

# Illinois Country Living



## FIRST TO MARKET

Small Town Taylorville  
creates shopping destination

HEALTH

**Big improvements from small changes**

ENERGY SOLUTIONS

**Bundle up and save**


SNAPSHOTS

**Snowy shenanigans**

**+**  
CO-OP  
NEWS



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Electric Cooperatives

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# Eye Doctor Helps Illinois Legally Blind To See

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



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

"Some of my patients consider me the last stop for people who have vision loss," said Dr. 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](http://www.mascoutaheyecare.com)

**1-618-566-8899**

Office located in Mascoutah, Illinois

**Marianne McDaniel, O.D.**



# Illinois Country Living

JANUARY 2024  
VOLUME 81, NO. 9

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On the cover: (From left) Lee and Dyanne Skinner, Elizabeth Conaway, and Steve and Sherri Craggs of Small Town Taylorville play vital roles in marketing Taylorville's small businesses.





## Riding out the storm

Electric co-ops take proactive approach to safeguard against extreme weather

**FROM THE EARLIEST DAYS** of electricity, weather has presented the biggest challenges to reliability and safety. Severe thunderstorms, tornadoes, heat waves, heavy snowfalls, flooding and wind events have long put power lines and Illinois' co-op crews to the test.

If you've thought storm events seem to be more frequent and more intense these days, you're not wrong. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, which tracks weather and climate disasters that cause more than \$1 billion in damage, reported an annual average of 18 such events between 2018 and 2022. That compares to an average of just 8.1 major disasters per year from 1980 to 2017.

While scientists and policymakers debate the causes of our wild weather, electric co-ops diligently work to prepare for it. From coast to coast, cooperatives are taking steps to harden the vital infrastructure that delivers electricity to homes, farms and other businesses.

Co-ops have been upgrading equipment and connections to the nation's electric power grid to better withstand disaster-level events. They're also taking steps to prevent damage from happening in the first place.

For example, you may have noticed increased tree trimming and other vegetation management strategies. Keeping trees and branches at a safe

distance from power lines reduces the potential for weather-related outages. While it's sad to see these trees trimmed, many outages that occur every year happen when trees tangle with power lines.

Hardening the infrastructure includes a long list of other strategies. Co-ops are paying more attention to the condition of the system. If a power pole is damaged or weakened, strong winds might bring it down and leave a big area of the community in the dark. That's why poles are periodically inspected and replaced when necessary.

When line crews aren't fixing problems, they're working just as hard to prevent them from happening. Those poles and the wires connecting them are frequent targets for lightning, so co-ops protect the power grid by installing devices that safely divert surges caused by lightning strikes.

It's also why many co-ops are investing in sophisticated management systems, also known as the smart grid, capable of drawing attention to potential issues before they grow into problems. Paired with innovative technology like reclosers, these systems are engineered to keep the power flowing even in the toughest weather conditions ... or when a squirrel makes a poor choice. Co-ops are also taking steps to protect substations and other outdoor equipment from severe weather events.

Considering the impact of potential weather disasters and implementing steps to prevent damage is just one more example of your electric cooperative's dedication to making sure power is always ready when it's needed most. 💡



Business writer **Scott Flood** has worked with electric co-ops for more than four decades to build knowledge of energy-related issues. He writes on a variety of energy-related topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

Illinois Country Living is a monthly publication serving the communications needs of the locally owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives of Illinois. With a circulation of more than 192,000, the magazine informs cooperative consumer-members about issues affecting their electric cooperative and the quality of life in rural Illinois.

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## JANUARY CHECKLIST

**Shovel safely.** When the snow comes down, be sure to take it slow when shoveling. Push the snow rather than lift, do not overexert yourself and take many breaks.



**Bundle up.** Avoid frostbite and hypothermia by dressing appropriately for the weather.



Wear several loose layers of clothes, mittens instead

of gloves, a warm hat and a thick pair of socks.

### Test your CO detectors.

Hundreds die from carbon monoxide poisoning each year. Test your CO detectors monthly to be sure they are in working order.



**Tip of the month.** Jan. 10 is Cut Your Energy Costs Day. The best ways to lower your winter energy bills include lowering your thermostat,

adding window coverings and wearing extra clothes.



Utilizing CoBank's Sharing Success Program, JCE Co-op donated \$5,000 (half from the co-op and half from CoBank) to Elizabeth Community Ambulance Service to help fund the replacement of the organization's oldest ambulance in its fleet.

## Grant program invests \$500,000 into rural Illinois

In 2023, more than \$500,000 was invested into many rural Illinois charitable organizations, thanks to CoBank's Sharing Success Program and its members, including several of Illinois' electric cooperatives. Since its inception in 2012, CoBank and its customers have together provided more than \$86 million in support to charitable organizations across the nation.

"At CoBank, we're grateful to all of our customers, including Illinois' electric cooperatives, for allowing us to partner with them to make life better in the communities they serve," said Sherry Johnson, director of corporate social responsibility at CoBank.

Sharing Success reflects two key cooperative principles — "Cooperation Among Cooperatives" and "Concern for Community." CoBank matches contributions by its cooperative members to charitable organizations, schools and government organizations that serve a public purpose and are consistent with the program's guidelines. The nationwide program runs April through September every year, or until the \$5 million fund runs out. CoBank matches charitable donations of up to \$10,000 made by its member organizations.

"This program is a really nice way to leverage additional contributions to several key organizations in our communities," said Kelly Hamm, McDonough Power Cooperative's energy services manager, in a news release announcing the co-op's 2023 recipients.

Through this program, McDonough Power was able to donate \$5,000 each to four area nonprofit organizations — half from the co-op and the other half from CoBank. These funds helped stock The Crossing-Macomb's food pantry, assisted Jamieson Community Center in providing food security and other services to its community, financially assisted Western Illinois Museum with needed renovations, and helped provide warm winter coats for area children through McDonough Power's Coats for Kids program.

For the past five years, Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative has utilized CoBank's Sharing Success grants to assist schools in its community, and 2023 was no exception. A total of \$20,000 was donated to Auburn, Northwestern and Pawnee school districts to help fund various education programs, by providing science and lab kits, music equipment, art supplies, math kits and more.

*Continued on page 8*

## 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.

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

Grant - continued from page 7



**A \$4,000 donation to the Athens Area Food Pantry from Menard Electric Cooperative and CoBank allowed the organization to purchase additional goods to help area families in need.**

EnerStar Electric Cooperative has participated in the Sharing Success Program for 12 years, distributing \$165,000 throughout its service territory. This year, EnerStar and CoBank donated a combined total of \$10,000 each to Friends of Lincoln Trail State Park and Walnut Point State Park.

With the help of Menard Electric Cooperative, Sharing Success Program donations this year helped support the Ashland Fire Protection District in fixing and replacing the district building’s roof, allowed the Athens Area Food Pantry to purchase additional goods to help area families in need, and assisted the Central Illinois Lutheran Camp Association in purchasing materials for a newly redesigned outdoor education program.

In addition, Menard Electric was able to donate a total of \$6,000 to the Cooperative Family Fund, a newly formed national organization which aims to support the minor children of electric co-op employees if a parent dies while employed at a cooperative.

During its time participating in the Sharing Success Program, Shelby Electric Cooperative has donated \$135,000 to organizations within the co-op’s service territory with the help of CoBank. This year, the Autism and Movement Project (AAMP)/Autism Movement Therapy in Pana received \$15,000 to expand its sensory gym. Additional funds went to the Pana Historical Society to support its sensory garden and to Brewin’ Hope Coffee House, which is staffed by AAMP students, to help purchase equipment.

Through the program, JCE Co-op was able to continue its annual Sharing

Success tradition. This year, four organizations in its service territory received \$5,000 each. Elizabeth Community Ambulance Service used its funds to replace the oldest ambulance in its fleet, Hammond Henry Hospital utilized the grant for a nurse call system that allows patients to call for staff assistance, funds awarded to the city of Mount Carroll were used to help establish child care centers in the area, and the Fulton Historical Society used the money to continue the remodel of a local historical building.

These are just a few examples of co-ops in Illinois supporting their local communities through the Sharing Success Program. In total, CoBank matched nearly \$260,000 of donations in 2023 that went to help rural nonprofit organizations across Illinois.



**Over the past 12 years, EnerStar Electric Cooperative has participated in the Sharing Success Program and distributed \$165,000 throughout its service territory. Walnut Point State Park received a \$10,000 donation this year from EnerStar Electric and CoBank.**

CoBank is a cooperative bank serving vital industries across rural America. It is one of the largest private providers of credit to the U.S. rural economy and delivers loans, leases and other financial services to agribusinesses and rural power, water and communications providers in all 50 states.

