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 CO-OP
NEWS

EXIT
263

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.



PHOTO COURTESY OF VISITMO.COM

Illinois Country Living

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PHOTO COURTESY OF PISTOL CITY RESTAURANT



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

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Craig Sondgeroth

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Lisa Cherry

CHIEF CREATIVE OFFICER
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**CREATIVE SERVICES
COORDINATOR**
Kayla Adkins

GRAPHIC DESIGNERS
Jen Danzinger
Meghan Jenkins

CONTRIBUTORS
Chris Enroth
Pamela A. Keene
Les O'Dell
Nick Thomas

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.

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Keep decisions local

Legislative proposals would decrease member control and cost efficiency

WHEN ELECTRICITY CAME TO Illinois, for-profit companies focused on bringing it to the densely populated areas of the state. The reason was obvious — electric infrastructure served many more customers in these areas and made it more economical.

However, people in rural Illinois remained without electricity. In the 1930s and '40s, farmers and other leaders formed not-for-profit electric cooperatives to bring electricity to those areas left in the dark. These electric co-ops had (and still have) two advantages: member control and cost efficiency.

First, everyone receiving electricity not only became members of the cooperative, they also became owners. Electric co-ops are different than for-profit utilities because the members own and control their utility. This is why members of your cooperative democratically elect those who serve on the co-op's board of directors during each year's annual meeting.

Any member-owner can run for the board, and if the membership is ready for a change, they can vote in a new director. It is a true democracy. Most other Illinoisans have no such control over their electric supplier.

Second, electric co-ops are cost-efficient. As not-for-profits, any amount collected by the cooperative that exceeds the cost to run the co-op is returned to its members; these funds are known as capital credits. An electric co-op may average four consumers per mile of electric line, while a for-profit utility might average 40. For electric cooperatives to succeed with this lack of density, cost-efficient operation is critical.

Unfortunately, both member control and cost efficiency are currently threatened by proposals in the Illinois General Assembly. If voted into law, one proposal would force electric co-ops to implement one-size-fits-all excess self-generation net-metering policies. This would significantly

change a core principle of not-for-profit electric cooperatives — local control providing consumers a direct voice in utility decisions.

We oppose taking away our local and transparent process and handing off that control to the Illinois Commerce Commission. Decisions about an electric co-op should be made by its board of directors. Each director is democratically elected and accountable to the members.

I'm proud that electric co-op members in Illinois have installed a large number of renewable energy systems (almost 6,000), but the finances of an electric cooperative are like a seesaw. If the General Assembly requires electric co-ops to subsidize members who have solar generation, then members without it will pay for that subsidy indirectly. An electric co-op board of directors considers the interest of all members, including the low-income person who cannot afford to subsidize their neighbor's solar energy system.

Another proposal would require electric co-ops to file integrated resource plans with the state of Illinois. The state's electric co-ops serve primarily rural areas downstate, which is a small percentage of Illinois consumers. Co-ops already plan for generation resources for many years in the future, which includes a diverse energy portfolio because members need electricity that is affordable and reliable.

For many years, electric cooperatives have added and will continue to add renewable and carbon-free resources to their energy portfolios voluntarily, without a mandate or arbitrary dates. It makes no sense for Illinois to require small electric cooperatives to deal with bureaucratic red tape when they already plan on how to generate affordable and reliable power.

The Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives continuously fights for the interests of electric cooperatives. I encourage you to reach out to your state legislators and let them know that you strongly oppose any legislation that would decrease member control and cost efficiency and ultimately increase rates for co-op consumer-members.



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



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April 8 is National Lineworker
Appreciation Day.

#thankalineworker



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Photo courtesy of Maribel Esquivel

APRIL CHECKLIST

Dial 811. April is National Safe Digging Month. Protect yourself and underground utilities by calling 811 before any digging project to have them marked.



Protect roadside crews. Remember to slow down and stay



focused when approaching roadside work zones. Do your part to keep roadside crews, drivers and passengers safe.

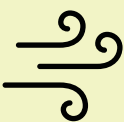
Thank a lineworker.

Electric lineworkers provide an essential service to keep electricity flowing. Take time to thank lineworkers at your electric cooperative for the work they do.



Tip of the month.

Heating and cooling account for a large portion of energy use in homes. Make sure air registers are accessible, open and not covered by furniture, rugs or other items.



Celebrate those who keep the lights on

Fast facts about lineworkers

You may not think about them until the power goes out, but electric lineworkers protect our homes and communities 24 hours a day. In April, we celebrate Lineworker Appreciation Day to honor those who power our lives. Here are some quick facts about lineworkers and the work they do.

Lineworker history. Lineworkers first appeared during the 1840s to spread telegraph service across the U.S., stringing wires between trees and other natural objects. It didn't take long to realize tall poles were more practical.

What lineworkers do. Restoring electricity after a power outage is just one of their duties. Lineworkers also install and connect new power lines to homes and businesses, maintain and perform upgrades to improve the electric grid, diagnose and pinpoint power delivery issues, plan and manage large-scale projects, and ensure safe work practices.

Lineworkers are responsible for maintaining and upgrading the nation's electric grid, which connects more than 7,300 power plants to 145 million consumers through 60,000 miles of high-voltage lines, millions of miles of distribution lines and more than 50 million transformers.

Geared for safety. Lineworkers climb with up to 40 pounds of safety gear and tools. To stay safe while working, they typically wear hard hats, safety glasses, flame-resistant clothing, arc flash protective clothes, rubber gloves and sleeves, climbing belts and fall-protection harnesses.

The wild side. Squirrels, snakes and birds are major causes of power outages, and lineworkers see plenty of them while working. When your office is outdoors, these encounters are part of the job.

On-the-job training. Becoming a journeyman lineworker typically requires a high



school diploma or equivalent, training and a paid apprenticeship, which typically spans four years. Apprentice lineworkers receive hands-on training in the field before advancing to journeyman status.

Inspiring safety. Each year, roughly 60,000 lineworkers respond to devastating storms and the damage left behind. In addition to extreme weather, lineworkers face many dangers, including electric shock, falls from elevated work locations and roadside traffic accidents. High injury rates among early lineworkers led to the creation of apprenticeship programs and organized labor throughout the industry.

Safety is always the No. 1 priority, which is why lineworkers continuously receive training to stay mindful of safety requirements and up to date on the latest equipment and procedures. Lineworkers power our lives. The next time you see one, remember to thank them for the essential work they do. 💡

Scott Flood, NRECA

Sudoku

by Myles Mellor and Susan Flanagan

Solution on page 33.

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

IL ENTERTAINMENT CORNER



Fans of the popular TV show “This Is Us” may not realize that a former Illinoisan is one of the “big three” – Jack (Milo Ventimiglia) and Rebecca (Mandy Moore) Pearson’s children. Actor Justin Hartley, who portrays Kevin

Pearson, was born Jan. 29, 1977, in Knoxville, Ill., according to his official biography, and later majored in history and theater at Southern Illinois University Carbondale and University of Illinois Chicago.

Although the majority of his award nominations and wins were for that iconic role, including two Critics Choice nominations for Best Supporting Actor in a Drama Series and two Screen Actors Guild Awards for Outstanding Performance by an Ensemble in a Drama Series, Hartley was also nominated for a Daytime Emmy earlier in his career for Outstanding Lead Actor in a Drama Series as Adam Newman on “The Young and the Restless.”

