SAFETY CHECK
Cook up safety in the kitchen
Kitchen fires are more common than you might think.

16 ENERGY SOLUTIONS
A consumer guide to stovetops
Consider your cooking options.

18 POWERED UP
Energy-saving gadgets and gizmos
Tips to get the right smart technologies for your home.

26 GARDENWISE
Holiday cacti bloom faithfully for the season
A holiday jewel among houseplants.

30 FINEST COOKING
Sugar-free desserts
Recipes for those with a sweet tooth.

32 HOME IMPROVEMENT
DIY vs. professional
Who is best for the job?

34 SNAPSHOTS
Have a field day
Readers photograph a farming icon – the tractor.



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.

PRESIDENT/CEO
 Craig Sondgeroth
CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD
 Scott Ury
EDITOR
 Colten Bradford
ASSISTANT EDITOR
 Lisa Cherry
CHIEF CREATIVE OFFICER
 Chris Reynolds
CREATIVE SERVICES COORDINATOR
 Kayla Adkins

GRAPHIC DESIGNERS
 Jen Danzinger
 Kathy Feraris

CONTRIBUTORS
 Brittnay Haag
 Jerry McDonald

SALES REPRESENTATIVE
 Cheryl Solomon
 Cheryl@amp.coop

Illinois Country Living (ISSN number 1086-8062) is published monthly by the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives, 6460 S. 6th St. Frontage Road East, Springfield, IL 62712. The cost is \$2.88 plus postage per year for members of subscribing cooperatives and \$12 per year for all others. Periodical postage paid at Springfield, Illinois, and additional mailing offices.

© 2023 Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission is prohibited.

COOPERATIVE MEMBERS: Please report changes of address to your electric cooperative. Illinois Country Living staff cannot process address changes.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Illinois Country Living, 6460 S. 6th St. Frontage Road East, Springfield, IL 62712.

ADVERTISING: Acceptance of advertising by the magazine does not imply endorsement by the publisher or the electric cooperatives of Illinois of the product or service advertised. Illinois Country Living is not responsible for the performance of the product or service advertised and reserves the right to refuse any advertising.

icl.coop
 800-593-2432 info@icl.coop



Member of AMP network of publications, reaching more than 9 million households and businesses.



Stay politically engaged all year long

WHILE SOME OTHER STATES will have an election on Nov. 7, the next election in Illinois will be the primary election, just 4 1/2 months from now, on March 19, 2024. Voting is one of the most important rights as citizens, and you should exercise your right to vote every time you have the chance.

An electric cooperative's No. 1 priority is providing consumer-members with safe, reliable and affordable electricity. But doing this job requires more than maintaining power lines. It requires political engagement. Engaging with elected officials and policymakers is essential to serving you, the consumer-member.

It's critical to develop and cultivate relationships with local legislators, because they craft, introduce and vote on legislation that impacts electric cooperatives and their consumer-members. That's why the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives, generation and transmission cooperatives, and local distribution electric cooperatives work closely with elected officials. After all, our purpose is not only to provide safe, reliable and affordable energy, but also to help communities across the state thrive.

As a practical matter, legislators vote on a wide range of issues. With an ever-changing energy industry, it is important to help provide guidance and expertise as subject matter experts who've been in the energy industry for many years.

Today's energy landscape is an increasingly complex topic, covering not only the traditional engineering and vegetation management aspects

of the industry, but also technology, cybersecurity, the electrification of the transportation sector and more.

Co-op leaders provide briefings and information to legislators, committees and staff and offer expert testimony for hearings and other legislative or regulatory meetings. Because electric co-ops are involved in economic development, they can provide insight into how issues and policies under discussion might impact the region.

We strive to be a trusted resource on energy issues, and we will continue looking after the long-term interests of consumer-members. This means we can cultivate and foster positive, productive relationships with legislators.

What can you do as a consumer-member of an electric cooperative? The first step is for all of us to keep talking about the issues that matter to rural America and electric co-ops. Sharing about the work that electric cooperatives throughout Illinois are doing every day ensures continued access to reliable electricity and improves life in our rural communities. The second step is to exercise your right to vote. Boosting voter turnout ensures that the issues that matter to our areas are heard everywhere.

These vitally important local and state elections are often decided by a small fraction of our citizens, so be one of the faithful few who show up for every election.

Our democracy is at its finest when our citizens are most engaged. That's true for selecting our national leaders in Washington, our state leaders in Springfield and the leaders in the communities we live. I hope you'll contribute to that continued strength by staying engaged and casting a ballot in every election. 💡



Nick Reitz is the vice president of government relations for the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives.

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. McDaniel, 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



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

condition. As many as 25% of those over the age of 50 have some degree of macular degeneration. The macula 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. McDaniel. "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 a call. You can also visit our websites.

www.mascoutaheyecare.com

1-618-566-8899

Office located in Mascoutah, Illinois

Marianne McDaniel, O.D.

THANK YOU *to our* VETERANS

*“Our debt to the heroic men and valiant women in
the service of our country can never be repaid.”*

- HARRY S. TRUMAN -



Touchstone Energy[®]
Cooperatives

HONORING ALL WHO SERVED
NOVEMBER 11TH • VETERANS DAY



NOVEMBER CHECKLIST

Fall back. Don't forget to set your clocks back one hour on Nov. 5, as daylight saving time ends.



Thank veterans for their service. We stand united in gratitude for the brave men and women who have selflessly served our country.



Make room on the road. Harvest season is in full swing, so be on the lookout for large farming equipment on the roads.



Tip of the month. Planning to deck the halls soon? LED holiday lights use 88% less energy than incandescent holiday lights.



Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative lineworker Drayton Davis won the Best Overall Individual award during the Lineworker's Safety Rodeo.

Not their first rodeo AIEC's safety event highlights skills of the trade

Line personnel across Illinois gathered in Springfield on Sept. 21 for the annual Lineworker's Safety Rodeo, coordinated by the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives. Eighteen teams from 14 electric co-ops and two municipal electric utilities participated in the friendly competition.

The rodeo highlighted the skills lineworkers use every day to keep the power on. While competitors were scored on agility, speed and accuracy, those skills are secondary to safety when it comes to linework. Judges scored safe work above all else. In the real world, linework isn't about getting the job done quickly, it is about completing the job safely.

Held at the Lincoln Land Community College (LLCC) Line School Yard in Springfield, participants competed in team and individual events, including a 40-foot climb, pole-top rescue, H-structure obstacle course, a cutout change event, and a head-to-head climbing challenge.

Scores for each event were based on completion time, proper execution of the task and safety. Deductions were made to a team's or individual's overall performance score due to mistakes such as slipping when climbing poles, dropping tools or executing inappropriate procedures or methods.

Continued on page 8



Shelby Electric Cooperative's team of Dalton Brown, Brian Chevalier and Jamie Sharp won Best Overall Team for the second year in a row.

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.

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

Rodeo - continued from page 7



Egyptian Electric Cooperative Association's Mike Smith won the head-to-head climbing challenge.

Upon completion of events and after scores were tabulated, Shelby Electric Cooperative (SEC) lineworkers Jamie Sharp, Dalton Brown and Brian Chevalier, who combined as a three-man team, won Best Overall Team for the second year in a row. Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative lineworker Drayton Davis won the Best Overall Individual award.

The final event of the rodeo was a climbing challenge — a head-to-head event that required lineworkers to climb up a 40-foot pole, ring a bell and climb back down. The fastest speed moved to the next round; however, participants were automatically disqualified for safety violations, including slips, because speed is secondary to safety. Mike Smith, a lineworker representing Egyptian Electric Cooperative Association, was named the victor of the challenge.

For full results, go to icl.coop.



Where is it?

The winners of the September hidden object contest were Michael Burke of Coles-Moultrie Electric Cooperative and Nancy Junge of Egyptian Electric Cooperative Association. Congratulations! Your ICL Tervis tumblers have been sent.

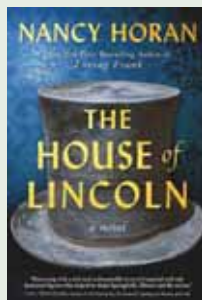
October's candy corn was hidden on page 14 in the bottom right-hand corner of the Halloween decorations photo. Winners' names will be drawn, and they will be notified. Visit Illinois Country Living on Facebook after each month's deadline for a closeup of the object's location and winners' names.

It's time for a new hidden object search. In honor of National Take a Hike Day on Nov. 17, be on the lookout for a hiking boot print. 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 (nonmembers 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 symbol's location will be published in each month's issue of Illinois Country Living.

IL ENTERTAINMENT CORNER

In June, former Illinois journalist Nancy Horan released her third novel, "The House of Lincoln." The work of historical fiction begins with Abraham Lincoln during his time as an attorney in Springfield, prior to his presidency.



Readers see Lincoln's views of democracy evolve from the perspective of Ana, a 13-year-old Portuguese immigrant working as a house girl in his home; she also bears witness to Mary Todd's pain and complex psyche. Outside the home, she encounters racial prejudice and the work of the Underground Railroad. The story comes to a dramatic conclusion following the end of the Civil War, in an account of the Springfield race riot of 1908.

Horan also wrote the New York Times bestseller "Loving Frank," following the love affair of architect Frank Lloyd Wright and Mamah Borthwick Cheney. The book received the 2009 Society of American Historians Prize for Historical Fiction.



THERE IS A TREASURE IN YOUR BACK YARD.

You may not realize it, but your home is sitting on a **free and renewable supply of energy**. A WaterFurnace geothermal system taps into the stored solar energy found in your own backyard to provide **savings of up to 70% on heating, cooling and hot water**. That's money in the bank and a smart investment in your family's comfort. Contact your local WaterFurnace dealer today to learn how to **tap into your buried treasure**.

YOUR LOCAL WATERFURNACE DEALERS

Bloomington/Normal

Design Air
(217)423-4713
Hinrichsen Htg & A/C
(309)965-2604

Brighton

Den-Son Clg & Htg
(618) 207-3847

Carbondale

D&C Htg & Clg
(618)997-6577

Damiansville

Toennies Service Co.
(618) 248-5130

Decatur

Design Air
(217) 423-4713

Fairbury

Popejoy Pbg, Htg & Elct.
(815) 496-5181

Gifford

Duden & Silver
(217) 568-7954

Goodfield

Hinrichsen Htg & A/C
(309) 965-2604

Harrisburg

D&C Htg & Clg
(618)997-6577

Macomb

Arnold Bros. Htg & Clg
(309) 833-2852

Marion

D & C Htg & Clg
(618) 997-6577

Parker Htg & Clg
(618) 357-8951

Murphysboro

Heartland Htg, Air & Pbg
(618) 202-4609

Paxton/Gibson City

Houston Plmb,
Htg & A/C
(217) 379-2329

Springfield/Petersburg

Collins Plmb, Htg & Clg
(217) 793-8031

Thomasboro

Hoveln Htg & Clg
(217) 643-2125

Virden

Snell Pbg & Htg
(217) 965-3911



7 Series
The ultimate comfort & efficiency



visit us at waterfurnace.com

WaterFurnace is a registered trademark of WaterFurnace International, Inc. ©2022 WaterFurnace International, Inc.