“Over the past 10 years, Sharing Success has helped CoBank and our customer-owners contribute in a big way to the growth and vibrancy of rural America,” said Thomas Halverson, CoBank’s president and chief executive officer, in a news release announcing the 2023 program. “We are privileged to partner with our customers in their charitable efforts and look forward to many more decades of Sharing Success.”

## IL ENTERTAINMENT CORNER

Lorado Taft (1860-1936) was one of the early 20th century’s most notable sculptors. His birthplace of Elmwood, Ill., proudly displays several of his sculptures, including:



- Memory – an original replica of a larger cast bronze statue called Foote Memorial Angel. It was dedicated to the town by his wife shortly after his death.
- The Pioneers (pictured) – the cast bronze sculpture measures 10 feet high and weighs 3,500 pounds. It bears the words, “To the pioneers who bridged the streams, subdued the soil and founded a state,” and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
- Ionic Frieze replica – inspired by a work of the same name located in the Parthenon, initially intended for the artist’s “dream museum,” which never came to be.
- Dioramas – acquired by the Elmwood Historical Society, these were originally to be displayed in Taft’s museum as well.

Other works by the sculptor can be found at the Lorado Taft Museum, housed in Elmwood’s 1875 Kemp residence. For more information about the artist and his other works, visit [cfa.gov/about-cfa/who-we-are/lorado-taft](http://cfa.gov/about-cfa/who-we-are/lorado-taft).



# Feeling Rejuvenated With CBD

Everyone feels the hurt as you age, but CBD can help you deal with it

By Beth Giles

Life really does fly by. Before I knew it, my 60s had arrived, and with them came some new gifts from dear ol' Mother Nature—frequent knee pain, stress, low energy and sleeplessness. Now, I'm a realist about these things, I knew I wasn't going to be young and springy forever. But still, with "golden years" nearly on my doorstep, I couldn't help but feel a little cheated. That is until I found my own secret weapon. Another gift from Mother Nature.

It began a few months back when I was complaining about my aches and pains to my marathon-running granddaughter, Jen. She casually mentioned how she uses CBD oil to help with her joint pain. She said that CBD gave her more focus and clarity throughout the day and that her lingering muscle and joint discomfort no longer bothered her. She even felt comfortable signing up for back-to-back marathons two weekends in a row this year. That made even this self-proclaimed skeptic take notice.

But I still had some concerns. According to one study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 70% of CBD products didn't contain the amount of CBD stated on their labels. And, as a consumer, that's terrifying!

If I was going to try CBD, I needed to trust the source through and through. My two-fold research process naturally led me to Zebra CBD.

First, I started calling my family and friends. Call me old fashioned but I wanted to know if there were people whom I trusted (more than anonymous testimonials) who've had success using CBD besides my granddaughter.

Secondly, I wanted cold hard facts. Diving deep into the world of CBD research and clinical studies, I came across Emily Gray M.D., a physician at the University of California at San Diego (UCSD) Medical School and medical advisor to Zebra CBD who is researching the effects of CBD. Dr. Gray wrote "early results with CBD have been promising and we have a lot of research underway now. I've had several patients using CBD with good success. It's important that you know your source of CBD and how to use it properly."

After hearing it from the doctor's mouth, I returned to my research, asking more people and was amazed by the number of close friends and family who were already on the CBD train. Apparently, I was the only one without a clue! And funny enough, a couple of friends who commented were using the same brand as my granddaughter—Zebra CBD. There was no consensus as to why they were using CBD, but the top reasons given were for muscle & joint discomfort, mood support, sleep support, stress and headaches, as well as supporting overall health & wellness.

Eventually, even the most skeptical of the bunch can be won over. With a trusted CBD source in mind, I decided to give it a go.

When I viewed Zebra CBD's selection online, I was impressed by its array of products, including CBD oils called tinctures, topicals, chewable tablets, mints and gummies. After reading on their website that all their products are made with organically-grown hemp, I ordered... and it arrived within 2 days!

The first product I tried was the Rub. Now this stuff was strong. Immediately after rubbing it on my knee, the soothing effects kicked in. It had that familiar menthol cooling effect, which I personally find very relieving. And the best part is, after two weeks of using it, my knee pain no longer affected my daily mobility.

The Zebra Mint Oil, on the other hand, had a different but equally positive effect on my body. To take it, the instructions suggest holding the oil in your mouth for about 30 seconds. This was simple enough, and the mint taste was, well, minty. After about 15 minutes, a sense of calm came over my body. It's hard to describe exactly. It's more like an overall sense of relaxation—as if I just walked out of a spa, and now I'm ready to seize the day. Needless to say, I've really enjoyed the oil.

While it hasn't been a catch-all fix to every one of my health issues, it has eased the level and frequency of my aches. And it sure doesn't seem like a coincidence how much calmer and more focused I am.

All-in-all, CBD is one of those things that you have to try for yourself. Although I was skeptical at first, I can safely say that I'm now a Zebra CBD fan and that I highly recommend their products.

Also, I managed to speak with a Zebra CBD spokesperson willing to provide an exclusive offer. If you order this month, you'll receive \$10 off your first order by using promo code "**IL10**" at checkout. Plus, the company offers a 100% No-Hassle, Money-Back Guarantee. You can try it yourself and order Zebra CBD at [ZebraCBD.com/Illinois](https://ZebraCBD.com/Illinois) or at 1-888-762-2699.






## Where is it?

The winners of the November hidden object contest were Jaqueline Johnson of Norris Electric Cooperative and Lindsey Lietz of Clinton County Electric Cooperative. Congratulations! Your ICL Tervis tumblers have been sent.

December's ugly Christmas sweater was hidden in the dryer on page 16. 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. With the new year comes a new winner prize – a ceramic campfire mug with an Illinois Country Living logo. So, be on the hunt for a mug. 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](http://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. 

## NERC warns of reliability risks

Unprecedented electricity demand and lagging infrastructure development could place many regions of the U.S. at risk of power supply shortages over the next decade, particularly during periods of extreme weather, the North American Electric Reliability Corp. (NERC) said in a new report.

Over the next five years, NERC forecasts that all or parts of 19 states from Montana to Louisiana are at high risk of rolling blackouts during normal peak conditions. And most of the rest of the country is at similar risk when demand for electricity spikes during exceedingly hot or cold temperatures.

In its 2023 Long-Term Reliability Assessment, released Dec. 13, NERC warned that planned retirements of baseload power plants, transmission congestion, fuel supply issues and inadequate maintenance increase the risks of prolonged service disruptions during major winter cold snaps or summer heatwaves.

“NERC's latest assessment paints a grim picture of our nation's energy future as demand for electricity soars and the supply of always-available generation declines,” National Rural Electric Cooperative Association CEO Jim Matheson said.

Matheson is among the energy industry leaders urging government agencies and policymakers to reconsider regulations that threaten to exacerbate regional shortfalls and support initiatives that could help meet energy demand at costs consumers are able to bear.

“Nine states saw rolling blackouts in December 2022 as the demand for electricity exceeded available supply. And proposals like the Environmental Protection Agency's power plant rule will greatly compound the problem,” said Matheson. “Absent a major shift in state and federal energy policy, this is the reality we will face for years to come.”


NERC's report noted that some areas have improved generation and transmission, which could help ensure adequate reserves through 2028. However, resource shortfalls could become more common, based upon demand growth, anticipated retirements of older power plants, and slow or stalled development of new generation.

“Demand is rising, and the resource generation mix is declining,” said Mark Olson, NERC's manager of reliability assessments.

The report warns that the nation's bulk power system must be maintained to respond to demand during extreme weather events. “Generator performance and fuel issues are

more likely to occur when generators are called upon with short notice,” analysts said.

Portions of the Midwest from the western Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico, which includes Illinois, are categorized as “high risk,” due in part to what analysts describe as “overly rigid” environmental regulations and energy policies threatening grid reliability.


These policies have the “potential to influence generators to seek deactivation despite a projected resource adequacy or operating reliability risk,” analysts wrote. “Regulators and policymakers need to consider effects on the electric grid in their rules and policies and design provisions that safeguard grid reliability.” 