His latest project, “Tracker,” premiered earlier this year on CBS and can be streamed on Paramount Plus. The crime-solving drama features Hartley in the lead role as Colter Shaw, who utilizes his expert tracking skills to help solve mysteries. 💡



PHOTO COURTESY OF SARAH BIELEMA

Member services rep helps save a life

Electric cooperative member services representatives are regularly relied upon to quickly solve problems, handle complaints and make other quick decisions. In the case of JCE Co-op’s Jamie Twombly, they can also be lifesavers.

Last fall, the lead member care representative for the co-op was taking a payment over the phone from a member when she noticed he suddenly seemed incoherent and was slurring his words.

“When I asked for his account number, he would go from numbers to letters,” said Twombly. Even though she was eventually able to process the payment, “I could just tell something was off, and I felt uneasy.”

Twombly pulled aside Member Care Manager Sue Glick, and they located the member after a quick check of the co-op’s backlog of recorded calls. “Once we pulled a prior call and listened to it, we knew right away that something didn’t sound right,” Twombly said.

She immediately called 911 and asked if emergency responders could conduct a wellness check at the member’s home. The co-op employees were relieved to later learn that the member survived after receiving emergency care at a local hospital.

While there’s no shortage of stories of lineworkers going above and beyond the call of duty when they encounter emergencies while on the job, member care representatives are also well-positioned to save the day.

“Jamie did the right thing,” Glick said. “This was one of those feel-good moments, when she listened to her instincts and took 5 minutes out of her day to make a big difference in someone’s life.” 💡

Victoria A. Rocha, NRECA

Bernson, Mirasola honored for their service

Two Illinois electric cooperative employees were nationally recognized for their service in promoting the cooperative difference and supporting the growth of Touchstone Energy Cooperative. Kevin Bernson of Shelby Electric Cooperative (SEC) and Deb Mirasola of Dairyland Power Cooperative were presented with Touchstone Energy’s Distinguished Service Awards during the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association’s PowerXchange conference in San Antonio, Texas, in early March.



PHOTO COURTESY OF NRECA

Touchstone Energy Cooperative Board President Tim McCarthy (far left) and Executive Director Jana Adams (far right) present Deb Mirasola and Kevin Bernson with Distinguished Service Awards.

Bernson has worked in the electric co-op program for nearly 35 years and is SEC’s vice president of media and public relations. SEC was one of the first cooperatives to join Touchstone Energy.

Bernson served six years on the cooperative relations advisory committee and was elected to the national board of directors in 2017 for Touchstone Energy. He has also been one of the biggest advocates for the hot and cold air balloon program, serving in many roles for Cooperative Balloon Associates. According to Touchstone Energy, Bernson has helped shape the direction, strategy and visibility of the Touchstone brand and has set a legacy of how a distribution co-op can strengthen its relationship with its member-owners.

For more than 35 years, Mirasola has been a trusted source at Dairyland Power Cooperative, the Wisconsin-based generation and transmission (G&T) cooperative that supplies electricity to JCE Co-op in northwestern Illinois. She is the G&T’s director of member relations and chief communications officer.

Continued on page 10

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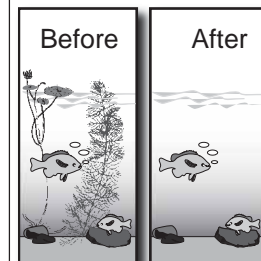
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For the latest currents news, go to www.icl.coop

Service awards - continued from page 8



Where is it?


The winners of the February hidden object contest were Bernard Richter of Clinton County Electric Cooperative and Carol Johnson of Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative. Congratulations! Your ICL campfire mugs have been sent.

March's clock was hidden in the orange shirt on page 28. 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 Pretzel Day on April 26, be on the hunt for a pretzel. 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 or letter to Illinois Country Living, Hidden Objects, 6460 S. 6th St. Frontage Road East, Springfield, IL 62712. We will NOT accept entries via phone call or email. All entries for that month must be post-marked 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. 

According to Touchstone Energy, Mirasola supported and nurtured Touchstone Energy from the start. She was elected to the national board of directors for Touchstone Energy and served as the organization's president from 2021 to 2023, helping to establish and build this national brand that promotes the cooperative difference.

Touchstone Energy is a national network of electric cooperatives across 46 states that provides research, communications resources and employee training programs to help its member cooperatives better engage and serve their members. 



Van Dyke represents Illinois during PowerXchange

The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's annual PowerXchange conference, held this year March 4-6 in San Antonio, Texas, is the largest annual gathering of electric co-op leaders. While the conference is designed to discuss and embrace the challenges of the ever-changing electric industry, it also highlights future leaders. One of those leaders present this year was Paris Van Dyke.

In June 2023, Van Dyke was one of 53 high school students who represented Illinois' electric and telephone cooperatives during the annual Youth Tour in Washington, D.C. During the trip, Van Dyke, who represented Wabash Communications Co-op, was selected by her peers as the 2023-24 Youth Leadership Council (YLC) representative for the Illinois delegation. The YLC is a yearlong appointment.

She described her time as Illinois' YLC representative as nothing short of extraordinary. "I totally enjoyed going on Youth Tour and [to] my state capitol, meeting legislators and so many people from across the world," Van Dyke said. "It's insane to think of the number of connections I have made that I hope will help me in my future. It's just been awesome to get to see everyone and everything that our world has to offer, and it's opened my eyes to the co-op world."


While she has visited Texas before, this was her first time in San Antonio. She enjoyed seeing

the iconic San Antonio Riverwalk and experiencing the culture of southern Texas, but she valued most the time spent getting to know other YLC representatives from across the nation.

"I've gotten to know them all personally, and it's just been great," Van Dyke said. "We have just had so much fun together, getting to meet people from different backgrounds. It's such a great opportunity for all of us to grow. We all talked about that and the different paths we have planned for life. It's cool to see all the different routes everyone wants to take."

In just a few short months, Van Dyke's service as Illinois' 47th YLC will come to an end, when a new YLC is selected during this year's Youth Tour in June.


"I want to say a big 'thank you' to Wabash Communications and the rest of Illinois' cooperatives," she said. "It has been incredible getting their support and seeing what they do in my community and throughout the state of Illinois. If it weren't for them, we wouldn't have reliable and affordable energy and power. It's so important to see, even in my small community, how that affects everyone's lives."

To her high school peers, she advised, "Take every opportunity that comes your way, because you never know what it will lead to." 

Last chance to apply for lineworker scholarship

Time is running out to apply for the LaVern and Nola McEntire Memorial Lineworker's Scholarship. This 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. The deadline to apply is April 30, 2024. Scan the QR code or go to aiec.coop/lavern-and-nola-lineworkers-scholarship to learn more. 