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

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

Title of publication — Illinois Country Living.

Publication No. — 258420.

Date of filing — Sept. 22, 2023.

Frequency of issue — Monthly.

No. of issues published annually — 12.

Annual subscription price — \$12.

Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication — Illinois Country Living, 6460 S. Sixth St. Frontage Road East, Springfield, Sangamon, Illinois 62712-6820.

Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher — Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives, 6460 S. Sixth St. Frontage Road East, Springfield, Sangamon, Illinois 62712-6820.

Full Names and complete Mailing addresses of Publisher, Editor and Managing Editor — Publisher, Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives, 6460 S. Sixth St. Frontage Road East, Springfield, Sangamon, Illinois 62712-6820. Editor — Colten Bradford, 6460 S. Sixth St. Frontage Road East, Springfield, Sangamon, Illinois 62712-6820. Managing Editor — Colten Bradford, 6460 S. Sixth St. Frontage Road East, Springfield, Sangamon, Illinois 62712-6820.

Owner — Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives, 6460 S. 6th St. Frontage Road East, Springfield, IL, 62712-6820.

Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages or Other Securities — None.

Publication Name — Illinois Country Living.

Issue Date for Circulation Data Below — October 2023.

Extent and Nature of Circulation — Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months; Actual No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date

Total No. Copies — 192,796; 192,991

Mailed Outside-County Paid Subscriptions- 191,556; 191,760

Mailed In-County Paid Subscriptions - None; None

Paid Distribution outside mail including Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and other Non-USPS - None; None

Other Classes Mailed Through the USPS - None; None

Total Paid Distribution - 191,556; 191,760

Free Distribution by Mail Outside-County— 522; 513

Free Distribution by Mail In-County - None; None

Free Distribution-Other Classes Mailed Through the USPS— None; None

Free Distribution Outside the Mail— None; None

Total Free Distribution - 522; 513

Total Distribution — 192,078; 192,273

Copies Not Distributed — 718; 718

Total — 192,796; 192,991

Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation — 99.7%; 99.7%

This Statement of Ownership will be printed in the November 2023 issue of this publication.

I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information requested on the form may be subject to criminal sanctions and/or civil sanctions.

/s/Colten Bradford



Co-ops overwhelm USDA with project proposals

Electric cooperatives flooded the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) with interest in a new \$9.7 billion clean energy program, submitting proposals for hundreds of projects that would require at least twice that amount and launch \$93 billion in new investment across rural America.

USDA announced on Sept. 27 that it received 157 letters of interest from electric co-ops across the nation for 750 projects seeking grants and loans from the Empowering Rural America program, also known as New ERA.

“The demand for the New ERA program illustrates the innovative spirit of electric cooperatives as they explore new ways to meet tomorrow’s energy needs and prepare for a future that depends on electricity to power more of the economy,” said National Rural Electric Cooperative Association CEO Jim Matheson.

USDA closed its 46-day window to file letters on Sept. 15 and is preparing to send application invitations to co-ops with projects deemed technologically viable, reliable and resilient.

Awards are expected to be made early next year. Grants may be up to 25% of a project’s cost, with a maximum amount of loans and grants limited to \$970 million for any one co-op. Eligible projects may include carbon capture, renewable energy, energy storage, nuclear energy and generation and transmission efficiency improvements.

USDA said the co-op proposals emphasized plans to serve the country’s most disadvantaged communities and would create a total of \$93 billion in public and private investments in rural America.

NRECA provided in-depth recommendations to USDA as it shaped the New ERA program, which was created by the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act, and encouraged prioritizing grid reliability, electricity affordability and project flexibility.

“The program rightly prioritizes voluntary, flexible decision-making that allows electric co-ops to take a tailored approach to respond to local energy needs,” Matheson said. 📍

Cathy Cash, NRECA

Priestley selected as a “Co-op Rising Star”



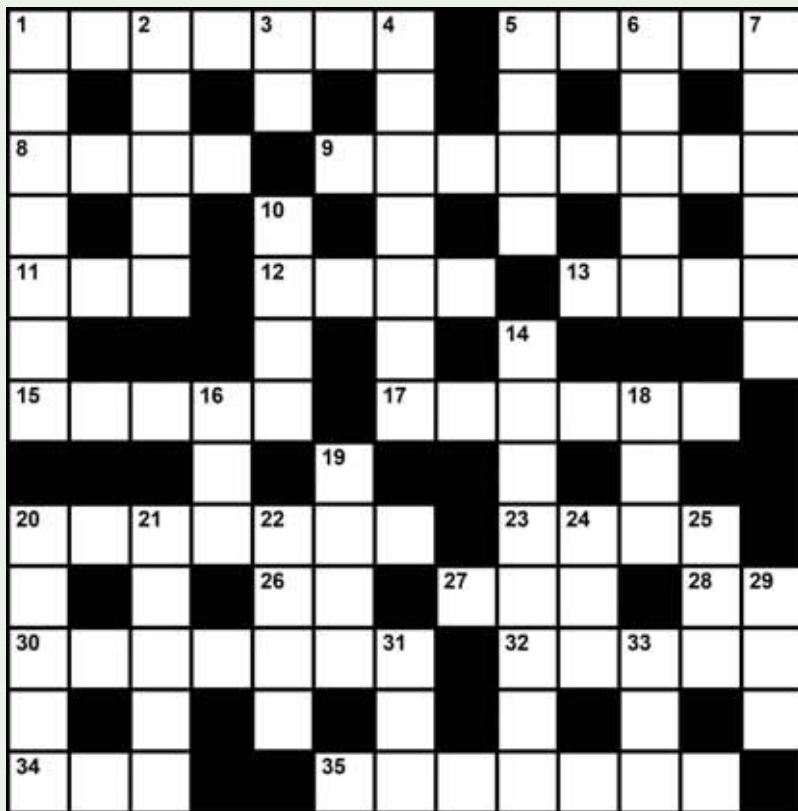
Joe Priestley

For the second year, RE Magazine, the flagship publication of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, selected 20 electric cooperative

employees from across the nation as Co-op Rising Stars. Illinois’ own Joe Priestley was selected for the 2023 class of rising stars.

Priestley is the vice president of utility services for Corn Belt Energy Cooperative and oversees the security and technological aspects of the co-op’s administrative side. Priestley is a veteran and served in the Army as a battlefield intelligence code breaker.

The purpose of this honor is to celebrate and spotlight talented and passionate co-op employees who help shoulder the responsibility of ensuring that co-ops respond well to the challenges co-ops face and help them to continue to thrive well into the future, according to RE Magazine. 📍



Across

- 1 Gather crops
- 5 Sumptuous repast
- 8 365 days
- 9 Preparing the turkey
- 11 Believer, suffix
- 12 Grace ending
- 13 Hereditary unit
- 15 Bird that's an American symbol
- 17 Treats pulled from the fire
- 20 Orange-brown pie
- 23 On-the-cob serving
- 26 Dawn time, abbr.
- 27 Put on clothes
- 28 Either's partner
- 30 Vegetables preserved in brine
- 32 Sweet item for the kids
- 34 Sure!
- 35 Thanksgiving celebrations

Down

- 1 Fall activity on a farm

- 2 Cook in the oven
- 3 Former
- 4 Thanksgiving birds
- 5 Salmon or seabass
- 6 Come up
- 7 Pulled
- 10 Cook in a way
- 14 Thanksgiving drink, 2 words
- 16 Spot for the grandkids
- 18 Corn piece
- 19 Cocktail addition
- 20 Litter member
- 21 Store that made the Thanksgiving Parade popular
- 22 Green salad
- 24 Out _____ limb, 2 words
- 25 Silent approval
- 29 Type of bread
- 31 Hot stone massage place
- 33 Compass direction, abbr.

Solution on page 33.

Preorder
ILLINOIS COUNTRY LIVING'S
2024
CALENDAR!

Featuring photos
by readers submitted
to our SnapShots page!



\$10⁰⁰, plus tax
Shipping included

Preorder online at
icl.coop/calendar

Shipping will begin December 1.



LET'S GO!

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



Hobnob Holiday Market

NOVEMBER

3-4

Kick off the holidays at the Illinois State Fairgrounds with a festive holiday shopping experience. Purchase gifts or treat yourself to vintage and handmade items from 120-plus vendors. The Hobnob Holiday Market is indoors, so no need to worry about the weather.

Nov. 3, 2023: 4-8 p.m. and Nov. 4: 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

- Illinois State Fairgrounds Expo Building, 801 E. Sangamon Ave., Springfield
Admission: varies
hobnobmarket.com

Gym Bob's Jamboree Show

NOVEMBER

5

The Gym Bob's Jamboree Show features opry-style live music and is held the first Sunday of every month. This month will be the annual '50s and '60s show, featuring a variety of music from legends such as Elvis, Brenda Lee, Jerry Lee Lewis and many more for the whole family to enjoy.

Nov. 5, 2023: 1-3:30 p.m.

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



Christmas Barn Sale Trail

NOVEMBER

9-11

The Christmas Barn Sale Trail is a unique driving event for shoppers to discover hidden gems, local treasures and festive holiday finds. All 10-plus barns are located within 7 miles of each other. This trail offers a range of products and showcases handmade items, including jewelry, home decor, clothing, artwork, vintage collectibles, antiques and more. Tickets are required for the VIP experience on Thursday, Nov. 9. Register online. Admission is free on Friday and Saturday.

Nov. 9, 2023: 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Nov. 10: 9 a.m.-7 p.m. and Nov. 11: 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

- Massac County, 606 Market St., Metropolis
Admission: varies
618-940-0743 or thechristmasbarnsaletrail.com

Nouveau Parade and Celebration

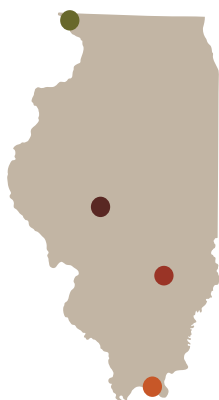
NOVEMBER

17

Join Galena Cellars as it celebrates its 2023 Nouveau wine. The 39th annual Nouveau Parade will begin at 2:30 p.m. down Galena's Main Street and will include horse-drawn wagons and trolleys as the Nouveau wine is handed out to Galena merchants. Local restaurants and businesses will continue to celebrate all weekend with wine tastings, dinner specials and live music.

Nov. 17, 2023: 11 a.m.-10 p.m.

- Galena Cellars, 111 N. Main St., Galena
Admission: free
815-777-3330 or nouveauweekend.com



WE ALL NEED SOMEONE WE CAN TALK TO

Get the support you need
because a healthy farm
isn't anything without
a healthy farmer.