Derrill Holly, NRECA



## Linework scholarship available

The LaVern and Nola McEntire Memorial Lineworker's Scholarship helps pay for costs to attend lineworker school conducted by the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives in conjunction with Lincoln Land Community College (LLCC), Springfield. Awarded for the first time in 2011, the scholarship was endowed by LaVern and Nola McEntire to assist students attending lineworker's school at LLCC. LaVern served as a lineworker for more than 42 years at McDonough Power Cooperative. The scholarship is awarded based on an essay, a biographical statement and references.

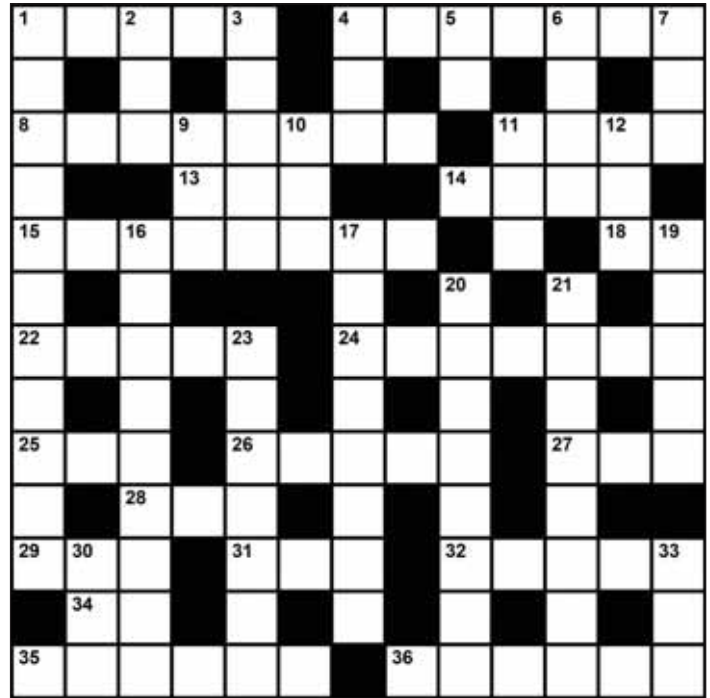
The \$2,000 scholarship is awarded annually to an individual who is related to an Illinois rural electric cooperative employee or director; is the son or daughter of an Illinois electric cooperative member; is enrolled in the Lincoln Land lineworker's school; or has served or is currently serving in the U.S. armed forces or National Guard. The deadline to apply for this scholarship is April 30, 2024. To apply, go to [aiec.coop/lavern-and-nola-lineworkers-scholarship](http://aiec.coop/lavern-and-nola-lineworkers-scholarship). 

**Across**

- 1 Glass raiser
- 4 New start
- 8 When the new year is welcomed in
- 11 Hope for the new year
- 13 Edible South American tuber
- 14 Pinot noir, for example
- 15 Handheld firework
- 18 DC alternative
- 22 Hearty drink
- 24 It's blown up at a party
- 25 Noshed
- 26 Move on the ice
- 27 Cook in a way
- 28 A little liquor
- 29 East coast time setting
- 31 Cocktail addition
- 32 Come in
- 34 Italian river
- 35 Present containing fruit
- 36 On a plane

**Down**

- 1 Area for a national TV New Year's celebration, 2 words
- 2 Recipe word
- 3 Magic act
- 4 Cheerleading cry
- 5 Alongside
- 6 Precipitation
- 7 Skeptic's exclamation
- 9 Neighbor of Swed.
- 10 Young lady
- 11 Come out on top
- 12 Pirate's domain
- 16 Apricot liqueurs
- 17 Hugs
- 19 Sweet for a kid
- 20 Wild hyacinth
- 21 Scattered colored paper
- 23 In party mode
- 30 Place to relax
- 33 Floor cover



*Solution on page 33.*

# GRIEF & SUICIDE BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GROUPS

FOR FARMERS AND FARM FAMILIES



## Grief Support Group

4th Wednesday of each month

7-8 pm | Virtual

JAN 24 | FEB 28 | MAR 27 | APR 24 | MAY 22 | JUNE 26

## Suicide Support Group

4th Tuesday of each month

8-9 am | Virtual

JAN 23 | FEB 27 | MARCH 26 | APRIL 23 | MAY 28 | JUNE 25



To register or for more information, contact Rachel Brown at 217.718.6315 or email [rachelbrown.lpc24@gmail.com](mailto:rachelbrown.lpc24@gmail.com).



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## LET'S GO!

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



### Let's Go Fishing Show

JANUARY

5-7

For fishing enthusiasts, this event boasts a fishing tackle superstore, informative seminars, engaging exhibits, kid-friendly activities and more. This annual tradition caters to anglers with a diverse array of fishing gear, boats, accessories and advice from experts.

Jan. 5, 2024: noon-8 p.m., Jan. 6: 9 a.m.-7 p.m. and Jan. 7: 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

- Gateway Convention Center, One Gateway Drive, Collinsville  
Admission: varies  
800-289-2388 or [gatewaycenter.com/fishing-show/home](http://gatewaycenter.com/fishing-show/home)

### Quad City Bald Eagle Days

JANUARY

5-7

Discover more about bald eagles, explore exhibits and enjoy live demonstrations at the annual celebration dedicated to the bald eagle's return to the Quad Cities. Be sure to attend the Bald Eagle Days Environmental Fair and Wildlife Art Show held at the QCCA Expo Center in Rock Island. This three-day extravaganza features captivating live flying demonstrations featuring eagles, hawks, owls and vultures, along with educational sessions and more than 200 entertaining and informative exhibits.

Jan. 5, 2024: 4-8 p.m., Jan. 6: 10 a.m.-8 p.m. and Jan. 7: 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

- QCCA Expo Center, 2621 4th Ave., Rock Island  
Admission: varies  
618-940-0743 or [qccaexpo.com/baldeagledays](http://qccaexpo.com/baldeagledays)



### Gym Bob's Jamboree Show

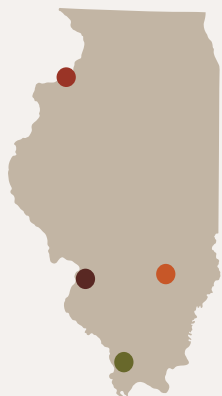
JANUARY

7

The Gym Bob's Jamboree Show is opry-style live music and is held the first Sunday of every month. Each month features a special guest and a variety of classic country and '90s country hits, as well as '50s and '60s favorites for the whole family to enjoy.

Jan. 7, 2024: 1-3:30 p.m.

- Gym Bob's, 44 Apostle Lane, Bible Grove  
Admission: varies  
615-481-7418 or [gymbobs.com](http://gymbobs.com)



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JANUARY

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Jan. 19, 2024: 5:30-9 p.m.

- Alto Vineyards, 8515 Illinois 127, Alto Pass  
Admission: free  
618-893-4898 or [altovineyards.net](http://altovineyards.net)





# Americans can finally grow thick, lustrous hair

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Surprising Truth About Hair Loss

It is commonly believed that hair loss is hereditary.

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

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

The latest scientific research reveals that hair loss is primarily

caused by the stem cells in your hair follicles dying.

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Regrows Hair In Just 30 Days

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

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

cycle.

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

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

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

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

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

### Reawakens Dead Hair Follicles

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Try Re-Nourish 100% Risk-Free

To secure the hot, new **Re-Nourish** formula, buyers should contact the Sears Health Hotline at **1-800-987-9957** TODAY. “It's not available in retail stores yet,” says Dr. Sears. “The Hotline allows us to ship directly to the customer.” Dr. Sears feels so strongly about **Re-Nourish**, all orders are backed by a 100% money-back guarantee. “Just send me back the bottle and any unused product within 90 days from purchase date, and I'll send you all your money back.”

Call NOW at **1-800-987-9957** to secure your supply of **Re-Nourish**. Use Promo Code **ICLRN124** when you call. Lines are frequently busy, but all calls will be answered!



## A winter road warrior's survival guide

Navigating hazards and downed lines in dangerous icy conditions

**AS WINTER TAKES ITS** icy grip on the roads, drivers face additional challenges, from snow-covered surfaces to treacherous ice patches. These hazards demand careful preparation and swift decision-making, particularly in the aftermath of an automobile accident where power lines and other electrical equipment are involved.

In a recent MoneyGeek report, 403 drivers die per year in the U.S. in winter conditions on average, with Illinois ranked as the sixth most dangerous state for winter driving. Statistics were collected from data in the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's Fatality Analysis Reporting System.

Help reverse these statistics by following these tips created to help drivers and passengers stay safe on winter roads.

Safety starts with general maintenance of your vehicle. To prepare for cold temperatures, snow and ice, perform regular maintenance on your car to check that batteries are charged, tires have sufficient tread, and windshield wipers are in good condition.