Across

- 1 Green and lush
- 6 Earth Day month
- 9 Annoyance
- 10 Made a continuous murmuring sound, like a stream
- 11 Submerged
- 12 Links' goal
- 14 Pure mountain
- 15 Layer that absorbs ultraviolet rays
- 16 Thumbs-up vote
- 18 Male turkey
- 19 French for "the"
- 20 Infant
- 23 Environmental watchdogs, abbr.
- 25 Trophy

27 Teeming

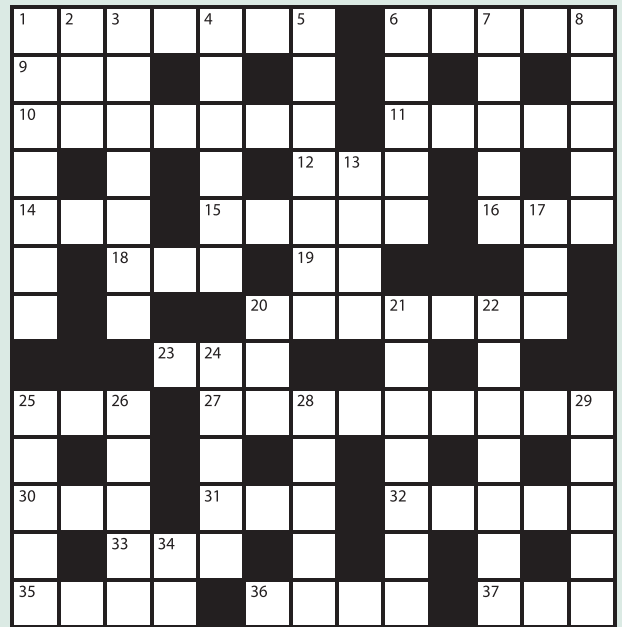
- 30 Started a camp fire
- 31 Slide on snow
- 32 Inspire (with)
- 33 Cow food
- 35 The "right coast"
- 36 Where flowers and vegetables grow
- 37 Succeed

Down

- 1 Pulsing with energy
- 2 Historical time period
- 3 Renaissance
- 4 Flowering
- 5 Young frog
- 6 Unclouded sky, blue color

7 Healthy red

- 8 Newly hatched caterpillar
- 13 Once more
- 17 Many, many moons
- 20 Grab
- 21 Rabbits, affectionately
- 22 Multi-colored phenomenon often seen in spring
- 24 Johnny-jump-up, for example
- 25 Have a young cow
- 26 Trails
- 28 Green or black fruit used in salads
- 29 The color of spring
- 34 Location word



Solution on page 33.

UNCOVER THE POSSIBILITIES

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AREA CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

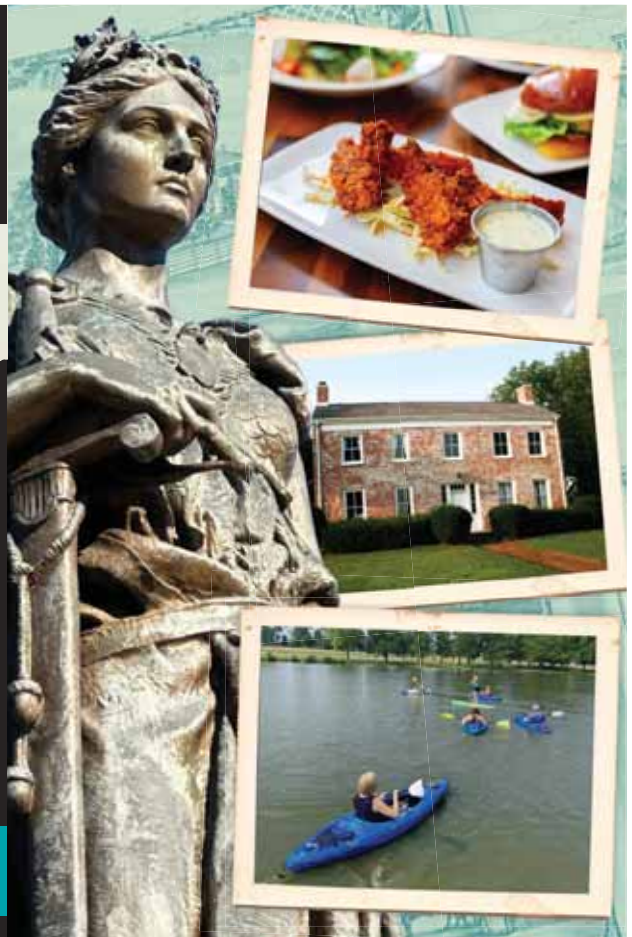
Uncover the Possibilities

DISCOVER ILLINOIS' BEST-KEPT SECRETS

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illinois



LET'S GO!

2

Abe for All
SPRINGFIELD
Abraham Lincoln
Presidential Museum
hosts a free sensory-
friendly experience

6-7

**SpringFest
Vendor Fair**
CARBONDALE
This outdoor
extravaganza
highlights local
businesses, artisans
and entrepreneurs

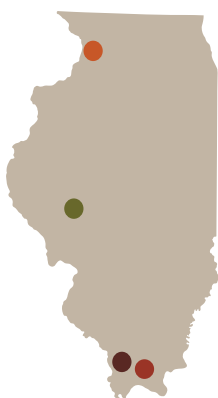
6, 13, 20, 27

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7

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Total Solar Eclipse at Bald Knob Cross

APRIL

8

Experience a solar eclipse phenomenon with the whole family on April 8. Bald Knob Cross has a full day of fun planned, with music, food trucks and activities for kids. There will be two viewing options. Serious viewers (with cameras or telescopes) can purchase a 10×10-foot space on the property. The second option for the casual viewer allows participants to bring a chair or blanket and find a spot. Entry for children under age 15 is \$5. Gates will open at 9 a.m., but plan to arrive by 10 a.m. The partial eclipse will begin around 12:30 p.m., with totality around 2 p.m.

April 8, 2024: all day

- Bald Knob Cross of Peace, 3630 Bald Knob Road, Alto Pass
Admission: varies
618-713-8516 or baldknobcross.com/tickets

Junque Jamboree

APRIL

27

Enjoy a day of shopping in southern Illinois. The outdoor vendor event will be held around the Vienna Town Square, with antiques, collectibles, primitives, crafts, home decor, clothing, jewelry and more. Food and ATMs will be available on site.

April 27, 2024: 8 a.m.-3 p.m.

- Vienna Town Square Mall, 114 N. 4th St., Vienna
Admission: free
618-638-6495 or fb.me/e/4wLUuLqAe



Model Train Open House

APRIL

27-28

The Northwestern Illinois Model Railroad Club will host an open house of its model trains. There will be two types of layouts, so be sure to check out the main floor and the basement. Both layouts are HO scale and are very different designs. Several trains will run throughout the weekend. The \$1 donation at the door helps pay the bills and keep the lights on. Make sure to bring a camera as the busy BNSF railroad is just across the street.

April 27-28, 2024: 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

- Northwestern Illinois Model Railroad Club, 101 Main St., Chadwick
Admission: \$1 donation
815-238-0245 or facebook.com/NWILMRR

High Tea and Table Games

APRIL

28

This gathering combines the elegance of high tea with the camaraderie of table games, promising an afternoon of fun and relaxation in the historic parlors of Governor Duncan Mansion. For \$100 per table, groups of four can immerse themselves in the mansion's grandeur, enjoying a selection of teas served by the Daughters of the American Revolution. Guests are encouraged to bring games or cards to enjoy with friends, family or fellow history and tea enthusiasts. Call 217-553-7023 to reserve a table.

April 28, 2024: 1-4 p.m.

- Governor Duncan Mansion, 4 Duncan Place, Jacksonville
Admission: \$100 per table, reservations required
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7 Ways Our Amazoy™ Zoysia Lawn Saves You Time, Work and Money!

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Plant Amazoy in an old lawn or bare ground. Set plugs into holes in the soil checkerboard style. Plugs spread to create a lush, thick lawn, driving out weeds. Easy instructions included with every order.