CALL OR TEXT
1-833-FARM-SOS

EMAIL
FarmFamilyResourceHelpline@mhsil.com




SIU MEDICINE
CENTER FOR RURAL HEALTH &
SOCIAL SERVICE DEVELOPMENT
siumed.org/farm

ENTER OUR PIE RECIPE CONTEST!

Illinois
Country Living

March 14 marks the annual celebration of the mathematical term Pi. Pi Day is also a great excuse to indulge in the beloved dessert — pie. In honor of Pi Day, enter Illinois Country Living's pie recipe contest. Any dessert pie recipe is welcome. It could be a recipe passed down for generations or one of your own.

You may only enter one recipe, and it must include instructions for both crust and filling. After recipes are reviewed, finalists will be selected for baking, and pies will be tasted by a panel of judges. Winning entries will be printed in the March 2024 issue of Illinois Country Living. All entries will be included on the magazine's website at www.icl.coop.

 **Enter online at www.icl.coop/contest**
Each entry **MUST** include your name, address and phone number, **PLUS** the name of your Illinois electric cooperative, or it will be disqualified. You may also mail entries to Illinois Country Living Recipe Contest, 6460 S. 6th St. Frontage Road East, Springfield, IL 62712.

Entry deadline is December 15, 2023.

PRIZES:

- First place: \$100 gift card
- Second place: \$75 gift card
- Third place: \$50 gift card
- Five honorable mentions: \$25 gift cards





Cook up safety in the kitchen

AS WE APPROACH THE holiday season, the number of hours spent in the kitchen increases as many of us prepare feasts for families and bake sweet treats. Before the cooking and baking begins, be sure to check your kitchen for safety hazards.

Cooking equipment fires are more common than you might think. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), U.S. fire departments respond to more than 158,000 home fires every year that are started by cooking activities.

Unattended cooking is the leading cause of kitchen fires, according to a study by the NFPA, and homes with electric ranges have a higher risk of cooking fires. So, always stay in the kitchen when frying, grilling, boiling or broiling food. Keep anything that can catch fire, including oven mitts, food wrappers, towels and wooden utensils, away from the cooking surface.

There's also another cooking safety hazard that's often overlooked, and that's using appliances that are faulty or those that have damaged

cords or plugs. Make sure appliances are in good working condition, and never use an appliance that is in disrepair or one that's already lived a full and productive life.

Inspect all small appliances and electric cords to make sure they are in good condition before using. Do not use appliances with cracked or frayed cords. Small appliance lifespan depends greatly on how often you use it and how you maintain it. In general, the average life expectancy of most small kitchen appliances is 5-10 years. So, if your appliances have some age on them, you might want to consider replacing them.

When purchasing new kitchen appliances, look for UL-certified appliances with automatic shut-off features. Read the operating instructions of any appliance before use, and never plug more than one high-wattage appliance into a single outlet.

Make sure your appliances are plugged into a GFCI (ground fault circuit interrupter) outlet. When working properly, the GFCI senses any power flow imbalances and trips

the circuit. These should be tested monthly to ensure they are working.

While in the kitchen, keep cooking areas clear of other items, particularly flammable items. Keep the area clean and free of grease. Stay focused and attentive to baking, frying, brewing and simmering foods. Always have a working fire extinguisher on hand and know how to operate it.

Be alert to other safety considerations when working in the kitchen. Flickering or dimming lights and monitors, sparks from appliances or outlets, and wall plates, plugs or cords that are warm to the touch are all warning signs that demand immediate attention. If you spot an electrical danger, make sure to unplug the malfunctioning appliance immediately and have it repaired or replaced.

Although not necessarily a safety issue, always unplug small appliances when not in use to prevent unnecessary energy consumption, especially if the appliance has LED displays or other standby energy-consuming features. For more electrical safety tips, 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.

**Chicken Should Always
Taste this Good.**
Raised Right in the USA with
No Antibiotics Ever!



PERDUE FARMS
— A FAMILY OF FARMERS SINCE 1920 —

Get The **PERDUE FARMHOUSE SAMPLER**
With This Introductory Offer.

- 3x - Boneless Chicken Breasts Pack (3 lb.)
- 3x - Chicken Tenderloins Pack (3 lb.)
- 1x - Chicken Breast Cutlets Tray (1.5 lb.)
- 1x - Diced Chicken Breasts Tray (1.25 lb.)
- 1x - Chicken Breast Strips Tray (1.25 lb.)
- 1x - Farmhouse Blend Seasoning (1.0 oz.)

FREE - Applewood-Smoked Bacon (.75 lb)

\$140.94* Separately

Your Price **\$88.99**

www.perdufarm.com/sampler390

OR

Call **1.800.473.7383** Ask For Sampler 390



+ FREE Applewood-Smoked Bacon

Our Gift To You

Offer Expires 12/31/2023. Not valid with any other offers. *Savings shown based on total of single item base price. Introductory S&H added per address. Only available in select states. Limited one order per household. Valid for new customers only. Visit Perdufarm.com or call 1.800.473.7383 for full Terms and Conditions. Prices and offer subject to change. All pictures shown are for illustration purposes only. Product is frozen at peak freshness and carefully packaged in eco-friendly shipping materials to ensure safe delivery.

A consumer guide to stovetops

I HAVE FOUND THAT most people who enjoy cooking have strong opinions about their preferred fuel choice — gas or electric. Induction is a newer option for home

coil elements and are easier to clean, but they tend to be more expensive. The most common complaint about electric cooking is that the heating controls are not as fast or precise.

An induction stovetop can offer a higher-end cooking experience than a standard electric stovetop, and some people prefer it to cooking on gas.

Induction stovetops use electromagnetic energy to heat the pan, reducing energy waste. Instead of heating the stove's surface, they heat the pans themselves. Because the pans heat directly, you don't have to wait for the heat to transfer like you do with gas and electric stovetops, resulting in faster cooking times. They also allow for more precise temperature control, which can deliver better results.

Cool burners offer additional safety benefits. You don't have the indoor air quality issues associated with gas, and they won't ignite items like dishrags or paper left on the stovetop.

Induction cooktops are typically more expensive than similar gas or electric models. They also require the use of specific cookware. Stainless steel and cast-iron cookware are both compatible with induction cooktops. If you want to test your pots and pans to see if they are induction compatible, do the magnet test. If a magnet sticks to the bottom of the pan, it will work on an induction stove.

Cooking on an induction stovetop takes a little time to get used to, but many people have made the switch and enjoy the experience. If you are remodeling and have a gas range, consider running electrical to support an induction cooktop if you change your mind in the future. Setting up the power supply during a remodel can offer significant savings.

If you are considering making the switch, keep an eye on any incentives. A rebate for replacing your gas stove with an electric one may be available under the Inflation Reduction Act. 💡

stovetops, which is growing in popularity. If you're considering a new stovetop, here is a guide to help you through your options.

According to a study completed by the Electric Power Research Institute, 74% of the energy from an electric range is transferred to food, versus 40% on a gas range. Induction cooktops are the most efficient option at 90% energy transferred to food. Regardless of your stovetop choice, using the right size of pots and pans on the burners is important to avoid wasting energy.

Electric cooktops are a tried-and-true option for many homes, and they are typically the most affordable option. Glass top models offer a cleaner look than the traditional

Many home chefs prefer gas stovetops because the size of the flame is a visual clue that helps control the cooking temperature. Temperature adjustments are also faster and more precise than on electric stovetops. However, there are some concerns with safety and indoor air quality associated with gas stoves, because gas emissions can be harmful to your health. To reduce indoor air pollution, always use an exhaust fan when using a gas stovetop. Ideally, it should be vented to the exterior of the home.

Access is also a consideration. Natural gas is typically available in more populated areas, while rural customers may need a propane storage tank installed outside their homes to use a gas stove.



PHOTO COURTESY OF MARK GILLILAND

Electric stovetops are a tried-and-true option for many homes, with 74% of the energy transferred to the food.



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

ALL-NEW mobility technology

Introducing the world's lightest mobility scooter with anti-tip technology

The So Lite® Scooter is easy to transport and almost impossible to tip over.

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.

Years of work by innovative engineers have resulted in a scooter that's designed with seniors in mind. They created Electronic Stability Control (ESC) that makes it virtually impossible to tip over. If you try to turn too quickly, the scooter automatically slows down to prevent it from tipping over. The battery provides powerful energy at a fraction of the weight of most batteries. With its rugged yet lightweight aluminum frame, the So Lite® Scooter is the most portable scooter



*Do not attempt

Why a So Lite® Scooter is better:

- Latest "No-Tip" Technology
- Lightweight yet durable
- Folds and locks in seconds
- Easier to operate

ever—but it can hold up to 275 pounds—yet weighs only 40.8 pounds without the battery! What's more, it easily folds up for storage in a car seat, trunk or even on an airplane. It folds in seconds without tools and is safe and reliable. Best of all, it's designed with your safety in mind, from the newest technology and superior craftsmanship. Why spend another day letting your lack of mobility ruin your quality of life? Call now and find out how you can get a So Lite® Scooter of your very own.



journey **solite** Scooter

Call now Toll-Free
1-888-902-1197

Please mention code 603218 when ordering.



Scan with Phone Camera



enjoying life never gets old™

journey
HEALTH & LIFESTYLE™

*DO NOT ATTEMPT TO LIFT OVERHEAD. Lifting overhead poses risk of injury or death. © 2023 Journey Health & Lifestyle

85684

Energy-saving gadgets and gizmos

Tips to get the right smart technologies for your home

WITH THE HOLIDAYS APPROACHING, shoppers will soon be eyeing an abundance of devices and gadgets to give to loved ones ... or to buy for themselves.

technology you want. What are your habits when it comes to setting up and using the latest development? If you like to tinker, an energy app on your phone could be fun and help you save money. But as electronics get smarter, even non-tech-savvy people are finding them easier to use.

Get the most bang for your buck

The most frequently recommended energy-saving device is a smart thermostat. And that makes sense because the thermostat controls the heating and cooling, which account for the most energy consumption in your home. Smart thermostats can do things like program an energy schedule to

adjust the heating or cooling when you're sleeping or out of the house during the day. Additional smart thermostat features include detecting movement in a room to adjust energy use, learning your daily habits, responding to voice commands and tracking the weather.

Renters might even be able to convince a landlord to pay for an energy-saving smart thermostat.

If you have a heat pump, you could benefit by contacting your electric co-op before using a smart thermostat. Lowering the temperature too much when you're not home could result in switching to more expensive auxiliary heat to bring the house back to room temperature.

Other devices that can produce energy savings for minimal cost and

effort include smart light bulbs, outlets and charging stations.

Determine your energy-saving goals

A home energy monitor is one way to save on electricity, and the range of choices means you'll need to ask how much you're willing to pay and if it's worthwhile. One study found that spending about \$1,800 on a full-home, commercially installed energy monitor could save about 16% on electric bills and pay for itself in 10-15 years. Much less ambitious approaches involve downloading an app on your phone so you can keep track of your electricity use and even turn smart appliances on and off when you're away.