In case of an emergency, pack a kit that includes blankets, flares,

a flashlight and a window scraper. Also, pack extra water and food. If you are stranded in your car after an accident, watch for signs of frostbite or hypothermia. Do not stay in one position for too long. Stay awake and do not overexert yourself, as this could strain your heart.

Due to the potential for a winter storm to bring down power lines, individuals should only venture outside if necessary. Slow down when driving in icy conditions, and always keep your eyes on the road to look out for hazardous conditions or downed power lines. Also watch for debris near downed poles and lines, as it may be energized as well.

If you see a car in an accident with a power pole, your first instinct may be to rush toward the vehicle to offer help. Always remember to keep your distance from the vehicle and all electrical equipment that has been damaged. Instruct those in the car to stay inside until the power has been shut off.

If you must exit a vehicle because it is on fire, jump clear of it with your feet together and without touching the vehicle and ground at the same time. Keeping your feet

together, shuffle or "bunny hop" to safety. Doing this will ensure that you will not have different strengths of electric current running from one foot to another.

Keep in mind that a downed line does not need to be sparking to be energized. It is best to assume all low and downed lines are energized and dangerous.

Never drive over a downed line, because that could pull down the pole and other equipment, causing additional hazards. If you see a downed line, do not get out of your car. The safest place is inside the vehicle. Call 911 to have the utility notified immediately.

For utility crews, repairing damaged power lines is especially dangerous in storm conditions. The increased hazards mean extra time and attention must be dedicated to ensure power is safely restored. Have patience while lineworkers do their job in these adverse conditions to turn the power back on, and remember to exercise safety and be prepared for driving in dangerous winter conditions.

For more information on electrical safety, visit [SafeElectricity.org](http://SafeElectricity.org). 



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

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## Bundle up and save

Tips to stay warm and still save energy this winter

**COLDER WEATHER CAN INCREASE** energy use and bills, since heating accounts for the highest winter-time energy consumption in most homes. The amount of energy used

dirty. Ductless heat pumps, or mini-splits, boilers, radiant heat, baseboard heaters and electric resistance heaters are other common heating system types.

If you don't know what type of system you have, find the model number of your equipment and look it up online. You'll find information about the system, how efficiently it operates and recommendations for servicing it, which can improve efficiency.

### Small changes, big savings

We use energy to make our homes comfortable. The easiest and most cost-efficient way to save money on heating is to keep your thermostat as low as comfort allows. The

closer your home's temperature is to the outdoor temperature, the less energy is used.

The U.S. Department of Energy recommends a thermostat setting of 68 degrees in the winter while you are awake and lower when you are asleep or away from home. Keep in mind that setting the temperature too low can cause pipes to freeze or moisture issues in some geographic locations.

Adding additional layers of clothing, slippers or a hat can keep you comfortable in a cooler home.

### Hidden cost of space heaters

Do you use space heaters to heat a room or small section of your home? If so, you may see an increase in your electric bill. For example, let's say you use a

1,500-watt electric space heater to warm your living room while you watch TV or read a book. Operating that space heater for 2 hours a day could cost you an additional \$15 a month, on average. Operating that same space heater for 12 hours a day will cost about \$90 a month.

If you choose to use space heaters, use them safely. Keep them 3 feet away from anything flammable, do not leave them unattended and plug them directly into the outlet, not an extension cord or power strip.

### Stop air leaks

Just as we put on a windbreaker to block cold winds, your home also benefits from blocking air movement. Air sealing can make a big improvement in the comfort of your home as well as provide energy savings.

A common air sealing practice is applying weatherstripping to exterior doors and windows. You can also seal around plumbing penetrations to help eliminate drafts. A gap often exists between the drywall or wood and the plumbing pipes and drains. Filling these gaps with expanding foam can reduce drafts in bathrooms and kitchens.

Cold, windy winter days are the perfect time to find opportunities for air sealing. Rattling doors or moving curtains can indicate air leakage. Air leakage can occur where two different materials come together, like drywall and trim work. Cracked plaster and gaps in drywall can also cause drafts. Sealing the gaps saves energy and improves comfort.

As outdoor temperatures dip this winter, take a few proactive steps to maintain comfort in your home and keep your energy bill in check. 💡



PHOTO COURTESY OF MARK GILLILAND

**The easiest and most cost-efficient way to save money on heating is to keep your thermostat as low as comfort allows. Adding a layer, slippers, a hat or a lap dog can keep you comfortable in a cooler home.**

to heat a home depends on the equipment, how it's used, and the efficiency of the home's shell — the building components that separate the indoors from the outdoors.

### Home heating fundamentals

It's important to know how your home is heated so you can make informed decisions on your energy use. It also helps you prepare for upcoming bills and avoid surprises that impact your budget. A forced-air furnace is the most common type of heating system and is fueled by natural gas, propane, oil or electricity.

Heat pumps are growing in popularity and are available for forced-air systems. If you have a forced-air system, check the filter regularly and replace it when it's



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



# See the Forest Through the Trees

## Mighty Conifer Knife at an Impossible Price!



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## Guardians of the grid

How co-ops take proactive steps against evolving cyber threats

**ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES RECOGNIZE** THE evolving cyber threat landscape that poses disruptions to the nation's electric grid. As responsible providers of power to consumer-members, co-ops continuously take proactive measures to secure the grid.

Cyber threats, ranging from phishing to compromised passwords, have the potential to disrupt power reliability. That's why electric co-ops work to stay one step ahead by assessing vulnerabilities, monitoring emerging threats and implementing cybersecurity defense measures. By securing the grid against cyber threats, co-ops ensure a more reliable power supply and reduce the risk of disruptions.

Electric co-ops are implementing multiple cybersecurity strategies to utilize a defense-in-depth approach, emphasizing concern for their communities and the importance of reliability for the members they serve.

Electric co-ops are deploying advanced monitoring and protection systems that analyze network traffic, detect suspicious activity and

alert security personnel to threats. Additionally, co-ops regularly practice security audits to identify vulnerabilities, assess risks, and implement necessary updates and patches to safeguard critical infrastructure.

Cybersecurity is a team effort, so electric co-ops regularly engage with other co-ops, industry organizations, government agencies and cybersecurity experts to share best practices, develop lessons learned and stay up to date on the latest threats. This collaboration enables the development of robust cybersecurity measures. Electric co-ops also participate in mutual aid efforts focused on cybersecurity events, such as the Cyber Mutual Assistance Program. By working together, co-ops are stronger and better prepared.

Electric co-ops also understand the importance of educating all employees on the latest cybersecurity issues, which is why co-op staff members are regularly trained on best practices and the significance of adhering to security protocols. By cultivating an internal culture of cybersecurity awareness, co-ops are

improving cyber knowledge and skills for employees.

In addition to internal measures, co-ops are establishing dedicated cybersecurity points of contact so that members can easily access individuals to discuss any cyber-related concerns. Co-op members are regularly targeted by energy scammers, whether through false claims or messages sent as emails, or phone scams from people falsely claiming to represent the co-op. By identifying and reporting these incidents, you can help play an important role in keeping the co-op community safe from cyber threats and scams.

Electric co-ops remain committed to providing reliable power to their members. Their top priority is to keep your information secure and your lights on.

Your electric co-op will continue working hard to strengthen the grid, keep data safe and ensure the long-term well-being of the communities they serve. In the face of increasing cyber threats, these proactive measures provide a foundation for a robust and secure electric grid. 💡



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

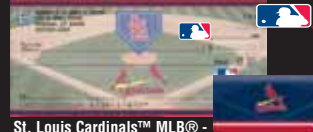
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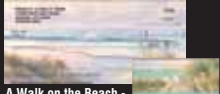
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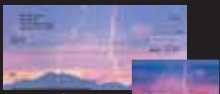
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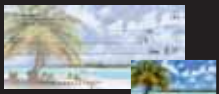
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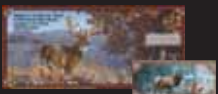
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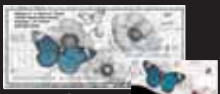
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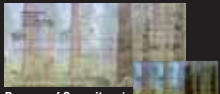
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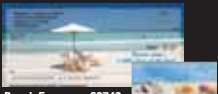
North American Wildlife - 00876  
Leather Cover and Labels - 00876



A Touch of Color II - 01370  
Leather Cover and Labels - 01370



Prayers of Serenity w/ verse "Trust in the Lord with all your heart" - 00194  
Leather Cover and Labels - 00194



Beach Escapes - 00743  
Leather Cover and Labels - 00743



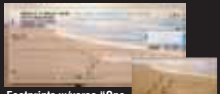
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Leather Cover and Labels - 00542



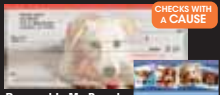
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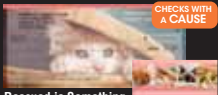
Thomas Kinkadee's Faith for All Seasons w/verse "Believe all things are possible with God" - 00105  
Leather Cover and Labels - 00105



Footprints w/verse "One night I dreamed that I was walking along the beach with the Lord." - 00667  
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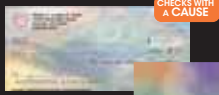
Rescued is My Breed of Choice - 00379  
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A portion of the proceeds will be donated to a national no-kill animal shelter.