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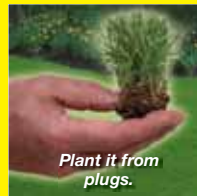
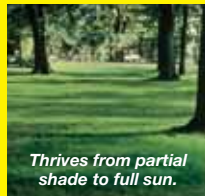
No weeding means no costly chemicals. Amazoy Zoysia lawns naturally resist insects, so you'll save money, while helping to protect the environment. Never expose your family and pets to weed killers and pesticide poison.

4 FOR SLOPES, PLAY AREAS, BARE SPOTS AND PARTIAL SHADE

Can't beat Amazoy as the low-cost answer for hard-to-cover spots, play-worn areas, partial shade and erosion on slopes.

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"The hotter it gets, the better it grows!" Amazoy Zoysia thrives in blistering heat, yet it won't winter-kill to 30° below zero. It goes off its green color after hard frosts, and begins regaining its green color as temperatures in the spring are consistently warm.



6 CHOKES OUT CRABGRASS AND WEEDS ALL SUMMER

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7 NOW 3 WAYS TO START YOUR AMAZOY ZOYSIA LAWN!

1) Freestyle Plugs come in uncut sheets containing a maximum of 150–1" plugs that can be planted up to 1 ft. apart. Freestyle plugs allow you to make each plug bigger and plant further apart – less cutting and planting – you decide.

2) Precut Super Plugs come precut into individual 3"x3" plugs ready-to-plant (minimum 1 per 4 sq. ft.). They arrive in easy to handle trays of 15 Super Plugs. Save time and get your new lawn faster!

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Max Plugs	Free Plugs	Grass Sheets	Your PRICE	+Shipping	SAVINGS
450	—	3	\$ 47.50	\$26.50	—
750	+150	6	\$ 72.50	\$32.50	29%
1100	+400	10	\$110.00	\$47.50	36%
2000	+1000	20	\$185.00	\$75.00	47%
3000	+1500	30	\$245.00	\$90.00	55%

Super Plugs Precut plugs 3 inches by 3 inches READY TO PLANT Packed in trays of 15 Super Plugs. Plant minimum 1 plug per 4 sq. ft.

Super Plugs	Free Plugs	Tray	Your PRICE	+Shipping	SAVINGS
15	—	1	\$ 27.50	\$18.00	—
25	+5	2	\$ 42.50	\$25.00	26%
60	+15	5	\$ 97.50	\$37.50	41%
120	+30	10	\$150.00	\$60.00	54%
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Tailgate n' Tallboys Festival, Clinton, Iowa

IOWA'S SECRETS (REVEALED)

Here in Iowa, we're ready to start sharing our secrets. Not only do our borders contain some of the best family entertainment around, but Iowa also boasts endless outdoor recreation options as well as a thriving music scene. So, pack up the car and hit the road for a fun family adventure at these destinations.



Scenic Sights

For relaxing outdoor fun, head to Newton's **Maytag Park** to take on its 18-hole disc golf course. The challenging course winds throughout the park and features various shot distances and difficulty among the many trees and rolling hills.

Leave land behind and experience the waters of the majestic Mississippi River with the **Riverboat Twilight** in LeClaire. They offer one and two-day cruises and a 90-minute sightseeing excursion from aboard an authentic Victorian-era riverboat.

Discover all the best things about lake life in **Okoboji**, which is surrounded by approximately 15,000 acres of glacier-carved Iowa Great Lakes. Enjoy endless fun on a boat, at the beach or at a waterside restaurant. For fun on land, ride or walk around the lakes on the Iowa Great Lakes Trail.

Winding through Jackson County, the Maquoketa River offers a relaxing float or paddle route. Grab a canoe, kayak, paddle board or tube rental from **Maquoketa River Rental** for a stress-free water adventure. They offer two- to eight-hour floats with pick-up and drop-off. Reservations must be made for parties over two, so be sure to plan accordingly.

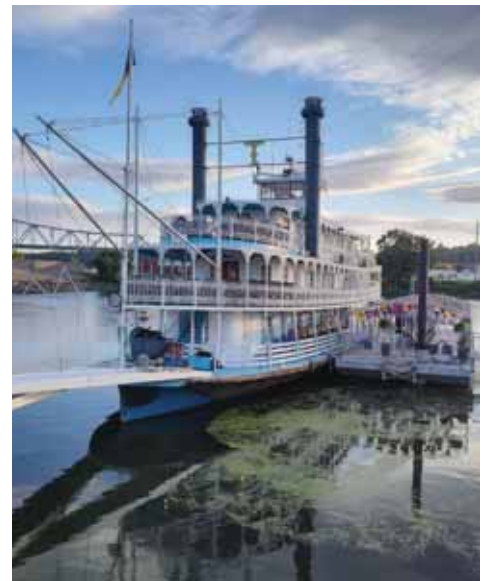
Sensational Sounds

For a one-of-a-kind experience music experience, stop by the **Surf Ballroom and Museum** in Clear Lake, a must-visit Iowa attraction. One of the last remaining ballrooms in the Midwest and the final concert site of Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens and J.P. Richardson is filled with music artifacts and stories. It also welcomes national and local artists to the stage for performances year-round.

Held in Sioux City's charming Grandview Park, **Saturday in the Park** is one of the area's best music events. Bring a chair and choose a spot to listen to the eclectic mix of music groups as they perform on stage at the park's unique bandshell, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The event is held every July and is free to attend.

Recognized as the largest free marching band competition in the Midwest, Mason City's **North Iowa Band Festival** is a Memorial Day weekend event staple. Each year's event features a different theme that inspires each music acts' song choices, merchandise and parade floats. This year's festival is throwing it all the way back to 1985 with the theme "80s Rewind."

Returning to Clinton for the second time, **Tailgate n' Tallboys** brings big name acts to entertain the crowd for three thrilling days in June. This year's event welcomes headliners Jelly Roll, Bailey Zimmerman and Shinedown as well as Nate Smith, The Cadillac Three and more to Riverview Park.



Explore even more of what Iowa has to offer and build the perfect itinerary by visiting traveliowa.com.



Learn more about these exciting destinations.



Electric co-ops and other electric utilities are required to document that every foot of power line and other electrical equipment are a safe distance from trees and vegetation.

Protect new trees by planting them in safe places

“WHY CAN’T THEY JUST leave my trees alone?” If you’ve ever wondered that while watching a tree-trimming crew change the look of your favorite tree, you’ll find the reason in rural Ohio. Just after 4 p.m. on the steamy Thursday afternoon on Aug. 14, 2003, a sagging transmission power line came in contact with a nearby tree. In minutes, 45 million Americans and 10 million Canadians had no air conditioning or any electric power.

Transmission lines are critical to the U.S. power grid. These lines crisscross North America, some held up by slim poles, while others hang below towers resembling science-fiction robots. The giant wires carry enough electricity to power more than a million homes, moving from distant power plants to electric co-ops and other users.

Federal regulators placed most of the blame for the 2003 blackout on technology that failed to reroute power properly, but they also recognized the problem would not have happened if the tree had been a safe distance away from the line. The outage event led to strict rules your electric co-op and other electric utilities are required to follow to prevent large-scale blackouts.

Co-ops are required to document that every piece of equipment and every foot of power line are a

safe distance from trees and vegetation. If your home received a visit from a tree-trimming crew, it was because your trees were closer to power lines than the rules allow.

The last thing your co-op wants to do is alter or remove part of your landscaping. They’d rather help you avoid conflict between electricity and greenery altogether. How? By reminding you to plant your new trees, shrubs or other vegetation where they won’t grow into power lines or other electric equipment.