Do a simple energy checkup

Walk through your home with the intention of identifying everything that uses electricity. You'll likely notice a lot of functions that could be managed with smart devices. If your phone sits plugged in long after it's charged, smart power strips and smart outlets can stop the electricity use when the battery is at 100%.

Smart light bulbs can be controlled with an app on your phone, saving energy and giving your home that lived-in look when you're away. Ceiling fans can now adjust themselves for the best airflow depending on the temperature. Motion detectors can turn indoor lights on and off when you enter or leave a room, and even solar-powered outdoor lights can detect when you're approaching and light the way.

With just a little planning, you can make sure this gift-giving season is merry, bright ... and smart. 💡



When it comes to cool new technology, many consumers are turning to smart home devices that offer convenience as well as other benefits, including one often overlooked perk — energy savings. With so many options available, choosing the best tech for your needs can be overwhelming. Here are four tips to help you determine the right smart home technologies for your home.

Ask yourself how smart you want your home to be

Smart plugs, energy-use apps and home monitors are cool devices that can help save energy. But to make the most of them, it helps to understand how they work. Before investing your time and money, figure out how much



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

10% OFF PLUS FREE SHIPPING!

Get similar features to prescription hearing aids for 85% less!*

HOW DOES THAT SOUND?!

America's Best-Selling **NANO CIC** Rechargeable OTC Hearing Aids

Hear the most out of life with these affordable FDA-Registered OTC hearing aids packed with all the best features a \$2,000 pair has to offer:

- Rechargeable - no more batteries!
- Easy Push button control!
- FREE Portable (Re)charging case!
- Charge all night, wear all day!
- Customizable ear-tips / domes!
- No prescription or hearing test needed!



Comfortably sits in the ear canal being nearly invisible!

only
\$297

Plus, Order Right Now & Get:
FREE SHIPPING!
45-Day Money Back Guarantee!
Unlimited Lifetime 24/7 Support!



Over 5,900 5-Star Reviews!

★★★★★

These hearing aids are SO much better than the ones I paid thousands of dollars for. I Love them!
Katherine D.
- Online Customer

★★★★★

I'm a first time user of hearing devices and to be perfectly honest NANO nailed it. Great devices with outstanding customer service.
Ralph G.
- Online Customer

★★★★★

Great hearing aids; much better than my \$5000 pair that needs repair every year. Sound quality is GREAT and easy to use.
V.J. & M.A.
- Online Customer

Join over 400,000 Satisfied Customers!

Be one of the thousands of people we've helped live fuller, happier lives with the gift of glorious hearing. Don't wait, **order today!**

Call toll free

800-449-5311

Live agents standing by 24/7

Or visit nanohearingaids.com/AMIC

THIS AD ONLY! Use Promo Code **AMIC GET AN EXTRA**

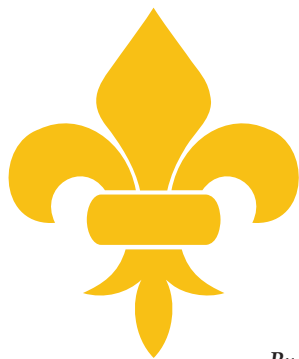
10% OFF

ANY HEARING AID! No Minimums, No Hassle!

* Strikeout prices and percent off prices compared to Audiologist recommended hearing aids including professional fitting fees and follow-up visits. It is by cutting out the middle man and selling direct to you, we are able to keep our prices low, so you can afford the hearing aids you need.



For all humankind™



Illinois' French connection

History comes alive at Fort de Chartres

By Jerry McDonald

ON A WARM SUMMER day at Fort de Chartres in Randolph County, two Native Americans clad in breechcloths and little else wandered along an avenue of tents. At a cookfire in front of one of those tents, a bearded woodsman wearing a mixture of linsey-woolsey and buckskin and sharpening a tomahawk discussed the prospects of the St. Louis Cardinals with a 20-something-year-old man in khaki shorts and a T-shirt emblazoned with the team's logo.

Elsewhere on the grounds, a vendor in her period frock, apron and mobcap spoke 18th-century-style to a potential customer trying on bonnets. Nearby, an animated conversation took place between a French soldier in a tricorn hat and long green waistcoat, a Highland Scot in a resplendent scarlet regimental coat and kilt, and a middle-aged man in a polo shirt and jeans.

The sound of drums and flutes filled the air as the French marines

of his most Christian Majesty Louis XV marched through the gatehouse and onto the fort's parade ground. This was the 53rd Annual Fort de Chartres Rendezvous, and it mixed the modern day with the 1700s.

This "Rendezvous," which occurs each June at the recreated French fort Fort de Chartres, is a gathering of reenactors, black powder aficionados, merchants and traders in 18th-century reproductions and memorabilia. It is an opportunity for visitors to sample living history, gain an understanding of mid-18th-century life in southern Illinois and learn the background of Fort de Chartres — a story of resilience and rebirth.

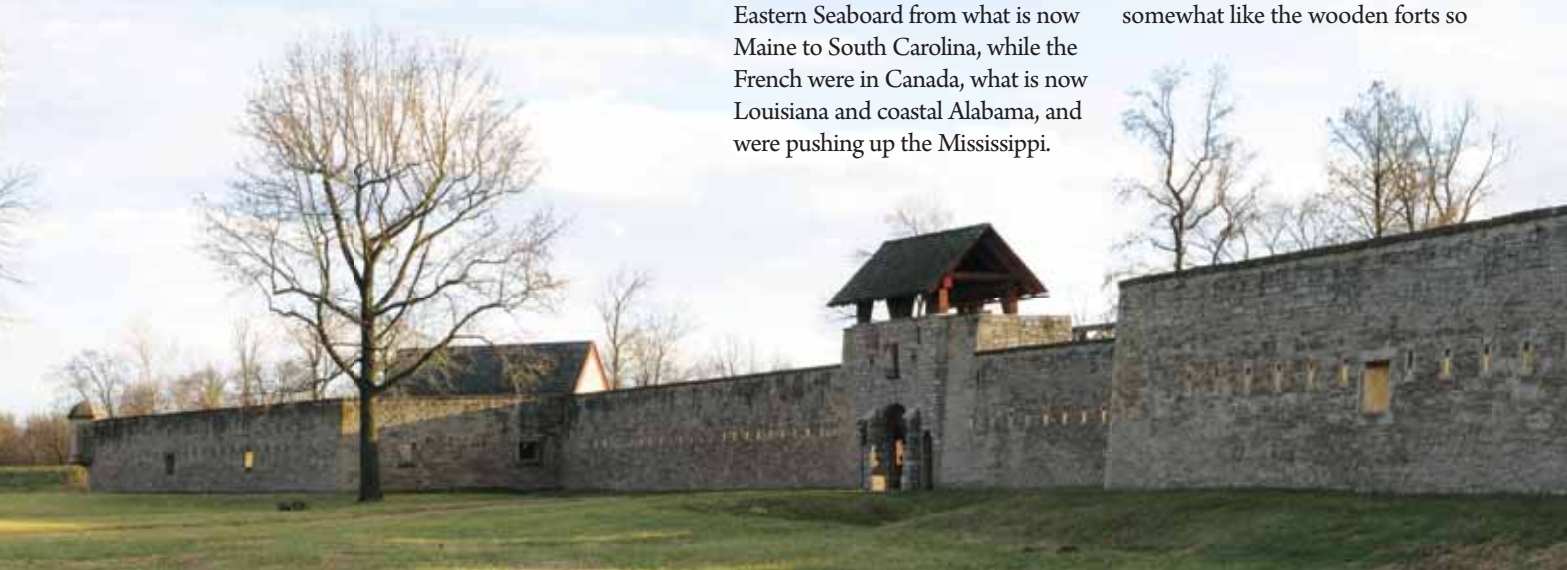
That story began with the long rivalry between France and England — a rivalry that was brought to North America in the 17th century and grew steadily until it culminated in the French and Indian War (1754-1763). By 1720, the English established settlements along the Eastern Seaboard from what is now Maine to South Carolina, while the French were in Canada, what is now Louisiana and coastal Alabama, and were pushing up the Mississippi.

It was a logical move that would create a riparian highway between their two colonial holdings to give them better access to the fur trade and the rich bottomlands of the Mississippi floodplain, and act as a roadblock to England's westward expansion.

This plain, encompassing about 175 square miles, begins near the mouth of the Kaskaskia River and stretches north to around Alton. It was, and is, excellent land for farming, and the French hoped to establish a strong and lasting presence there.

So, in 1720, they built a fort about 20 miles north of the mouth of the Kaskaskia River and named it Fort de Chartres in honor of the son of the Duke of Orleans, the regent of France during the minority years of Louis XV.

The newly established fort was not the one you see today, with its imposing gatehouse and stone walls. It was instead a wooden palisade with bastions at the corners, somewhat like the wooden forts so



familiar to us from countless movies and TV shows. In 1722, colonists from Canada established the nearby town of Prairie du Rocher.

By 1725, the periodic flooding of the Mississippi had severely impacted the fort, and the decision was made to rebuild some distance away yet remain on the floodplain. Again, due to its abundance and cost, wood was the material of choice. This incarnation of Fort de Chartres lasted for well over a decade before it, too, fell victim to the river. Around 1747, the garrison moved to Kaskaskia, and the site fell into further disrepair.

The administration debated between building a permanent fort at Kaskaskia and rebuilding Fort de Chartres, but nothing was decided until the political situation changed. In the 1750s, tensions between Britain and France ultimately led to the French and Indian War. The French decided to build new forts and strengthen existing ones from Louisiana Territory to Canada.

Once again, Fort de Chartres was rebuilt and relocated a short distance from the previous site. However, this time it was built of stone, which was quarried from the limestone bluffs only a few miles from the fort.

Construction began in 1753, and by the end of 1754, the structure was complete enough to allow occupation. According to the records, the new fort walls, 15 feet high and nearly 3 feet thick,

enclosed an area of approximately 4 acres. Inside the walls were barracks, administrative buildings, a powder magazine and a chapel. Ironically, this structure that was built to exacting standards to withstand even light artillery would never suffer attack or siege.

In 1763, the French and Indian War ended in the defeat of France

In late 1765, the British took formal possession of Fort de Chartres. In 1772, the garrison withdrew to Kaskaskia, and soon after the fort once again fell victim to the river, which swept away a bastion and a wall. Over the next several decades, periodic flooding, neglect and the fact that the locals saw it as a convenient place



and the loss of all territory in North America. The French ceded Louisiana and everything west of the Mississippi to the Spanish. The British acquired all of Canada and the Illinois Territory.

to gather stone for their own construction projects, all contributed to the dismemberment of the fort. By the early 1900s, the only remaining structure was the powder magazine, and it was in a sad state of repair.