Rescued is Something to Purr About - 00525  
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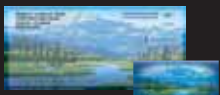
On the Wings of Hope - 00384  
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A portion of the proceeds will be donated to fight breast cancer.



Coping Together - 01397  
Leather Cover and Labels - 00125 and Labels - 01397  
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Grandkids Rule! w/verse "I'd rather be with my grandkids." - 00437  
Leather Cover and Labels - 00437



Mountains - 01287  
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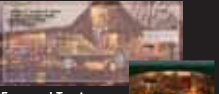
Words of Faith w/verse "With God all things are possible." - 00551  
Leather Cover and Labels - 00551



Cowboy Boots - 00434  
Leather Cover and Labels - 00434



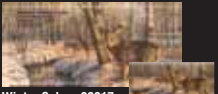
Mickey Loves Minnie - 00422  
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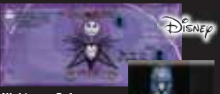
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Leather Cover and Labels - 00785



Black & White - 01393  
Leather Cover and Labels - 01393



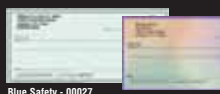
Winter Calm - 00017  
Leather Cover and Labels - 00017



Nightmare Before Christmas - 00531  
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Ohio State University - 00513  
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# FIRST TO MARKET





# SMALL TOWN TAYLORVILLE CREATES SHOPPING DESTINATION

By Lisa Cherry

A MID-SIZE ILLINOIS TOWN has formulated a model for small business success reminiscent of JFK's keen observation that a rising tide lifts all boats. So, while most enterprises advertise only their own products and services, Taylorville entrepreneurs have embraced marketing the businesses in their town as a whole. The response has been overwhelming.

Steve Craggs, president of Downtown Taylorville/Small Town Taylorville, describes the 501(c)3 as a community service organization. "2003 is when the original Taylorville Main Street organization was founded through a joint agreement with the state of Illinois and Taylorville," he says. "Since then, it has morphed into being much more. It has become a citywide program with various projects, such as the Veterans Memorial at Lake Taylorville, the Farmer's Market, the Christmas parade, the July 4th parade, Meet the Machines, downtown beautification, Small Town Taylorville Car Cruise, etc. In addition, we developed a citywide marketing program."

Craggs, born and raised in Taylorville, moved away at one point but returned in 2006. In 2009, he was voted president of the Main Street group. Eventually, the group's focus turned to the square, and the board decided to change the name to Downtown Taylorville. That organization still exists in conjunction with Small Town Taylorville, the latter of which is used for marketing purposes. "We would like to get it to one name at some point," he says. "We're doing that on a slow basis now that we're gaining momentum as Small Town Taylorville."

Turnkey to the process was establishing a business development district. "We had a consultant come from Edwardsville, who consulted with us about a state program which allows the establishment of a business development district (BDD) with an additional incremental tax that stays in the community and can be used for a variety of services within the district," he explains. "With the use of BDD funds, we were able to come up with a matching fund grant program to attract business and investors into our downtown and throughout the business district in the city of Taylorville."



PHOTO COURTESY OF ROBERT ADAMS



Uprooted owner Jessica Kocurek (left), and manager Carli Hanlon



Niki VanAirdale and Ashley Kochniarczyk are the owners of The Coffee Can, housed in an Airstream trailer on the main drag across from the high school. "We were starting around the same time. It's been a blur of three years, but I'm pretty sure we were both babies around the same time," says Niki, referring to Small Town Taylorville. "We're more than happy to team up with them and do what we can for Taylorville. Our hearts are here."

Lee and Dyanne Skinner have also played a major role in marketing the town as a shopping destination. The couple owns several shops in Taylorville, including flagship Dear Yesteryear, Storehouse Market, Wonder & Rhyme, Tallulah Jane's Boutique and Elladee's Boutique.

Dyanne's entrepreneurial streak began 20-some years ago when she began making candles and stamping wooden candle lids. Later, after having children, she simplified her product line and launched an online label company, which soon became a booming business. When she and Lee met and eventually married, she realized she was ready for another creative venture. "Let's open a store," she remembers telling Lee. "We were newly married. We were trying to find a place to live. And then this place popped up."

The building, a former showroom for a kitchen and bath designer, was equipped with an upstairs apartment. The couple didn't have high hopes for the living space but toured it just to rule it out. "God just opened the door for us," Dyanne says, adding that the next thing they knew, they were living in that upstairs apartment and giving their new business venture a go.

Their store mixes "the best of the old and the trendiest of the new." Its name, Dear Yesteryear, is a salutation to pieces from the past. "It's like you're writing a letter to the past and promising [it] that we're not going to kick it to the curb anymore. We're going to upstyle it and utilize it — whatever it takes to make it part of homes today," says Dyanne.

About a year after opening Dear Yesteryear, they decided to incorporate an element from one of her previous pursuits — in the form of wax melts. "I created our own label, and I print [them]. That's the full circle right there." The Skinners now sell them in the store and online at waxmelts.com.

They didn't stop there. "All five of our stores have stemmed out of seeing a section of this store do well," she says. Elladee's Boutique, located next door, came about when the Skinners noticed flannels and graphic T-shirts were flying off the shelves at their first store.

"I've never been an overly fashionable person, so I just assumed I couldn't do it," says Dyanne. "I learned that a lot of people are just normal like me. It works." Next came Wonder & Rhyme on the square, born of a small baby section in their first store. This past June, they opened Tallulah Jane's, geared toward girls ages 6 and up. "I thought little girls would appreciate a place of their own," she says.

The Skinners' experience as ever-evolving small business owners is a microcosm of Small Town Taylorville itself. Perhaps because of that, they were destined to be a part of its launch.

It started out with a simple map of all the town's shops that Dyanne continues to help update and share with customers. "I had a lot of people question me. 'You're advertising for their businesses?' As far as I'm concerned, it's a customer courtesy," says Dyanne. "Maybe they've driven 2 hours. I don't want them to think, 'Okay, well, that's it.' I mean, the more shopping and dining, the better day you are going to have."

Craggs reached out to her about how to market the town. "I had purchased a book a few years prior. I read maybe two pages and got busy and didn't read the rest. But after our meeting that day, I thought, 'Where is that book?' I started listening to it [the audiobook], and holy cow. It was exactly what we were all talking about wanting to do," she says.

That book, "Town Inc." by Andrew Davis, details how building a booming business and growing a prosperous town go hand in hand. The author advises business owners to market their town just as passionately as they market their own business.

"[Lee and I] were so pumped. We got hold of [Steve] and said, 'You've got to listen to it,'" says Dyanne. "He was so excited that he provided everybody on the board with copies of it. Then he got copies for the mayor and the city



**"I can tell you for sure that the town has been growing. We've grown as a business," says Florinda Guerriero, longtime owner of Florinda's Pizza Ristorante Italiano. "With everybody's support, we've been renewing and repairing more of the square."**



council. That's really what started this mission to market the town as a whole."

From there, it was determined an advertising/marketing subcommittee was needed. Steve asked Dyanne if she would be interested in heading it up. She was. "It was her brainchild [to name it] Small Town Taylorville," says Lee.

"Steve and our new subcommittee went to the city council with our marketing plan presentation, which initially focused on shopping and dining, based on that book. We had a plan, went in there with all our numbers, and we had facts to back it up," Dyanne continues. Lee adds that those efforts are now bringing people from out of town, even out of state, to shop there.

"Now [we're] starting to get noticed by investors wanting to come to town and develop. ... They see it's lucrative, what's going on here," he says. "[We're] seeing some of these outside investors coming in and saying, 'Hey, I want to be part of this,' or 'I want to buy some property, too.'"