SAFETY TIP

Plant the right tree in the right place. The larger the tree’s potential growth, the farther it should be planted from power lines.

Whether you want to plant a tree or something else, it’s helpful to consider how it’s going to grow over the next 20-30 years. Consider both the eventual height and how wide the canopy of branches is likely to spread.

Even small trees and shrubs should be planted at least 20 feet from power lines. If you can’t plant that far away, choose a species that won’t top out at more than 15 feet high. Trees that will be 40 feet high or less should be at least 25 feet

from power lines, and larger trees should be at least 50 feet away.

Thinking about what’s above the ground is only part of tree-planting safety. Before you grab a shovel, call 811 to make sure you won’t accidentally cut into any underground utility lines. The service will send people to your property to mark the approximate locations of utilities. Because it can be challenging to pinpoint exact locations, only use hand tools while digging within a couple feet of the markings.

Trees aren’t the only type of vegetation requiring thoughtful planting. If there’s a pad-mounted transformer in your yard, you might be tempted to hide it behind colorful flowers and shrubs. Unfortunately, if there’s a problem, crews will need clear access to the transformer. That’s why you must keep plantings at least 10 feet from the transformer’s doors and 4 feet from its sides. Otherwise, crews may need to remove part of your landscaping.

Finally, if you notice your trees have grown dangerously close to power lines, don’t reach for your chainsaw. Let your electric co-op know. Tree trimming is more dangerous than most people realize, and you don’t want to find yourself in the emergency room or be the person who plunges your neighbors into the dark. ⚡



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.

Celebrating this beautiful planet

Why taking steps to conserve energy matters

EARTH DAY IS APRIL 22, a time when we celebrate the planet we are lucky to call home. During this day of appreciation, I encourage you to take action at home by making changes to conserve energy. If we all contribute, even small adjustments and changes to how much energy we use can have positive impacts.

Electricity is essential to our daily lives. It gives us opportunities to learn, keeps us safe and comfortable and provides entertainment. The downside is that every source of energy generation has consequences. Fossil fuels emit carbon. Hydropower dams limit the passage of migrating fish. Even solar panels can't be made without mining minerals. Using less electricity is a way to mitigate the impact of producing the electricity that powers our lives.

Before diving into ways to use less energy, it's important to know the difference between conservation and energy efficiency. Energy efficiency refers to equipment that uses less energy to do the same job. For example, ENERGY STAR-certified refrigerators keep your food just as fresh as standard models but use about 9% less energy to do it, according to the U.S. Department of Energy.

Conservation is using less energy by changing behavior and practices. For example, adjusting your thermostat to be closer to the temperature outside or turning off the lights or a ceiling fan when you

leave the room conserves energy. Conservation has the best return on investment. It's often free and can save a little or a lot, depending

on what you are changing and how drastic of a change you make. hot water in your home conserves energy. Wash clothes in cold water. When washing dishes, don't let the hot water run longer than necessary.



on what you are changing and how drastic of a change you make.

Let's start with what's typically the biggest energy user in the average household: heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) equipment. Save energy while you sleep by programming your thermostat to be a few degrees closer to the outside temperature at night. In colder climates, add an extra blanket or comforter to your bed to keep you warm.

Typically, the second biggest energy user is the water heater. Replacing an electric storage water heater with a heat pump/hybrid water heater is a great example of an energy-efficiency project. Adjusting the temperature setting to the recommended 120 degrees and using less

Earth Day also lends itself to thinking of ways we can connect with each other and limit our screen time. Look for electricity-free opportunities for your family or community. I like to unplug and get outside with friends and family. Going for a hike, a walk or even just spending time in your yard or local park is a great way to reconnect with others and nature. Before you head out, adjust that thermostat and turn off everything possible. Unplug chargers from outlets and turn off all electronics and lights.

I am grateful for this planet we call home. It offers so much to sustain us. Any small changes we can make to benefit it can add up if we all pitch in. 💡

The best way to save on energy is to not use it. Unplug and get outside to reconnect with nature. Before heading out, adjust the thermostat and turn off everything possible, including chargers, electronics and lights.



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

Lost in the screen

Overcoming nomophobia in the digital age

IF YOUR HEART RACES and you become anxious when you cannot use your cellphone, you might have nomophobia. The recently coined

adults are most likely to be addicted to using their cellphones for the largest chunk of the day (and night), all ages can be guilty of overuse.

to spending 7-plus hours on their phones daily. On average, people across the globe spend 3.25 hours on their phones per day.



Cutting back

If you would like to free up some of your day, be more productive at work or home, or have grown weary of eye strain and brain drain, there are many ways to help cut back on phone use.

Reduce notifications. Start by turning off all notifications except for calls, messages and calendar events. You can always turn notifications back on if necessary. The idea is to pare down the types of notifications you receive so you are only alerted when real people try to reach you.

Download tracking apps. These apps will show your amount of screen time and will help you limit time spent on your device and other apps.

Set boundaries. Keep your phone away from the dinner table so you can fully enjoy meals with loved ones, and don't bring your phone into your bedroom. Studies have shown that the blue light emitted by your cellphone can negatively affect your sleep quality, not to mention that it's a safety risk to place a charging cellphone on or under soft bedding or a pillow.

Make goals. Determine other ways to spend your time, especially if you find yourself using your phone out of boredom.

Smartphones have helped us have everything we need to connect to the outside world, right in the palm of our hands. The trick is not letting them take over in-person, real-life experiences and face-to-face connections that are so essential to our well-being. 💡

word is used to describe a psychological condition in which people have a fear of being detached from cellphone connectivity. The term is short for "no mobile phobia."

Nomophobia falls under the definition of "phobia for particular/specific things," as described in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. The term "phobia" can be misleading, because having nomophobia is considered an anxiety disorder. Although teens and young

Cellphone use

According to Exploding Topics, a website dedicated to discovering trends, the average cellphone user checks their phone 58 times each day. More than half of the phone checks happen during work hours, and half of all screen-time sessions begin within 3 minutes of the last.

Furthermore, 46% of Americans believe they spend an average of 4 to 5 hours on their smartphones each day, while 11% admit



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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Go with the slow

Boats, trains and automobiles



By Pamela A. Keene

THINK ABOUT YOUR LAST vacation. What do you remember? Did you hurry from one activity or place to another, getting a bird's-eye view of too many things to really enjoy the journey?

If so, there's good news. Use 2024 to do something different. Try exploring iconic highways, riding the rails to multiple destinations or boarding a riverboat on the country's waterways.



PHOTO COURTESY OF SEEING SOUTHERN

“There’s a growing trend called ‘slow tourism,’ a chance to enjoy the journey, make memories, eat like a local, participate in experiences and discover the heart of a destination,” says Berkeley Young, president of Young Strategies Inc., a tourism research and consulting firm that works with destinations across the country. “You can travel by road, rail or boat, set your own pace and create lasting memories — all without a passport.”

SheBuysTravel CEO Kim Orlando says she has seen an increase in domestic travel for families, girls’ getaways, affinity groups and multiple generations.

“Domestic destinations are packed with experiences that range from riverboat cruising to road trips, and it’s usually more affordable than traveling overseas,” she says. “Vacation varieties are endless: mountains, deserts, oceans, lakes. Busy cities and charming small towns offer travelers diverse cultural experiences and cuisines.”