SOURCE: KIRK-KITRELL (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0 DEED)



In 1913, the state of Illinois purchased the site, and in 1917, the powder magazine, thought to be the oldest existing European structure in Illinois, was reconstructed. In the 1920s, the original building and wall foundations were exposed. 1928 saw the construction of a combination office and museum on the foundation of the King's

Storehouse. In 1936, the "Guards House" was reconstructed, and the Land Gate, the iconic structure that symbolizes Fort de Chartres, was rebuilt on its original site.

In 1966, the site was placed on the National Register of Historic Places and recognized as a historic landmark. In 1989, portions of the wall were rebuilt on the original

foundation and additional structures were "ghosted" in wood. To further enhance visitors' understanding of fort life in the mid-18th century, additional features such as a bake oven, kitchen garden and a shed constructed in the 18th-century French poteaux-sur-sol (post and sill) method were added.

The shifting course of the Mississippi and the building of levees meant that flood damage was less of an issue, but there were threats of a different nature.

In 2015, the site manager of 45 years was retiring, the fort faced staffing issues, buildings and walls were deteriorating, and a looming state government budget impasse, which came to pass in 2016, meant deep cuts in the state's support for historic sites. Enter Jason and Jennifer Duensing.

"There was a group, Les Amis du Fort de Chartres (Friends of Fort de Chartres), they were originally established in the 1970s, but by 2015, they weren't active at all," Jason explains. "My wife and I saw all the issues facing the site, and we saw a need for a support organization to help care for the place,





help raise funds and coordinate special events. So, we approached the state.”

For Jason, Fort de Chartres’ significance goes beyond history and community. “My dad, Darrell Duensing, was the site manager from 1971 to 2015, so I grew up there. Lots of kids say their father built them a fort in the backyard, but my backyard was a fort,” he laughs.

With the blessing of the state, the Duensings renewed the group’s 501(c)(3) charter, revamped the group’s structure, started a membership drive and almost immediately confronted their first challenge.

In 2016, the state budget impasse became a reality. Les Amis stepped in and, working in concert with other fort support groups, raised enough money to fund that year’s special events. In 2020, they sought to raise \$100,000 for repairs to the fort and were able to reach their goal by September 2021.

Today, with Jennifer and Jason as president and vice president, respectively, Les Amis has approximately 300 members, many from other states whose visit to the fort inspired them to be a part of its preservation.

As membership has grown, so has the role of Les Amis. Jason says, “The state maintains responsibility for the day-to-day operation, but we provide costumed interpreters, manage the fundraisers for maintenance projects, and we manage all the special events, finding sponsors, coordinating with vendors and participants, and we work closely with the other support groups. In fact, many members of other groups are also members of Les Amis and vice versa, so putting on these events is a community affair.”

Although the annual rendezvous in the summer is the biggest event of the year, attracting 15,000 participants and visitors, there is also a winter rendezvous that draws 10,000 people. Other annual events include the Colonial Market Faire in April, an annual black powder shooting event, and an artillery safety school. Fort de Chartres is the Midwest site for said school that certifies reenactors who fire cannons. A recent addition to the growing list of events is a monthly demonstration, Art de Vivre (art of living), designed to expand understanding of day-to-day

18th-century life in the fort and the surrounding communities.

While Fort de Chartres is the most visible, it is by no means the only remnant of the French presence in southern Illinois. In 1974, a 22-square-mile section known as the French Colonial Historic District was enrolled on the National Register of Historic Places.

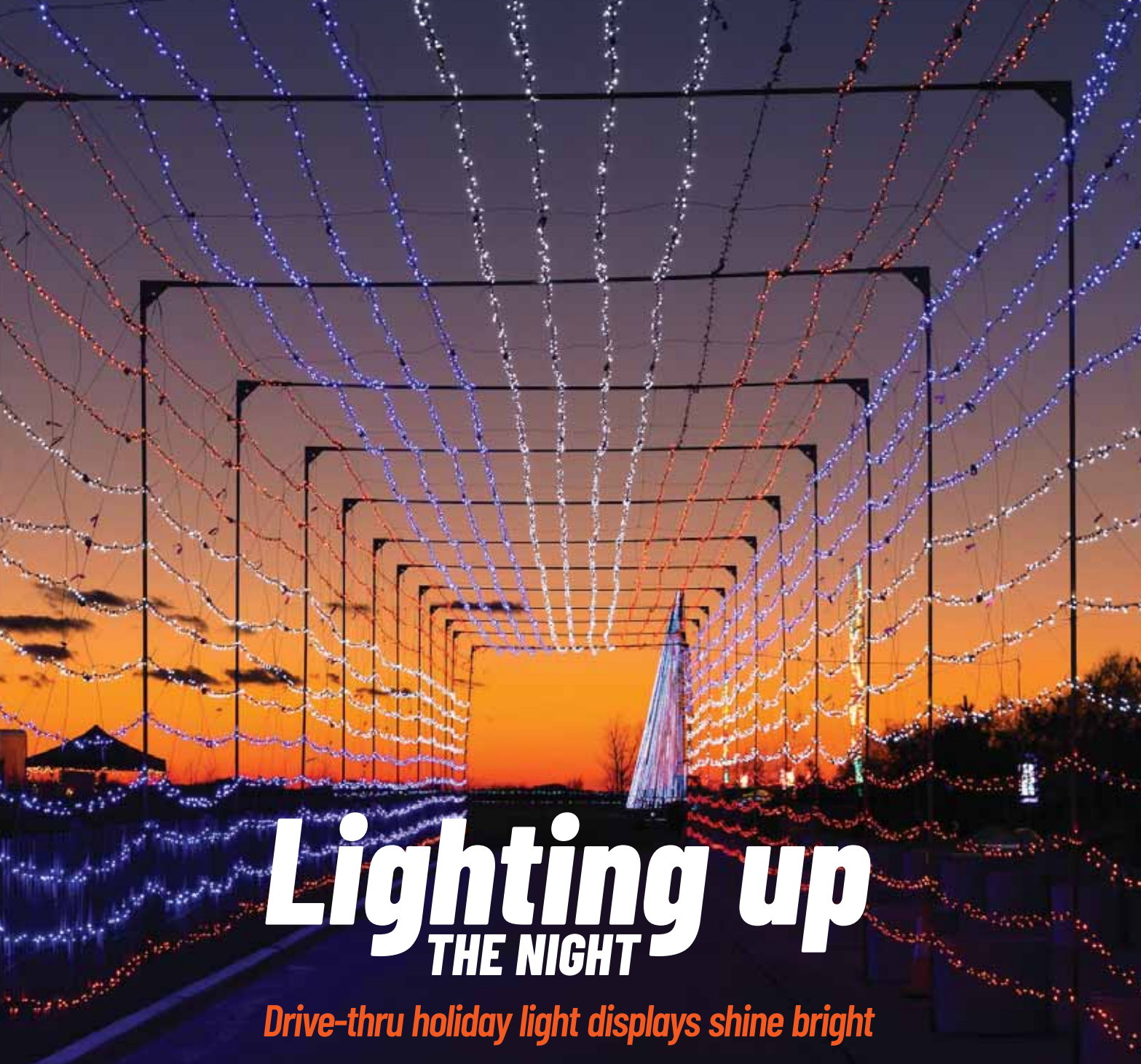
In addition to Fort de Chartres, the district includes the remains of Fort Kaskaskia, the Pierre Menard Home, other houses in Prairie du Rocher and several Native American archaeological sites.

Fort de Chartres and the other sites in the district not only have cultural and historical significance, they have an economic impact on the area, hosting about 55,000 visitors annually and adding around \$6 million to the area’s revenue stream.

More than 300 years after its founding, Fort de Chartres still stands, and thanks to groups such as Les Amis Du Fort de Chartres and the Fort de Chartres French Marines, it offers visitors not only a look at monuments of stone but also a glimpse of living history. 💡

LET’S GO

Fort de Chartres is located on Highway 155 in Randolph County. The grounds are open from sunrise to sunset, seven days a week; however, the buildings are open Wednesday through Sunday 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (subject to change depending on staff availability). All tours are self-guided. For more information about hours, special events and support organizations, visit the Fort de Chartres website at fortdechartres.us.



Lighting up THE NIGHT

Drive-thru holiday light displays shine bright

THE MAGIC OF THE holiday season comes to life in enchanting ways through drive-thru light displays. Across Illinois, communities, volunteers and local organizations work together to illuminate the night with a dazzling array of lights. Whether traveling near or far, these drive-thru light displays offer a fun way to celebrate with loved ones and capture the spirit of the season. While this is not a complete list of displays throughout Illinois, it will help get you started. So, hop in the car with your family and friends, tune the radio to your favorite holiday station, and enjoy the show.

Festival of Lights

A family tradition since 1989, this event is funded through donations and sponsorships. All holiday displays throughout the park are rented or built by community members and businesses.

Location: Sinnissippi Park,
1401 N. Second St., Rockford

Dates: Nov. 24-Dec. 31, 2023

Hours: Thu-Sun: 5-11 p.m., Dec. 18-23: 5-11 p.m.,
Dec. 24-25: 24 hours, Dec. 26-30: 5-11 p.m.,
and Dec. 31: 5 p.m. to midnight

Website: 4thandlights.com

Cost: Donations appreciated

Celebration of Lights

For the past 10 years, the city of La Salle has offered one of the largest and brightest ways to celebrate the holidays in north central Illinois.

Location: La Salle Rotary Park,
2845 E. 5th Road, La Salle
Dates: Nov. 10, 2023-Jan. 1, 2024
Hours: Sun-Thu: 5-9 p.m. and Fri-Sat: 5-10 p.m.
Website: facebook.com/LaSalleLights
Cost: Donations appreciated

Folepi's Winter Wonderland

A central Illinois staple for more than 30 years, Folepi's Winter Wonderland takes about 30 minutes to drive through. However, wait times can be long. It is recommended to go during the week rather than on weekends.

Location: East Peoria Festival of Lights,
123 Par 3 Lane, East Peoria
Dates: Nov. 24, 2023-Jan. 1, 2024
Hours: Sun-Thu: 5-9 p.m., Fri-Sat: 5-11 p.m.
and nightly Dec. 24-Jan. 1: 5-9 p.m.
Website: cityofeastpeoria.com/157/
Folepis-Winter-Wonderland
Cost: \$10 per vehicle, \$30 per small bus,
\$150 per full-sized bus

Light Up McFerren Park

Enjoy more than 25 displays along the mile loop throughout McFerren Park.

Location: McFerren Park, Hoopston
Dates: Nov. 25, 2023-Jan. 2, 2024
Hours: Dusk to 11 p.m. daily
Website: facebook.com/LightUpMcFerrenPark
Cost: Donations appreciated

Light Up the Park

More than 100,000 lights, sculptures and arches are on display as drivers weave through the mile-long route. Be sure to wave to Santa as you exit the park.