"It's not uncommon for us on a Tuesday to get somebody from Nebraska . . . just to come and shop. Happens all the time. We get a lot of [people from] Indiana and Missouri," Lee adds. "We feel it's been a destination spot for about five or six years now."

"It's a lot of work. A lot of people are involved, other board members and every store that opens up every day, they're part of the team effort to bring people to town," says Dyanne.

Elizabeth Conaway, owner of CreativelyELC and the freelance digital content creator behind the scenes, is one of those people. "We started [during] COVID," she says. "They wanted everybody to come back to town, and I had worked for Dyanne through her label company. I [had] started freelancing on my own doing graphic design and marketing for a handful of different businesses. Then Dyanne called me and said, 'I think I have something that you can help us with.' So, they hired me as a freelancer to do all the marketing design."

According to Conaway, different pieces of the puzzle began to come together. "Steve was on Downtown Taylorville. Then Small Town Taylorville grew. We had a few meetings. We had business owners from retail, we had restaurant owners and different organizations throughout town; [they] told us what they thought, and everybody pitched in. We started organizing shopping events to get all the stores on the same page for one weekend every few months just to have a big draw to town.

"We planned how to launch our social media sites. We had a photo contest, and people could submit local images to be on our website," she adds. "We made sure we were included on any tourism sites that we could find. Just any way that we could think of to get the word out about our town."

The organization has seen consistent growth online since. "I think we're averaging anywhere from 2,000 to 3,000 visitors a month to our

**Jessica Oyler, owner of The Dandy Lion, began selling at farmer's markets at age 17. "I graduated college and immediately opened my first storefront," says Oyler. "Small Town Taylorville has several scheduled shopping events. For a town, that's a great advertisement. It brings in a lot of people outside of our community."**

The Vintage Dresser Boutique  
owner Rachael Whitlow



website, which is a huge number for a small town. That's 2,000 to 3,000 potential shoppers and diners a month," says Conaway.

"Our Facebook page has grown to 13,000 followers, and I'd say the majority are within a 50-mile radius. We all do our shopping in Taylorville. That's where the grocery store is. That's where the movie theater is," she says. "I always try to come up with new ways to reach people. If I find something new or I find an award or a grant I think we should apply for, I do that as well as all the design work and website management."

Coordination between business owners also benefits shoppers. "They flip their stores at the same time," says Conaway. "In March, we do the spring shopping kickoff, and everyone puts out their new merchandise at the same time so when people come to town to shop, they can go to all 30-plus businesses and see all their new stuff at one time."

She says they make sure to use a hashtag so everyone gets publicity during an event. "I typically will make a graphic for each sale. Then we create an event and all the stores are responsible for sharing [it] and marketing that way, because everything we do is at no cost to them. It's like they have a free social media team. While we might not specifically focus on their business, we're always promoting everyone."

"When you're in social media and marketing, your goal is the numbers. . . . It's nice to have the city back Small Town Taylorville and believe, 'Okay, if we do invest in this project, we'll see the return.' [And] we can say we've had millions of eyes on our ads this year, between the billboards and print ads and social media."

Uprooted by Willow & Birch, an offshoot of Willow & Birch Salon in Springfield, is owned by Jessica Kocurek and managed by her sister, Carli Hanlon. They opened in October 2020.

"The Small Town Taylorville Facebook [group] that we're all a part of helps us stay in touch with one another. We're always chatting with others to see what they are going to do for certain specials or times of year, [and we're] always trying to collaborate with other businesses to do little events," says Hanlon. "Small Town Taylorville has such a following now that it reaches so many people, which is great for all the small businesses, because we have tons of people coming here for shopping events."

Kocurek explains the difference between being a business owner in a small town versus a city. "Small Town Taylorville does so many things to help the businesses around. Everyone comes together, and everyone's a part of the event that's happening, and you don't have to pay to be a part of it. I think that's a huge difference. When you're in a larger city, you're paying dues to be a part of this organization, and you're wanting to pay to be in the Chamber of Commerce. You don't always get a return on that investment. Your investment here is [opening] a business. Then the community is providing that support and that service to you, because you chose to open a business here. That's pretty amazing."

She adds that her business pulls in customers locally and from out of town. "People who live here do not want things to go away, so they avidly support it. They'll support [us] before they go somewhere else," she explains. "The community helps support all these businesses, so Small Town Taylorville will make sure the community knows what's going on. It's an ecosystem that works really well."

Even with its increased growth, Kocurek doesn't think Taylorville will lose its small-town charm. "I think it's a mix. It's the people, it's the location, it's the size. . . . I hope the newness never wears off," she says. "We've been on this ride for a few years, and I feel like it's only getting better." 💡



This feature kicks off a new column for 2024 in Illinois Country Living magazine called "Support Local." In it, we will highlight local businesses (preferably owned by electric cooperative consumer-members). If you are a small business owner and are interested in being featured, please submit the form on [icl.coop/local](http://icl.coop/local) for consideration. If you have questions, contact Lisa Cherry at 217-241-7952 or [lcherry@aieccoop](mailto:lcherry@aieccoop).





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# BIG IMPROVEMENTS FROM SMALL CHANGES

Taking care of mind and body promotes a balanced lifestyle

By Pamela A. Keene



**ALTHOUGH THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC** has subsided, its effects linger. The pandemic changed the way we interact with each other, how and where we earn a living, how we spend our free time and how we approach a healthy lifestyle. Life today is different than it was five years ago.

“During the pandemic, people faced more isolation, worry and fear, and this has left residual health and wellness issues,” says Ginger Nicol, associate professor of psychiatry at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis. “People stayed at home more, and their circle of face-to-face relationships shrank. They became more sedentary, influencing mental and physical health and wellness.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) National Center for Health Statistics, approximately 12% of those surveyed aged 18 and older between 2019 and 2022 said they regularly had feelings of worry, nervousness or anxiety.

“These feelings can lead to more serious mental health issues,” Nicol says. “However, there are ways that can improve your overall health and wellness — both mental and physical — to result in more day-to-day enjoyment and [better] health, and ultimately result in a better quality of life. Choosing to add more movement and activity, increasing time spent with family, and taking time for personal reflection can all contribute to better health and happiness.”

The pandemic cannot be wholly blamed for a decline in people’s mental and physical health. Today’s society is less active and exponentially more sedentary than it was several decades ago. As a result, both physical and mental health issues have increased.

Even before the pandemic, most Americans sat in front of some type of screen for much of their waking hours. With COVID-19, dependence on screens and technology expanded to fill the boredom.

Feelings of isolation and angst were magnified by less time outdoors and with family and friends. Depression, weight gain and other factors contributed to a decrease in physical fitness.

“Physical and mental health are inseparable,” Nicol says. “Research has shown that active people tend to have a better mental outlook and lead more enjoyable lives. The reverse is also true. People with a positive outlook are more likely to participate in some sort of regular activity.”

## What is wellness?

Numerous factors contribute to a healthy life, from nutrition and being active to getting

enough sleep and managing the aging process. Wellness encompasses both physical and mental health, and taking care of both mind and body promotes a balanced lifestyle.

“Our needs change as we grow older,” Nicol says. “It’s important to be aware of these changes and how we can address and adjust to them without compromising our wellness. Being responsible for our aging can help us reduce risk of disease, such as diabetes, stroke, heart attack and cardiovascular issues, depression and anxiety.”

Many things can contribute to a longer and more fulfilling life, such as regular wellness visits with a primary care physician to stay on top of potential health concerns; completing age-appropriate testing, such as colonoscopies and cancer screenings; and being willing to adjust eating, behavior and lifestyle habits.

“Prevention is the best approach to manage aging, and the sooner you can identify an issue, the better chance you have of making a meaningful change,” Nicol says. “Starting good behavioral practices for both physical and mental health can help your body and mind be more resilient and handle more serious challenges.”

### Physical improvements

Making small physical changes to add movement every day is one of the first ways to improve health and fitness. Getting up from a chair can be a revealing way to test physical ability.

“Some people simply cannot rise from a seated position without either using their arms to push themselves up or rocking several times to gain momentum,” Nicol says. “I’ve seen people in their 30s and 40s who have difficulty standing from sitting in a chair or on the sofa. If this is difficult for you, it’s a good idea to practice a little every day until you can rise unassisted.”

“As we age, our muscles lose mass and volume, plus our tendons get tighter. By tackling this basic movement, you can begin to increase your physical strength and mobility, as well as improve your balance and help prevent falls.”

According to the CDC, one in five falls causes serious injuries. Each year, more than 3 million older people are treated in emergency departments for fall injuries,

which are the most common cause of traumatic brain injuries.