Orlando says traveling domestically has many advantages. “The language, roads and monetary systems are familiar, and time differences are not as drastic, giving you more fun time in your destination and less stress. You can literally hop in your car and go.”

Asphalt icons

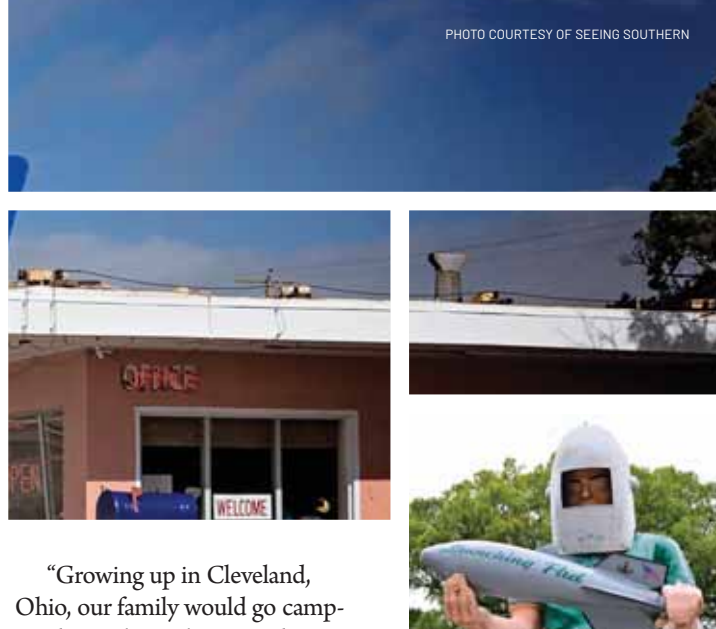
When asked about America’s iconic drives, a few big names may pop into mind: The Pacific Coast Highway from Dana Point, Calif., to Leggett, Wash.; Historic Route 66 from Chicago to Los Angeles; and U.S. 1 on the East Coast from Key West, Fla., to Fort Kent, Maine.

“Taking a road trip along any of America’s iconic highways opens up a whole world of itineraries, regardless of where you live and what you enjoy,” Young says.

“There’s a growing trend called ‘slow tourism’ ... travel by road, rail or boat, set your own pace and create lasting memories.”

Choosing a highway route rather than a connect-the-dots system of interstates can make for a more relaxing vacation and become a chance to learn by getting off the interstate and enjoying the journey, Young adds.

Kim Taddie, a retired nurse practitioner, never saw the ocean until she was nearly 22 years old and working in Maryland. These days, she travels around the globe with her husband Gordon McLachlan. They have spent much of their 40-year marriage on the road.



“Growing up in Cleveland, Ohio, our family would go camping, but only to places nearby, so I’d never really been anywhere until my early 20s,” says Taddie. “When we met, Gordon [was] an avid traveler. It was a perfect match. I wanted to travel more, and Gordon was living my dream.”

Aside from their globetrotting, they’ve traversed the U.S., mostly on the road in their motorhome. One of her favorite courses is Route 66, the famed highway between Chicago and southern California.

“Route 66 was the first transcontinental highway; traveling along the two-lane asphalt road is like going back to the 1950s with [its] roadside attractions, motor courts, crazy statues and all kinds of nostalgia,” she says. “It’s not as popular as a travel route since the interstates have opened up, but it is so worth the drive because of what it represents in our country’s history.”

McLachlan is quick to mention the 1,650-mile Pacific Coast Highway, which hugs the shores of the Pacific Ocean from Dana Point, Calif., north to Leggett, Wash.

“Spectacular views, the chance to see whales and other wildlife, plus memorable sights like Big Sur between Carmel and San Simeon, the Avenue of the Giants in Weott, Calif., and the Heceta Head Lighthouse in Oregon, are why we keep going back,” he says. “Camping in state parks along the way allows us to take our time and discover other treasures, too.”

Littlefamilyadventure.com's Nicky Omohundro writes about family travel. "Our country's iconic highways are a great place to start for a family road trip," she says. "Each has its own trademark stops."

She advises tackling renowned highways in sections, and she often travels with no cellphone, just a map. "For me, when we do this, it's more about the journey than the destination," she says. "And we're never disappointed."

"Kitschy street art in many of the towns, retro diners, motor courts and gas stations are just a few of the reasons we love Route 66," Omohundro says. "You almost have to see it to believe it. Giant statues of American music and film stars like Elvis, James Dean and Marilyn Monroe at the Braidwood, Ill., Polk-a-Dot Drive In and the Catoosa Blue Whale in Oklahoma prove the point. The route doesn't take itself too seriously."

In addition to Route 66, travelers can hop on several other iconic routes in Illinois. The Great River Road, which follows the Mississippi River along the state's western border, connects 10 states. Along the Illinois border, some popular sites include Pere Marquette State Park in Grafton, Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site in Collinsville, Fort de Chartres State Historic Site in Prairie du Rocher and Old Chain of Rocks Bridge near Madison.

U.S. Route 50 connects Ocean City, Md., to West Sacramento, Calif., and cuts through southern Illinois between Vincennes, Ind., and St. Louis. Following the road



PHOTO COURTESY OF AMTRAK

west, you'll find yourself along The Loneliest Road in America upon reaching Nevada.

The Historic National Road, which originally began in Cumberland, Md., and ended in Vandalia, Ill. (the state capital at the time), was the first highway built entirely with federal funds. It has since been extended to St. Louis.

Rolling down the river

The sight of a paddle-wheeler cruising down the Mississippi River conjures up romantic images of an earlier time in America's history, when waterways transported pioneers and settlers westward. Today, traveling by riverboat or small ship has been significantly modernized, yet the romance and adventure remain.

"People today love the different twist on vacations in the U.S. that our small ships offer, and traveling the country's waterways by riverboat opens up a whole new experience that's like a flashback in time," says Alexa Paoella, manager of public relations for American Cruise Lines. "No passport is required, and your hotel travels with you from port to port, so you unpack once. It's a much more relaxed pace for discovery, with more time to explore small river towns and picturesque shoreside villages, especially the places large cruise ships don't go."

American Cruise Lines' fleet of 19 ships sail America's coastlines

and rivers. Accommodations vary from 90 to 180 passengers, depending on the vessel. Classic paddle-wheelers and modern riverboats navigate the Mississippi and Columbia rivers.

The company's small cruise ships transport guests along both coasts of the country with itineraries from Alaska and Puget Sound to cruises exploring the New England coast to the Florida Keys. It has also added national park tours to its offerings.

"All our cruises offer a variety of experiences and activities ashore each day, providing access to larger cities but also the opportunity to relish the unique experiences only found in the smaller towns along the way," Paoella says. "Onboard, curated entertainment and chef-prepared daily meals complement the comfortable and relaxing travel that comes with sailing on America's waterways."

Ride the rails

With more than 21,400 miles of routes and more than 500 destinations across 46 states and parts of Canada, travel via Amtrak connects people to big cities, small towns, national parks, historic sites, popular travel destinations and off-the-beaten path adventures.

"Train travel can be a good alternative to driving or flying, and these days, customers have many options when taking a trip by rail," says Kimberly Woods, senior public relations manager at Amtrak's Washington, D.C., office. "Diverse destinations and the variety of routes and accommodations broaden choices, whether you're traveling with children, as a couple, solo or with a group of friends."