Location: Chatham Community Park,
698 S. Park Ave., Chatham
Dates: Nov. 24-Dec. 25, 2023
Hours: Thu-Sun: 6-9 p.m.
Cost: \$5 donation per car suggested

Shelbyville Festival of Lights

Take a journey through Shelbyville's Forest Park for the community's Festival of Lights. The local tradition includes many lighted display scenes and arches created and set up by local volunteers.

Location: Forest Park, E. North 9th St.,
Shelbyville
Dates: Nov. 17-Dec. 31, 2023
Hours: Sun-Thu: 5-9 p.m. and Fri-Sat: 5-10 p.m.
Website: facebook.com/
ShelbyvilleFestivalofLightsIllinois
Cost: Donations appreciated

Mattoon Lightworks

Drive through Mattoon's Peterson Park to see a variety of light displays. A one-night-only walk-thru will be held Nov. 16.

Location: Peterson Park,
500 Broadway Ave., Mattoon
Dates: Nov. 17-Dec. 26, 2023
Hours: 5-9 p.m. nightly
Website: facebook.com/mattoonlightworks
Cost: Donations appreciated

Wonderland in Lights

Effingham's Community Park is transformed each year into a holiday light spectacle with whimsical scenes. Santa will be there to greet cars and hand out toys every Saturday through Dec. 23.

Location: Community Park, 607 E. Temple Ave.,
Effingham
Dates: Nov. 23, 2023-Jan. 1, 2024
Hours: Sun-Thu: 5-9 p.m. and Fri-Sat: 5-10 p.m.
Website: visiteffinghamil.com
Cost: Donations appreciated

Christmas Wonderland

Rock Spring Park is transformed every year with more than 4 million lights. A walkthrough night will be held Nov. 27.

Location: Rock Spring Park,
2100 College Ave., Alton
Dates: Nov. 24-Dec. 27, 2023
Hours: Mon-Fri: 6-9 p.m. and Sat-Sun: 5-9 p.m.
Website: riversandrout.com/events/
christmas-wonderland-2023
Cost: \$7 donation per car suggested

Christmas Lights Wonderland

Drive or walk through a unique collection of light boxes, Christmas displays, lights and holiday scenes. Visitors are treated to something new every year, and Santa visits every Friday and Saturday.

Location: American Farm Heritage Museum,
1395 Museum Ave., Greenville
Dates: Nov. 24-Dec. 31, 2023
Hours: 5-9 p.m. nightly
Website: americanfarmheritagemuseum.com/
christmas-display.html
Cost: Donations appreciated

Way of Lights

This festive event has been a family tradition since 1970. Located at the National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows, the display focuses on the birth of Jesus.

Location: National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows,
442 S. Demazenod Drive, Belleville
Dates: Nov. 17-Dec. 31, 2023
Hours: 5-9 p.m. nightly
Website: snows.org/wayoflights
Cost: Donations appreciated

Christmas in Carlyle

City Park is filled with thousands of lights, dancing trees, animated features and more throughout the holiday season.

Location: Carlyle City Park, 1096 Lake Road, Carlyle
Dates: Nov. 24, 2023-Jan. 7, 2024
Hours: Dusk to 9 p.m. nightly
Website: carlylelake.com/christmas-lights
Cost: Donations appreciated

Coulterville Holiday Light Display

The 21st annual event starts at City Park and travels 18 blocks on 7th, King and Palm streets. More than 1 million lights will be on display along with hundreds of decorated trees and scenes.

Location: Downtown Coulterville,
102 W. Grant St., Coulterville
Dates: Dec. 2-27, 2023
Hours: Dusk to 9 p.m. nightly
Website: Coulterville Holiday Light Display
on Facebook
Cost: free

Christmas Lights of Hope


While enjoying the holiday displays, visitors are also giving back to the community. Through Carmi Christmas Elves Inc., Christmas Lights of Hope raises funds to support those in need.

Location: White County Fairgrounds, Carmi
Dates: Nov. 24-Dec. 24, 2023
Hours: Fri-Sat: 6-9 p.m., Sun: 6-8 p.m.,
week of Dec. 18: 6-8 p.m. and Dec. 23-24: 6-9 p.m.
Website: Christmas Lights of Hope-Carmi, IL
on Facebook
Cost: Donations appreciated

Holiday Lights Fair

The 24th annual event includes 3 miles of lighted displays. The Exhibition Hall will be open Friday-Sunday the first three weekends of December with food, craft and merchandise vendors.

Location: Du Quoin State Fairgrounds,
655 Executive Drive, Du Quoin
Dates: Nov. 23-Dec. 30, 2023
Hours: 5-9 p.m. nightly
Website: duquointourism.org
Cost: \$10 per car Monday-Thursday and \$20 per car
Friday-Sunday

Please note that this list doesn't include every drive-thru light display in Illinois. There are many in the Chicago area, and several others didn't have details available at the time of publication. For updated information and additional listings, go to icl.coop/lighting-up-the-night/. 



Thanksgiving cacti (above) have pointed serrations on the stem segments, while Christmas cacti (below) have rounded edges.

Holiday cacti bloom faithfully for the season

THE HOLIDAY SEASON COMES with tasty food, festive decorations and precious time spent with those dear to us. It also means an array of holiday plants in your home or office, like poinsettias, amaryllis and holly. Quickly check holiday decor off your to-do list with a dependable and unique plant — the holiday cactus. With an element of flair, these faithful blooming plants will always unveil their timely gift of blooms for the holiday season.

Notable characteristics of the holiday cactus include flattened stem segments. Often referred to as leaves, these plant parts are known as phylloclades. Blooms on this exotic plant offer several weeks of dazzling color in strong single or blended hues of pink, white, red and purple, depending on the hybrid or cultivar.

How do you tell the difference between a Thanksgiving and a Christmas cactus? Examine the flattened stem segment edges to distinguish which is which. They are similarly shaped but display distinct characteristics. Thanksgiving cacti have pointed serrations, while Christmas cacti have slightly rounded edges.

This Brazilian plant, an epiphyte that grows in rainforest tree branches with no attachment to the ground, resources the air and rain for nutrients and moisture. With proper care, epiphytes can be long-living houseplants in all parts of the world, including your home.

A good growing environment includes high humidity and bright filtered light when growing indoors. Waterlogged soils will cause the roots to rot; water the cacti well when the soil is dry to the touch. Slightly pot-bound roots will encourage more blooms on the plant, so only repot to a bigger container every three years during the spring.

Holiday cacti are short-day plants, requiring an increased amount of natural darkness and cool temperatures to bloom. Six weeks of 13 hours or more of darkness each night is required for the flower buds to develop. Any indoor or outdoor lights, even for a short amount of time, can disrupt this process and prevent flower development. Cool temperatures are also needed for the buds to develop; keep plants in a brightly lit space with a temperature of 60-68 degrees Fahrenheit for maximum flower development.

Following the holiday season, share starts of the stunning plant with envious family or friends. It is easily propagated in late spring by removing a three-section part of the stem that is allowed to dry for one day, to callous and prevent rotting. Plant in a small pot, 1-inch deep in potting soil to root. Roots should develop in three to four weeks. Spread joy and the tradition of holiday cacti by gifting your epiphyte in a decorative planter next holiday season.

Often passed down from generation to generation, you may have childhood memories of a beloved friend or family member growing this fascinating plant. As the holiday season approaches, skip the stress of selecting holiday decor and cherish this time-honored centerpiece instead — a holiday jewel among houseplants. 💡



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

Better than cannabis, better than CBD

New Joint-Supporting “Miracle Oil” Capsule Delivers Hip, Knee, and Shoulder Comfort in Just Days

Thousands of Americans are rediscovering normal freedom of movement thanks to a “miracle oil” capsule that’s outperforming hemp in promoting joint comfort.

According to the official figures from the CDC, more than 58 million Americans are living with joint discomfort. This epidemic has led to a search for alternative approaches – as many sufferers seek relief without the harmful side effects of conventional “solutions.”

Anti-aging specialist Dr. Al Sears is leading the way with a new formula he calls “the most significant breakthrough I’ve ever found for easing joint discomfort.”

The capsule is based on a “miracle oil” historically treasured for its joint health-supporting properties. Marco Polo prized it as he blazed the Silk Road. And to this day, Ayurvedic practitioners rely on it to promote optimal joint health.

Now, with a modern twist backed by science, Dr. Sears is making this natural solution for joint health available to the public.

Your Body’s Hidden “Soothing System”

Joint health research changed forever with the discovery of the endocannabinoid system (ECS) in 1992. Up until that point, research on cannabinoids focused on psychoactive effects. Now, scientists were looking at a new way to fight occasional aches and pains.

Your ECS serves as a central “signaling system” that tells your body how to react to things you do every day. It controls several critical bodily functions such as learning and memory, sleep, healthy immune responses – and your response to discomfort.

A recent study revealed a direct link between the ECS and creaky, sore joints. Researchers at the University of Edinburgh studied the aging of mice with endocannabinoid deficiencies versus “normal” mice.

As they aged, the deficient mice had a whopping 60% more joint degeneration than the mice with a healthy ECS.

As the name suggests, the ECS responds to cannabis. At the time it was discovered, scientists assumed that was the best way to support it. But thanks to Dr. Sears’ all-natural solution, you can power up your ECS without marijuana.

“Calling it the ‘endocannabinoid system’ was a misnomer from the very beginning,” Dr. Sears explained. “Modern research reveals that you don’t need cannabis to activate this incredible system. You don’t need to ‘get high’ to get joint relief.”

A scholarly review found that plants and herbs that don’t produce mind-altering effects can support the ECS and help it maintain its healthy functions.



The active ingredient in Mobilify soothes aching joints in as little as 5 days

This includes common foodstuffs, such as kava, chocolate, black pepper, and most significantly – the star ingredient to Dr. Sears’ own **Mobilify** formula - frankincense.

Modern scientists say this natural ingredient meets “cannabinoid tetrad” – the signs used to determine if something supports the ECS. While it doesn’t produce a “high” like cannabis does, it binds to the same receptors to support a healthy response to discomfort.

All the Benefits of CBD – Without Cannabis

Indian frankincense, the chief ingredient in **Mobilify**, has been shown to provide all the benefits of cannabis without any feelings of sluggishness or sleepiness.

And studies show that users don’t have to wait long for the comfort they’re looking for.

In a study published in the International Journal of Medical Sciences, 60 patients with stiff knees took 100 mg of Indian frankincense or a placebo daily for 30 days. Remarkably, Indian frankincense “significantly” supported healthy joint function and relieved discomfort in as little as five days.

Additional research linked regular use to lasting comfort.

In another study, 48 participants were given an extract made from frankincense for 120-days. When the results came in, researchers determined the extract strongly supported joint comfort – especially in the knees.

These results were all achieved without marijuana. Research continues to back up the idea that you can support smooth, strong, and healthy joints naturally – without tiredness or sluggishness.