Falls are one of the main causes of nonfatal and fatal injuries. Whether they’re caused by tripping, losing balance, vision problems or health problems, they can result in broken bones, head injuries, cuts and bruising.

“Simple things — like practicing standing on one foot while brushing your teeth — can help improve your general core strength,” Nicol says. “If you can improve your ability to stand up from sitting and also increase your confidence in your balance, you’re making good headway toward a healthier and safer life.”

### Brain health

Technology is a huge distraction in creating a healthy life. It can prevent people from relaxing, letting go of anxieties or working through challenges.

“Train your brain to let go of external diversions by turning off your smartphone, taking a walk in a park without handheld devices or simply finding a quiet place to sit and daydream for a bit,” Nicol says. “Daydreaming can be a powerful tool to help your brain slow down to the external stimuli and allow you to notice things you’d ordinarily glance over.”

Nicol suggests using a positive trigger to help increase awareness and to help with relaxing.

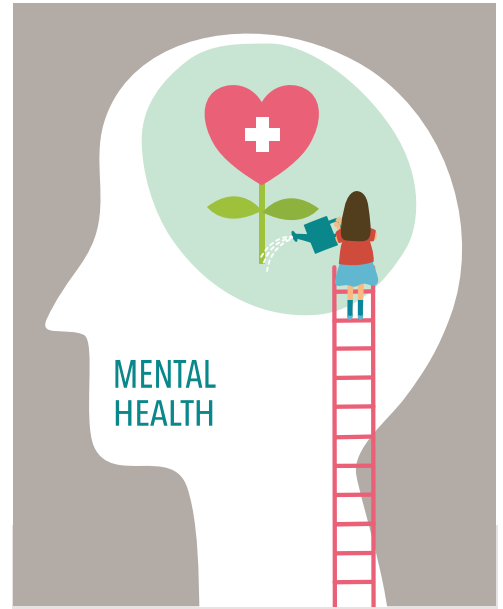
“Perhaps you’ve gone on a vacation and remember a pleasant sight, sound or feeling that can take you back to that time — the deep blue of the ocean, the sound of leaves rustling on a chilly fall day or seeing a stunning sunset,” she says. “Use that to disconnect from the worries of the day and reconnect with yourself.”

Other ways to unwind can include reading just for fun, spending an hour in the garden, pursuing a favorite hobby or experiencing a new one as a way to give your mind a rest.

“We spend our lives in front of screens, and we just don’t get outside enough to simply reflect and be present in the moment,” Nicol says. “Some people meditate, others practice yoga, but the secret is to find a way to slow down your brain waves and clear your mind. Give it time to refresh, and you’ll be surprised how much happier you can be.”

Health and wellness are parts of life’s journey that require heightened awareness and a commitment to make changes when necessary.

“Adding more movement each day, taking time to build meaningful social connections and allowing yourself to unplug from time to time can do wonders for your mental and physical health,” Nicol says. 💡



### Mental health resources

- If you are thinking about suicide, worried about a friend or loved one, or in need of emotional support, reach out to the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. Call or text 988 or go to [988lifeline.org](https://988lifeline.org).
- Find a comprehensive list of topics related to mental health, including eating disorders, helping a loved one cope with mental illness and warning signs of mental illness, at [psychiatry.org/patients-families](https://psychiatry.org/patients-families).
- Watch YouTube videos that cover topics such as, “What Is Anxiety?” “An Overview of Depression,” “Social Media and Children’s Mental Health” and “What Is Addiction?” at [youtube.com/@AmericanPsychiatricAssociation](https://youtube.com/@AmericanPsychiatricAssociation).
- Read up on suicide prevention information, from the risk factors and warning signs to action steps to help someone in emotional pain, at [psychiatry.org/Patients-Families/Suicide-Prevention](https://psychiatry.org/Patients-Families/Suicide-Prevention).

Source: American Psychiatric Association, [psychiatry.org](https://psychiatry.org)



French toast



Made-to-order omelet

## A bounty of Bonnies

By Les O'Dell

**ONE WOULD CERTAINLY EXPECT** to find a restaurant with the name Bonnie Cafe in the little Jefferson County village of Bonnie, just east of Rend Lake in southern Illinois. That makes sense, and there is, in fact, a Bonnie Cafe there — but it's not the only one on the map. There is also a Bonnie Cafe up the road in Mount Vernon. And yet another is located in Centralia. The towns of West Frankfort and Nashville have Bonnie Cafes, too.

Indeed, there is a whole family of Bonnie Cafes, which also is appropriate, given that the enterprise is a family-run and family-focused endeavor operated by three generations of the owners' family.

"We're just a little family business — me, my brothers, mom, dad, grandma — and we've built our way up with good home-cooked food and good service, where we treat our customers like they are

family to us," says Brittany O'Dell, who runs the restaurants along with her parents and siblings. "We just want to make sure everyone feels special when they come in our door; everyone is family to us."

Officially, there are five Bonnie Cafes in the area. O'Dell's parents, Brian and Melissa Hubbard, opened the flagship restaurant on Illinois Route 37 in Bonnie more than 10 years ago. A second location in Centralia opened in 2017, and Mount Vernon was added to the list in 2019. This location is currently found in the Mount Vernon Airport. The family has also franchised the restaurant to locations in West Frankfort and Nashville.

Adding to the bounty of Bonnies are two more franchised restaurants in the Lake of the Ozarks area of Missouri. "We've built a reputation we are proud of," O'Dell says. "When people want to join us with [their

own] restaurant, we're more than happy to offer them a hand."

While each of the locations has slightly different offerings, O'Dell says the approach is the same at all of the restaurants, that being great service and a full menu of "traditional American fare." Breakfast is one of their special features — in addition to the wide range of choices that can be ordered any time of day, some of the locations offer an "all-you-can-eat" breakfast, including eggs, pancakes and French toast, several different proteins, and, of course, biscuits. Plus, in Mount Vernon, a weekend breakfast buffet is available offering, among other things, a made-to-order omelet bar and pastries.

O'Dell says students from nearby Rend Lake College are big fans of the abundant breakfast options, particularly after class and athletic practices. "It's especially popular with the students," she says.

Lunch and dinner menus include the usual cafe classics like fried chicken, burgers and meatloaf, but visitors will also find some of the unexpected: steaks, pizza, all-you-can-eat crab legs and a seafood boil, for example. Each of the locations has regular specials and a discounted senior menu for lunch as well.

However, while the food is definitely a draw, the roots of the family's focus at all the Bonnie Cafe establishments are relationships — with each other, employees and their patrons.

"Our customers are family," O'Dell says. "I want to know what's going on with Aunt Sheila. Is she getting better? Can I send over some chicken and dumplings to help? That's what we're about. It's all just good food, good people, just regular family stuff." 📍

**Editor's note:** Les O'Dell, writer of this article, and Brittany O'Dell of Bonnie Cafe are not related.

## LET'S EAT!

### Bonnie Cafe

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[thebonniecave.com](http://thebonniecave.com)

#### HOURS

Mon-Sat: 6 a.m.-8 p.m.

Sun: 6 a.m.-3 p.m.



Fried chicken, mashed potatoes, carrots and a roll



## Pizza topping perfection

AS WE RING IN the New Year, but before our resolutions begin, let's have a pizza party. Pizza is one of my favorites, because you can put whatever you want on it, and it will likely taste delicious. All pizza topping recipes here were made with a 12-inch premade pizza crust; however, use any crust or dough of your choice. Just remember to adjust temperatures and baking times based on what you use. Most of all, have fun with your own pizza creations and don't feel guilty about eating a slice (or two) every once in a while. 🍷

### WE NEED RECIPES!

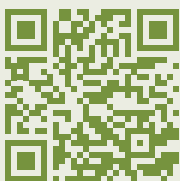
#### Upcoming recipes

Citrus

World foods

Potluck recipes

Please email recipe submissions or questions to [finestcooking@icl.coop](mailto: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](http://finestcooking.com).



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



GREEK CHICKEN PIZZA

### Greek Chicken Pizza

Submitted by Vanessa Caton, Norris Electric Cooperative

Servings: 8

- 1/2 cup mayonnaise
- 1 cup Feta cheese, divided
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 pizza crust, prepared
- 1 cup spinach
- 1/3 cup sun-dried tomatoes
- 1/4 cup kalamata olives, sliced
- 1-1/2 cups grilled chicken, diced

Preheat oven to 425 F. Mix together mayonnaise, 1/2 cup Feta cheese and minced garlic. Spread the sauce over the prepared crust. Spread spinach, sun-dried tomatoes, kalamata olives and grilled chicken over the pizza crust. Top with the remaining 1/2 cup Feta cheese. Bake for 15 minutes. Nutrition information: 152 calories; 6g fat; 268mg sodium; 18.2g carbohydrates; 7.9g protein.