PHOTOS COURTESY OF AMERICAN CRUISE LINES

PHOTO COURTESY OF VISITMO.COM



PHOTO COURTESY OF VISITMO.COM



Amtrak is the only national passenger rail service in the U.S., and in 2023, more than 28 million customers chose Amtrak for travel, according to the company's annual report.

"We're seeing a strong increase in people who choose to travel with us because of the convenience, the chance to see more of the country than flying, and the simple novelty of being on a train," she says.

Amtrak offers multiple options to travel short distances, like from Washington, D.C., to New York, Chicago to Milwaukee and to and from various locations in southern California.

Leisure travelers opt for overnight travel on several long-distance trains. The configurations of accommodations can include several types of service. First class offers private rooms with chairs that convert to upper and lower berths, larger bedrooms, family suites and accessible bedrooms. Coach cars have extra legroom and dedicated luggage storage.

The white-tablecloth dining car features traditional chef-curated menus. Customers can visit a cafe car to purchase more casual options for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Passengers can also bring their own food, beverages and snacks. Basic Wi-Fi is offered, and passengers can travel with small pets or bring their bicycles.

In the northeast between Washington, D.C., New York and Boston, customers are traveling for

work, vacation or maybe a day trip. However, as Amtrak's routes fan out westward, the number of leisure travelers increases.

"Chicago is our hub for western itineraries to Seattle, Washington state, Portland, Oregon, Oakland/San Francisco and Los Angeles, with a variety of other destinations along the way in large cities and smaller towns alike," Woods says.

Amtrak has named the California Zephyr as one of its most scenic routes, which begins in Chicago and travels through Omaha, Denver, Salt Lake City and finally to San Francisco.

In addition to direct routes, spur lines fill in across the lower half of the country. The Amtrak USA Rail Pass includes hop-on/off access for 10 segments over 30 days for a single fare.

"When you travel by train, you can be as busy or relaxed as you want," Woods says. "You'll have space to work, read, watch movies on your devices, have good old-fashioned face-to-face conversations or just sit back and look out the window to enjoy the scenery."

Best resources for local knowledge


"Some of the best planning resources are state tourism divisions and local convention and visitors bureaus," Young says. "Their job is to know their states, towns and counties and to provide easy ways to take a vacation that suits your interests and lifestyles."



Every state has a dedicated department with staff whose job is to promote tourism by creating numerous trip plans for all interests, such as music, culinary, cultural and historic. Research them first before drilling down to specific stops along the way via city, town or county-specific visitors bureaus and welcome centers.

"State and local agencies work with local attractions, accommodations, dining and special events and maintain extensive information about what to do, the best times to visit, outdoor activities and much more," he says. "They have access to information about recommended routes, and many times offer promotions for hotels, restaurants and attractions."

Young says that true leisure travel is about the experience, but many vacationers are in a hurry to get where they're going and miss interesting discoveries along the way.

"Just remember, don't sweat the tiny details. Determine the path you want to explore, book your transportation and some lodging, and get out there," he says. "Fill in your itinerary as you go along. Meet locals and eat local. Be adventuresome; go find the real America." 

A hidden GEM



Minerals from around the world
on display in central Illinois

By *Nick Thomas*

ONCE HOME TO A massive private mineral collection, the Funk Gem and Mineral Museum still houses an impressive geological display at the Funk Prairie Home off the Shirley exit along I-55, about 7 miles southwest of Bloomington.

The collection was assembled by LaFayette Funk II (1897-1992), grandson of Marquis De LaFayette Funk, who in turn was the grandson of Isaac Funk, a wealthy rancher with a Midwest farming and agricultural empire stretching over 20,000 acres. A member of the Illinois Senate and friend to Abraham Lincoln, Isaac founded Funks Grove in the 1820s; today it's an unincorporated community in McLean County and a National Natural Landmark site.

The Civil War-era home of Funk Sr. now sits nestled on almost 30 acres and about 100 feet from the mineral museum built in the early 1970s to house his grandson's ever-expanding collection of rocks and minerals from around the world.

"The Funks have been a prominent family in Illinois for many generations," says Bill Case, live-in curator of the museum for more than 30 years. "They were not only entrepreneurs, but teachers and very generous humanitarians — the museum has always been free to visit. It contains less than 20% of what LaFayette [Jr.] collected during his lifetime, because he gave the rest away to schools, universities and museums to use in teaching. If reassembled today, it would represent the biggest one-man private collection of minerals in the world."

LaFayette Jr. first developed an interest in rocks and minerals while accompanying his son on a field trip for a geology class at the University of Colorado Boulder. Observing mineral specimens during the excursion, he quickly discovered a new hobby. As a construction engineer for his father's seed company, Funk traveled the world helping communities develop better farming techniques and was often unexpectedly rewarded with samples from geological and mining sites.

"When people he was assisting discovered his interest in collecting minerals, he was given access to sites nobody else had, even the Smithsonian," explains Case. To illustrate, he recounts the story of another occasion, when Funk visited Colorado during the construction of tunnels through the Rocky Mountains.

"They were blasting, and somehow LaFayette was at the site when they hit a vein of rhodochrosite," says Case, referring to the vivid rose-colored, manganese-based mineral widely used in jewelry and Colorado's state mineral since 2002. "The engineer told him it would be buried under tons of rock, and LaFayette asked if he could grab some before the explosions were set off. He was given a 5-gallon bucket, a hard hat, and told he had 10 minutes to collect what he could. I've had museum people stand here in tears because we have the only raw rhodochrosite from that blast zone on the planet."



In the museum, the diversity of the mineral world is displayed in a floor-to-ceiling wall comprised of hundreds of illuminated translucent slabs of colorful minerals.

While the museum also holds impressive collections of fossils, dinosaur bones, Native American relics, Civil War antiques, Chinese soapstone carvings, bowls, shells and even an assortment of horse-drawn carriages and sleighs, it's the massive assemblage of minerals and rocks that draws visitors. Even the building housing the museum, unassuming at first glance, is remarkable.

Its exterior walls are coated with 30 tons of rocks embedded in concrete, such as black hornblende, quartz and mica, that Funk transported from North Carolina. If illuminated with mercury lamps, the reflective minerals in the rocks produce an eerie evening glow.

Approaching the entrance, either side of the doorway is straddled with chunks of iron-infused petrified wood that Case delights in tapping to produce unexpectedly high-pitched notes, the product of what he calls a "rock xylophone." Proceeding through the front door, the diversity of the mineral world is displayed in a single floor-to-ceiling wall comprised of hundreds of illuminated translucent slabs of colorful minerals.

All painstakingly cut by Funk with a diamond saw and sandwiched between two sheets of glass, mineral slivers of green zoisite from South Africa and red corundum rubies, as well as fluorite, agate, chlorite, jasper and more are framed in wood from an old door that Lafayette obtained from a garage sale. "It's probably the only display like it anywhere on Earth," says Case.

Once inside the main area, wall-to-wall shelves display thousands of mineral samples of every color, shape and size imaginable. Themed glass-protected cabinets fill the room with more samples. A case of fluorite specimens presents a dazzling variety of colors, many from nearby mines in southern Illinois. Fluorite, a natural form of colorless calcium fluoride, can exhibit a range of colors depending on several factors, including the presence of trace elements.

Another case is stacked with dozens of shiny samples of pyrite (Fool's Gold), a brass-colored mineral featuring characteristic cubic crystals comprised of iron and sulfur. There's also an entire case of native

copper; a collection of copper minerals, such as azurite and chrysocolla in all shades of blue; a case of wulfenite (lead molybdenite), with its striking shades of yellow, orange and brown; and an entire room filled with fluorescent rocks that glow under ultraviolet light.