Get Moving Again with Mobilify

Mobilify has already helped thousands of Americans stay on their feet and breeze through their daily activities with ease.

One user even reported getting results the

same day it was used.

“**Mobilify** really helps with soreness, stiffness, and mild temporary discomfort,” Joni D. said.

Larry M, another user, compared taking **Mobilify** to living a completely new life.

“After a week and a half of taking **Mobilify**, the discomfort, stiffness, and minor aches went away...it’s almost like being reborn,” he said.

Dennis H. said it helped him get back to his favorite hobby.

“I can attest to **Mobilify** easing discomfort to enable me to pursue my golfing days. Definitely one pill that works for me out of the many I have tried,” he said.

How to Get Mobilify

Right now, the only way to get this powerful, unique Mobilify formula that clobbers creaking joints without clobbering you is directly from Dr. Sears. It is not available in stores.

To secure your bottle of this breakthrough natural joint discomfort reliever, buyers should call with Sears Health Hotline at **1-800-329-8515**. “The Hotline allows us to ship the product directly to customers.”

Dr. Sears believes in this product so much, he offers a 100% money-back guarantee on every order. “Just send me back the bottle and any unused product within 90 days, and I’ll send you your money back,” said Dr. Sears.

The Hotline will be taking orders for the next 48 hours. After that, the phone number may be shut down to allow them to restock. Call **1-800-329-8515** to secure your limited supply of **Mobilify**. If you are not able to get through due to extremely high call volume, please try again! Call NOW to qualify for a significant discount on this limited time offer. To take advantage of this exclusive offer use Promo Code: **ICLMB1123** when you call.



Just Hamburgers manager Jon Frichtl



Hamburger and fries

More than just burgers

By Kayla Adkins

NESTLED IN THE HEART of Paxton is a 50-plus-year-old tradition — Just Hamburgers. Since 1971, this unassuming eatery has been flipping burgers for locals and travelers alike and has maintained its status as a favorite for generations of area residents.

“Smash burgers and fries, that’s what it is,” says Jon Frichtl, the restaurant’s manager, describing the establishment. “This has been an institution around here, but even people come in who have never been here before and always enjoy it.”

“Smash burgers and fries, that’s what it is. This has been an institution around here.”

Ironically, before opening as a hamburger joint, it was a meat locker. “My Dad [who grew up in Paxton] remembers his family having a meat locker here when he was a kid,” says Frichtl, whose family farm is located on Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative (EIEC) lines. “There was a little cooler locker, and they would store their meat in it.”

Skip Parcel, the original owner, is featured on the logo. His classic recipes are still used today, though the restaurant has changed hands a few times. “That was probably the hardest, making sure everything tasted the same,” Frichtl explains. “If it didn’t taste the same, the people who have been eating here their entire lives let you know about it.”

Parcel’s original slogan was, “Simple ingredients prepared with unusual skill.” According to Frichtl, part of that unusual skill includes cutting and grinding all their own meat. He jokes that since prepackaged foods weren’t readily available in the 1970s, they weren’t going to buck tradition and start buying it now. He says the locally sourced, high-quality beef is what gives the burgers that special flavor that keeps customers coming back.

“We just want to do it the way they [the previous owners] always did it ... the food should always be the same,” Frichtl says.

As the restaurant name suggests, burgers are the No. 1 item on the menu. “The double cheeseburger with everything is the [most] ordered item,” says Frichtl. However, patrons have other choices, including roast beef, turkey and hot ham sandwiches, hot dogs, chili, fries, coleslaw, baked beans and potato salad.

Just Hamburgers also has a variety of sauces and toppings, like barbecue sauce, chili and barbecue pork, giving customers the option to mix up their burger order. Drink options include Pepsi products, tea, lemonade and milkshakes — vanilla, chocolate and strawberry. Seasonal flavors are also served, such as mint, peach, orange, banana, blueberry and eggnog.

Daily specials feature breaded tenderloin, shrimp, steak sandwiches and chicken sandwiches, and there is always fish on Fridays. Diners can check ahead on the establishment's Facebook page (facebook.com/justhamburgersoriginal).

The restaurant only offers carryout. There is no inside dining, but there are picnic tables outdoors where people can eat when the weather is nice. This does not seem to be a problem for customers, who are used to the grab-and-go style.

"During the week, we have a fairly regular lunch crowd," Frichtl says, adding that they often serve 100-140 customers during the lunch hours. "We see a lot of the same people ... some of them three or four times a week." Just Hamburgers is also a popular spot for construction and other work crews, including lineworkers from EIEC.

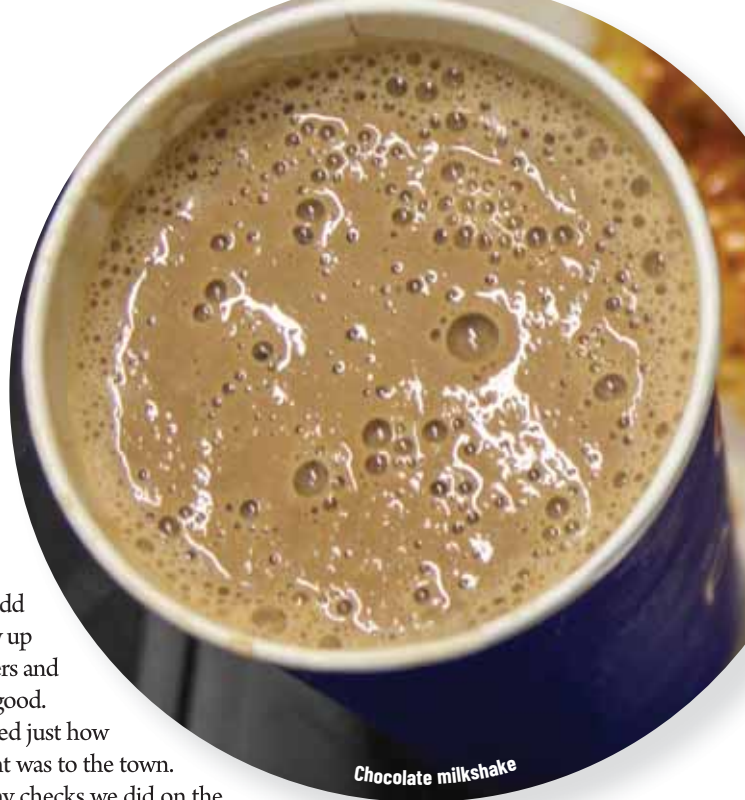
The goal throughout its history has been to stick to tradition. However, a few modern updates have been made over the years, including the addition of credit card and digital ways to pay, as well as updating the colors on the building and

signs to give the place a more modern look.

Although the retirement of the previous owner meant the closing of Just Hamburgers in April 2022, this Paxton staple was not closed for long. By August of the same year, it reopened under the new ownership of Brendan Healey and Todd Thorstenson. Both grew up eating at Just Hamburgers and couldn't see it close for good.

The reopening proved just how important the restaurant was to the town. "I don't know how many checks we did on the grand opening, but it was probably 180," Frichtl recalls. Fans of Just Hamburgers can sport their love of the restaurant with T-shirts and hats, available for purchase at the front counter.

Frichtl says it's always nice to hear stories from people who remember coming in with their grandparents or other family members. Even outside the restaurant, he gets recognized on occasion. "Aren't you the Just Hamburgers guy?" people will ask ... and they always have something good to say," Frichtl says with a smile. 💡



LET'S EAT!

Just Hamburgers

214 E. Ottawa Road, Paxton, IL

217-379-4222

justhamburgers.net

facebook.com/justhamburgersoriginal

HOURS

Mon-Fri: 11 a.m.-1:30 p.m. and 4-7 p.m.

Sat: 11 a.m.-1:30 p.m. and 4-6:30 p.m.



Sugar-free desserts

ACCORDING TO THE ILLINOIS Department of Public Health, 1.3 million adults in Illinois have diabetes, but 341,000 of them don't know it. November is Diabetes Awareness Month, designated to bring attention to the chronic health condition. Whether you have diabetes or if you're looking to reduce the amount of sugar in your diet, it is nice to have a sweet treat every once in a while. Here are some sugar-free dessert recipes to try. 💡

WE NEED RECIPES!

Upcoming recipes

Pizza toppings

Citrus

Dinner for two

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.



COCONUT CREAM PIE IN A SUGAR-FREE SHORTBREAD CRUST

Coconut Cream Pie

Servings: 6

- 1 cup unsweetened shredded coconut
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 8 ounces sour cream
- 1/2 cup coconut milk
- 2 small boxes of sugar-free instant vanilla pudding
- 1/2 teaspoon coconut extract
- 8 ounces sugar-free whipped topping
- 1 sugar-free crust (see recipe on page 31)

Preheat oven to 350 F. Spread coconut on a sheet pan and bake 8 minutes. Stir every 2-3 minutes to toast evenly. Set aside to cool. In a large bowl, whisk together lemon juice and sour cream. Whisk in coconut milk, dry pudding mix and coconut extract until no dry mix remains. Lightly fold in whipped topping and 2/3 of toasted coconut until well blended. Pour into pie crust, top with remaining toasted coconut and refrigerate before serving. Nutrition information (excluding crust): 461 calories; 38.3g fat; 137mg salt; 25.5g carbohydrates; 4.4g protein.

Pumpkin Mousse Pie

Submitted by *Jean McFadden*,
Coles-Moultrie Electric Cooperative

Servings: 6

- 1/2 cup milk
- 2 tablespoons pumpkin pie spice
- 1 cup canned pumpkin
- 1 box sugar-free instant vanilla pudding
- 8 ounces sugar-free whipped topping, divided
- 1 sugar-free crust (see recipe on page 31)

Whisk together milk and spice. Add pumpkin and whisk 1-1/2 minutes. Add pudding mix and blend well. Add half of the whipped topping and blend well. Pour into the pie crust and spread carefully. Cover with the rest of the whipped topping. Cover and chill. Nutrition information (excluding crust): 119 calories; 5g fat; 63mg salt; 19.2g carbohydrates; 1.2g protein.



KETO RED, WHITE AND BLUE CHEESECAKE DESSERT

Sugar-Free Shortbread Crust

Adapted from crazyforcrust.com
Makes: one 9-inch pie shell

- 8 ounces sugar-free shortbread cookies
- 1 tablespoon granulated sugar alternative (Swerve, Truvia, Splenda, etc.)
- 6 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted

Preheat oven to 350 F. Place cookies in food processor or a large resealable zipper storage bag. Process or crush with a rolling pin until cookies are fine crumbs. In a large bowl, stir together cookie crumbs, sugar alternative and butter until it looks like wet sand. Press into a 9-inch pie pan. Bake for 5-8 minutes. Cool before filling. Nutrition information: 112 calories; 12.2g fat; 86mg salt; 3.8g carbohydrates; 0.1g protein.