### Homemade Pizza Sauce

Submitted by Donna Nadig, JCE Co-op

Makes: 6 quarts

- |                                     |                             |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 2 cups onion, diced                 | 2 tablespoons basil         |
| 2 cups sweet pepper, diced          | 2 tablespoons thyme         |
| 16 cups tomato juice                | 2 tablespoons parsley       |
| 1/2 cup garlic, minced              | 1/2 cup sugar               |
| 3 tablespoons olive oil             | 1/8 cup salt                |
| 3 tablespoons oregano               | 1/2 teaspoon nutmeg         |
| 3 tablespoons paprika               | 1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper |
| 3 tablespoons fennel seeds, crushed | 4-5 cans tomato paste       |

Blend onions and sweet peppers until smooth. Combine all ingredients in a large pot and bring to a boil on the stovetop. Reduce to a simmer and cook down to pizza sauce consistency. Place in small containers and freeze or use a pressure canner to preserve.

## Mac and Cheese Pizza

Servings: 8

- |                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil | 1 cup shredded colby jack cheese, divided |
| 1 clove garlic, minced               | 1/4 cup whole milk                        |
| 2 cups macaroni and cheese, prepared | 1 premade pizza crust                     |
|                                      | Hot sauce, optional                       |

Preheat oven to 425 F. In a small bowl, stir together olive oil and minced garlic, and set aside. In a small saucepan over medium-low heat, stir together 2 cups of macaroni and cheese, 1/2 cup shredded cheese and 1/4 cup of milk. Stir until cheese has melted and remove from burner. Brush prepared pizza crust with garlic and olive oil. Top with mac and cheese mixture. Sprinkle the remaining cheese over the top. Bake for 15 minutes. Serve with hot sauce, if desired. **Editor's note:** Velveeta Shells and Cheese was used for this recipe; however, use any prepared mac and cheese of your choice. It could be leftover homemade mac and cheese or from a box. Nutrition information: 332 calories; 29.3g fat; 225mg sodium; 13.8g carbohydrates; 5.8g protein.



MAC AND CHEESE PIZZA

## Barbecue Chicken Pizza

Submitted by Kenna Rathai, Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative

Servings: 8

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1 prepared pizza crust                       | 1/4 cup fresh flatleaf parsley, chopped       |
| 1/2 cup barbecue sauce                       | 1 8-ounce package colby jack cheese, shredded |
| 2 chicken breasts, cooked and diced          | 1/4 cup Parmesan cheese, grated               |
| 1 small red onion, sliced                    | Salt and pepper, to taste                     |
| 1 small can black olives, drained and sliced |   |

Preheat oven to 425 F. Spread barbecue sauce on pizza crust. In a large bowl, combine chicken, onion, olives, parsley and 1-1/2 cups of shredded cheese. Spread the chicken mixture over the pizza crust. Toss Parmesan with the remaining cheese and sprinkle evenly over the pizza. Bake for 15 minutes. **Editor's note:** While a storebought barbecue sauce was used here, the submitter provided a homemade barbecue sauce recipe: Whisk together 2 cups ketchup, 1/2 cup apple cider vinegar, 1/4 cup brown sugar, 2 tablespoons honey, 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce, 1 tablespoon lemon juice, 1 teaspoon all-purpose seasoning and 1/4 teaspoon hot sauce in a saucepan over medium heat. Let it bubble, reduce to low and simmer for 10 minutes. Nutrition information: 480 calories; 34.7g fat; 2,009mg sodium; 10.3g carbohydrates; 30.3g protein.



BARBECUE CHICKEN PIZZA

## Cabbage Pizza

Submitted by Colleen Gill, Rock Energy Cooperative

Servings: 8

- |                                      |                                    |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1 tablespoon butter                  | 2 cups mozzarella cheese, shredded |
| 1/2 head cabbage, shredded           | Salt and pepper, to taste          |
| 1 prepared pizza crust               |                                    |
| 1 pound sausage, browned and drained |                                    |

Preheat oven to 425 F. Melt butter in a skillet over medium heat and add the shredded cabbage. Stir until the cabbage is wilted. Top pizza crust with cabbage, sausage and cheese, in that order. Bake 15 minutes. Remove from oven and let stand for 5 minutes before cutting. Add salt and pepper, to taste. Nutrition information: 171 calories; 15.3g fat; 5,088mg sodium; 3.6g carbohydrates; 5.3g protein.



CABBAGE PIZZA

# A home in full bloom

Add color and fragrance indoors

**MANY POPULAR HOUSEPLANTS HAVE** uniquely shaped or colored leaves. They add a natural flair and graceful texture to our typically static indoor spaces. While foliage does not lack, we often reserve colorful blooming plants for our outdoor gardens or patios, but this is not necessary.



frequently to maintain the surrounding humidity level, too.

## Kalanchoe

This waxy-leafed succulent is low maintenance and has colorful blooms. Kalanchoe flowers can be red, pink, yellow or white. Cut off all the blooms once they fade to encourage new buds to form. Make sure the soil dries out between watering, as this plant can be easily overwatered.

Kalanchoe grows best in bright, indirect sunlight and may get leggy in low-light conditions. It can also be easily propagated by stem or leaf cuttings to create new plants. Place the plant outside in the summer to grow during the summer

months. Bring them inside before the first frost; they will develop flower buds in response to the long nights of fall.

## Miniature rose

Instead of an arrangement of cut roses that will die in a couple of weeks, give someone the whole plant, only a miniature version. The delicate miniature buds can be found in red, pink or white and can be deadheaded to encourage new blooms.

When growing them indoors, they need bright sunlight in a south-facing window and constant temperatures ranging from 60-75 degrees Fahrenheit. Lightly mist the foliage daily to maintain the humidity level around the plant.

They can also be planted outdoors (in a container or the

ground) in the summer, but remember to bring them back in before the first frost. Most miniature roses will go dormant in the winter and begin to grow again in the spring.

## Cyclamen

These plants with heart-shaped leaves have unique foliage and showstopper flowers that can bloom for four to six weeks. Flowers can be a variety of shades of red, pink and white. Water cyclamens at the base of the plant when it dries out, soaking the soil until water flows out the bottom drainage holes. Cyclamens grow best in bright, indirect sunlight and thrive in cooler temperatures, between 55-60 F.

Cyclamens will go dormant after they bloom — foliage will yellow and die down to the soil. Remove the dried foliage and place the container in a cool, dark place for two months. After the dormancy period, resume water and add cyclamen bulbs to a new container of soil and place it in bright, indirect light; new foliage should start growing soon with blooms following a couple of months after.



Cyclamens

Blooming houseplants are great alternatives to traditional bouquets of cut flowers when celebrating a milestone or expressing your appreciation. They can be enjoyed for many months and add color and a delightful fragrance to their indoor space. 💡

**Orchids grow well indoors** while adding bright, vibrant color to home decor.

With a little care and maintenance, many blooming plants can thrive in your house or office and rebloom multiple times.

## Orchid

Many orchid species grow well indoors. Phalaenopsis are commonly found in stores and are the easiest to care for. While they can be a challenge to rebloom, they will if placed in a window with bright, indirect light. Orchids also need a good source of humidity. Place them in your kitchen or bathroom or on a tray of gravel and water.

Water orchids weekly until water flows out the drainage holes and fills the tray below, allowing it to dry out between watering. Water orchids with collected rainwater or distilled water. Mist the plant



**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.



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## Snowy shenanigans

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*Egyptian Electric Cooperative Association*
2. **MELISSA STUFFLEBEAM**  
*Spoon River Electric Cooperative*
3. **MYERS WALKER**  
*Egyptian Electric Cooperative Association*
4. **VALERIE LEWIS**  
*Clinton County Electric Cooperative*
5. **DIANE TURCZYNSKI**  
*JCE Co-op*
6. **JANET NIEZGODA**  
*Corn Belt Energy Corporation*

### UPCOMING THEMES

March - Sports

April - Water

May - Point of view

June - Youth photographers (entries by readers ages 17 and younger)



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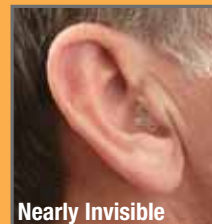
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