Keto Red, White and Blue Cheesecake Dessert

Submitted by Susan Livvix, EnerStar Electric Cooperative
Servings: 6-8

- 8 ounces cream cheese
- 1-1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1/3 cup Swerve confectioners sugar
- 1 cup strawberries, chopped
- 1 cup heavy whipping cream
- 1 cup blueberries

Mix cream cheese and sugar until light. Add whipping cream and vanilla. Mix until creamy. Carefully fold in fresh berries. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator until ready to serve. Nutrition information: 193 calories; 17.8g fat; 103mg salt; 17.5g carbohydrates; 3.1g protein.



CHOCOLATE CUPCAKES

Chocolate Cupcakes

Submitted by Donald G. Brand, Egyptian Electric Cooperative Association
Servings: 6-8

- 1 cup Splenda
- 1/4 cup milk
- 1 cup cake flour
- 1/4 cup butter, melted
- 1/4 cup cocoa powder
- 1/4 cup vegetable oil
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 egg
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract

Preheat oven to 350 F. Blend dry ingredients (first five) in one bowl. Blend liquid ingredients (last five) in a second bowl. Combine the liquid mixture with the dry. Thin with milk, if needed. Pour into paper-lined muffin tins. Bake 18-20 minutes until done. Cool and top with sugar-free frosting or melted sugar-free chocolate. Nutrition information: 351 calories; 15.8g fat; 143mg salt; 43.6g carbohydrates; 3.6g protein.

Cranberry-Orange Ice Cream

Submitted by Julie Douglas, Shelby Electric Cooperative
Servings: 12

- 1 bag whole cranberries
- 1 orange, zest and juice
- 3 tablespoons Truvia sweetener
- 14 ounces heavy whipping cream
- 1 cup water
- 7 ounces fat-free, sugar-free condensed milk
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon

In a small saucepan, place cranberries, Truvia, water, cinnamon, 1-1/2 teaspoons orange zest and juice from half the orange. Bring to a boil. Berries will pop during the process. Continue to cook, stirring frequently until the sauce thickens. With a hand beater or potato masher, break up most of the berries. Let cool completely. In a separate bowl, place heavy cream and use a hand mixer to whip. Add condensed milk and fold in with a rubber spatula or wooden spoon (do not use metal). Fold in half the cranberry mixture and save the rest for topping. Put in an 8x8-inch glass pan. Cover and freeze 2-4 hours. Serve and top with extra berries. **Editor's note:** Unsweetened condensed milk can be difficult to find. Food.com's recipe is simple, easy and works great with this recipe. Mix 1/2 cup cold water with 1-1/3 cups powdered milk until dissolved. Microwave for 1 minute and stir in 3/4 cup sugar alternative and 1 teaspoon vanilla extract. Cool before using. Nutrition information: 256 calories; 12.3g fat; 90mg salt; 29.5g carbohydrates; 7.5g protein.



CRANBERRY-ORANGE ICE CREAM



DIY vs. professional

Who is best for the job?

HOMEOWNERS LOOKING AT HOME improvement projects have lots of decisions to make, not the least of which is whether to hire the job out or do it themselves. With pros and cons on both sides, the choice is based upon experience, comfort level and budget.

“What the decision between DIY or a professional comes down to is an individual’s comfort level and ultimately what they want to accomplish,” says Andrew Brindley of HE Homes in Indianapolis. He tells people looking to tackle a project on their own to plan on making a mistake at least once if they’ve never done that particular job before.

“It comes down to the person,” explains Carl Kuchar of Woodchukar Carpentry of Payette, Idaho. “There are some jobs that are simple for people who have done it before but are not intuitive to someone who has only watched online videos.”

Brindley suggests novice DIYers tackle jobs where lessons can be

garnered easily online and mistakes may only be cosmetic. “With some projects, it is easy to look up some tutorials, read articles and know what you are doing,” he explains. “But when it comes to actual mechanical trades, structural plumbing, electrical and things like that, those are components of a home that, if they are not done correctly, can either create a safety issue or cause a whole bunch of damage.”

Kuchar agrees. “I understand that someone may not be able to afford a contractor, but they definitely need to do their homework and make sure they understand how to do it,” he says.

Brindley gives the example of a plumbing leak. “If you accidentally cut the wrong line, you could have up to 5,000 gallons of water flowing through your home every minute. . . . While it may cost a little bit more to use a professional

rather than making it a DIY project, you have to look at the cost of the whole project.”

Another factor to consider is the necessary equipment. “If a homeowner doesn’t have a lot of tools or the right ones for the job, hiring a contractor is probably going to be cheaper,” Kuchar says, explaining that a contractor may show up with \$40,000 worth of tools, including ones designed specifically for the job. Using the wrong tools or even unfamiliar tools may end up costing both time and money.



On the other hand, experts say there are a lot of things homeowners can do themselves, like painting, changing faucets and simple repairs, but they say to take your time. The old adage “measure twice to cut once” still holds true. If, on the other hand, you do choose to hire the job out, it is a good idea to check references and get referrals. 💡



Les O'Dell is a professional journalist and a frequent contributor to *Illinois Country Living* magazine, *Life and Style* in Southern Illinois, *Southern Business Journal* and other publications.

Designed to Last. *Generations.*

Most companies advertising post-frame buildings are selling you materials produced somewhere else, by someone else. We manufacture our custom-designed buildings right here in Illinois. That way we control quality, cost, and time of delivery for you.



ManseaMetal.com
(217) 864-5835



Illinois Country Living

Connect with us



Insulation. 4x8 sheets, foil-backed foam. All factory seconds. www.nichols5.com. Contact Ken Nichols, 800-424-1256.



Robert Halleran

Timber Buyer all Species
Logging
Timber Consulting
I buy Storm damaged timber
618-528-8088 DeSoto, Illinois



DIMENSION BUILDINGS

Best Buildings at the Best Price

For a Complete 30x50 Deluxe Pole Barn Package **only \$3,650** not building pictured

CALL (618) 997-9568
www.dimensionbldgs.com
All Sizes Available Marion, IL

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

To advertise in
Illinois Country Living
email info@icl.coop

1	H	A	2	R	V	3	E	S	4	T	5	F	6	A	S	7	T				
A	O	X	U	I	R	U															
8	Y	E	A	R		9	D	R	E	S	S	I	N	G							
R	S					10	B	K	H	S	G										
11	I	S	T			12	A	M	E	N		13	G	E	N	E					
D						K	Y					14	H				D				
15	E	A	G	16	L	E						17	S	M	O	R	18	E	S		
				A								19	L				T	A			
20	P	U	21	M	P	22	K	I	N			23	C	O	R	24	N	25			
U		A				26	A	M				27	D	O	N		28	O	29	R	
30	P	I	C	K	L	E	31	S				32	C	A	33	N	D	Y			
P						Y						E	P	O	N	E					
34	Y	E	S									35	P	A	R	A	D	E	S		



ENERGIZED

— GRAPHICS —

YOUR SOURCE FOR AFFORDABLE PRINT
AND WEB DESIGN.

energizedgraphics.com



**PROMOTIONAL
MATERIALS NOW
AVAILABLE**

Have a field day

1. **DARRIN FIZER**
Monroe County Electric Cooperative
2. **SANDY COOPER**
Coles-Moultrie Electric Cooperative
3. **KIM DONNELL-RODERICK**
Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative
4. **ROSARIO HISER**
Coles-Moultrie Electric Cooperative
5. **PATRICIA KNOP**
Egyptian Electric Cooperative Association
6. **BARB HORSCH**
Corn Belt Energy Corporation

UPCOMING THEMES

January - Animals in snow

February - Pink

March - Sports

April - Water



1



2



3



4



5



6

SUBMIT A PHOTO

Online: icl.coop/snapshots

Email: cbradford@aicoc.coop

Rules: Include high-quality digital files. When submitting, include details about the photo, artist's name and the co-op name.

Deadlines: Submissions are due 30 days before the publication month.

Terms of use: By submitting any photos to Snapshots, whether online or email, you agree to grant Illinois Country Living and icl.coop royalty-free, perpetual and nonexclusive rights to use, display, edit, publish or archive it in whole or in part online or in print. You further warrant that you have all legal, moral and other rights that may be necessary to grant the license specified above.

Visit icl.coop/snapshots for full terms and conditions.

OVER
1.5 MILLION
SOLD!

RECHARGEABLE In-Your-Ear Hearing Aid



BUY 1 GET 1
FREE

REG. \$299.98

ONLY
\$149⁹⁹

Each When You Buy a Pair

PLUS FREE SHIPPING
Limited Time Only!

How can a rechargeable hearing aid that fits inside your ear and costs only \$149⁹⁹ be every bit as good as one that sells for \$2,400 or more?

The answer: Although tremendous strides have been made in Hearing Aid Technology, those cost reductions have not been passed on to you. Until now...

The MDHearing™ NEO uses the same kind of technology incorporated into hearing aids that cost thousands more at a small fraction of the price. Satisfied MDHearing customers agree: High-quality, digital, FDA-registered rechargeable hearing aids don't have to cost a fortune. **NEO** is a medical-grade, digital, rechargeable hearing aid offering sophistication and high performance; and works right out of the box with no time consuming "adjustment" appointments. You can contact a licensed hearing specialist conveniently online or by phone — even after your purchase at no cost. No other company provides such extensive support. Now that you know...why pay more?

PLUS... It fits inside your ear.

CHARGE AT NIGHT **AND GO** ALL DAY



Actual size



Charging case

Our smallest hearing aid ever!

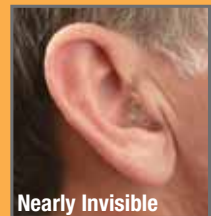
45-DAY RISK-FREE TRIAL!

If you are not completely satisfied with your hearing aids, return them within 45 days for a FULL REFUND!

For the Lowest Price Call

1-800-748-5145

www.TryMDNeo.com



Nearly Invisible

Use Code **NB68**
and get **FREE** Shipping



MDHearing™

DOCTOR DESIGNED | AUDIOLOGIST TESTED | FDA REGISTERED

Proudly designed in America and supported by US audiologists



TOP 7% NATIONALLY
Orthopedics

Sarah Bush Lincoln
Bonutti Clinic



Sarah Bush Lincoln Orthopedics was recognized by Women's Choice Awards Best 100 Hospitals.

The award is based on Sarah Bush Lincoln's

- clinical performance
- patient experience scores
- advanced technology

The award also recognized SBL in:

- Patient Experience overall
- Minimally Invasive Surgery
- Obstetrics (Top 10% Nationally)
- Outpatient Experience



**Sarah Bush
Lincoln**

Trusted Compassionate Care

EFFINGHAM

SBL Bonutti Clinic
1303 West Evergreen Ave., Suite 200
217-342-3400

MATTOON

SBL Orthopedics & Sports Medicine
Prairie Pavillion 2
1004 Health Center Drive, Suite 100
217-238-3435