While much of the collection remains protected behind glass, hundreds of samples remain within reach of even the smallest curious hands. "Everything in the building that's not behind glass is touchable," says Case. "Teaching was very important to LaFayette, so he wanted visitors, especially children, to have direct access to many of the samples on display."

In addition to the collection itself, it's noteworthy that Lafayette only began gathering minerals in his early 50s. The tales surrounding his collecting expeditions could have formed an intriguing book.

"With his extraordinary mind and photographic memory, LaFayette could go days with only a few hours' sleep," says Case. "Despite living to age 94, it's heartbreaking [that] he succumbed to Alzheimer's and his memory slipped away before he could document the stories behind his mineral collecting adventures."

Long after his passing, LaFayette Funk's dedication to the collection, preservation and display of geological specimens continues to be evident in the gem and mineral museum bearing his name. It awaits all visitors desiring to learn about the rocks and minerals that have shaped our planet. 💡

LET'S GO!

The Funk Gem and Mineral Museum is located on the same site as the Funk Prairie Home at 10875 Prairie Home Lane in Shirley. Tours are free by reservation by calling 309-827-6792. Go to funkprairiehomemuseum.com to learn more.

Wulfenite with mimetite from Mapimi, Mexico





PHOTO COURTESY OF SARAH RITTER

Free Range Yoga owner Dawn Piper offers a variety of online sessions via Zoom.

SHOW SUPPORT

Free Range Yoga and Community Wellness Center

Macomb Square, 118 and 122 N. Lafayette St., Macomb
309-333-5069

freerangeyoga.us

Zoom and On Demand options available

Small business owners can request to be featured in the Support Local section of Illinois Country Living by submitting the form at icl.coop/local. Call 217-241-7952 for any assistance.

Mindful movement

Treating wellness as a whole

By Lisa Cherry

WHETHER AN AVID FAN of fitness or not, we are inundated with different ways to exercise. Losing weight is often the goal, but one small business owner believes weight loss should be a byproduct of moving one's body, not the sole reason for it.

For more than a decade, McDonough Power Cooperative member Dawn Piper has focused on offering students at Free Range Yoga and Community Wellness Center safe ways to increase their physical longevity and improve their quality of life. Those options include yoga therapy, strength training, Reiki and massage, among others.

Her business is located on the town square in Macomb, but classes are not limited to locals. When the pandemic hit, Piper was already offering online classes via Zoom, which ultimately sustained the studio during lockdowns. She has since added more studio space, additional virtual and hybrid sessions and expanded areas of wellness.

Originally from Missouri, Piper moved to the area 20-some years ago for a position with the Institute for Rural Affairs in Macomb. "What I gained from that was to help build community here," says Piper. About that time, she began taking yoga classes, and a few years later, teaching them.

Eventually, she felt life pulling her further in that direction. "It got to the point that I finally [thought], 'I'm not doing what I'm supposed to be doing,'" says Piper.

Now, the certified yoga instructor is also an internationally accredited yoga therapist. "I can meet people where they are, and not try to fix them, but offer some tools they can use to then help themselves and give them some autonomy," she says. "It's not about the pose; it's more about being with yourself."

Piper adds that yoga doesn't have to be scary. "I'm not going to put [people] into a pretzel shape," she laughs. "I want it to be playful, I want it to be light. And I want people to not be afraid of it. If I can get somebody over [that] threshold . . . that's all they need. I want to meet everyone, all ages, shapes, sizes, conditions, you name it."

She emphasizes that the center offers more than yoga. Her fellow instructors, who work as independent contractors, include her husband Tim, a professor at Western Illinois University and certified weightlifting coach, who offers personalized strength lab classes. His lifelong focus on strength training led her to weave it into her yoga practice.

Tai Chi, Qigong, circuit classes, dance and self-defense are other alternatives. "We choose [instructors] carefully based on the type of human they are," she says. "They have to really care about people."

She believes there are many benefits to movement — becoming more mindful, healing from physical or mental trauma and basic longevity — and that people must continue to challenge themselves, especially as they age.

"We don't grow if we don't face resistance. . . . I teach people who have had strokes, Parkinson's, I used to teach a person who was blind. There are no conditions that will keep you from being able to move your body in a better way," Piper says. "If you want to stay in your home . . . find somebody to help [you] develop some skills around movement."

"There's a saying, 'If you listen to the body when it whispers, you won't have to hear it scream,'" she adds. "You have to feel to heal." 🧘

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 **1-800-672-4723**. “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 **1-800-672-4723** 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: **ICLMB424** when you call.



By Les O'Dell

IT TAKES SOME EFFORT to get to Pistol City Restaurant. After all, the Randolph County community of Coulterville is not exactly on the beaten path. However, those who enjoy unique restaurants with great food made from scratch and lots of menu options should take aim for Coulterville.

“We’re kind of the 800-pound gorilla in town,” restaurant owner Kyle Hinnerichs says with a laugh.

“Coulterville is a wonderful little community ...

Its [population is] less than 1,000 people, but we serve far beyond that,” he says. “We regularly have people coming from

Belleville and St. Louis and even Carbondale and Marion. There are always people driving 40 to 50 miles to come here.”

In fact, he says the restaurant has a mailing list of more than 3,500 people, many from miles away. “When we sorted our list by zip code, we discovered a majority of the people on it were from more than 25 or 30 miles away,” he adds.

Many of those people make frequent trips to the restaurant, which Hinnerichs purchased nearly 15 years ago. They come for good food made fresh. “When I arrived, I think probably just 15% of the menu was made from scratch, and it has definitely been our focus to elevate that,” he explains, boasting that it now is nearing 100%. “That’s something we are proud of.”

Just a single item remains on the menu which is not made from scratch. “I think the only thing that isn’t handmade is the Bosco Sticks, which people love,” he explains of the stuffed pizza-like appetizers. Every other listing on the menu (which includes seafood, hand-rolled meatballs, burgers and sandwiches), as well as all of the offerings on the restaurant’s extensive buffet, is made fresh in the 150-seat restaurant.

“I don’t know of any other restaurant that has both a full menu and a whole



Pulled pork nachos



Fried chicken with mashed potatoes and green beans



Homemade pie

buffet,” he adds. The buffet, which is available during both lunch and dinner, is popular and known for its fried chicken. “We’re closing in on 2 million pieces of fried chicken served since I’ve owned the restaurant,” Hinnerichs says. “We go through thousands of pieces a week.”

The full buffet and extensive menu results in a sort of “double-barrel”-style kitchen. “It’s a beast,” he explains. “With having a full menu and a full buffet, we basically have to operate as two kitchens.”

He continues with an example of the work required to prepare everything in-house: “You can go anywhere and get a frozen mozzarella stick that someone has taken out of a case and thrown in a fryer. Here, we’re taking whole block mozzarella, cutting it by hand, breading it and frying it. We even fry the tortilla chips for nachos. I believe it’s the little things that make a difference.”

Despite the huge selection, Hinnerichs cautions customers to save room for dessert. “Everything on the dessert menu is also made

from scratch, from the crusts to the pie fillings and meringues. We have our own in-house baker who works five days a week, and she’s constantly making cakes and pies, doughnuts and pretty much anything you can think of,” Hinnerichs says.

If you wonder why a restaurant that serves comfort food and decadent desserts has a weapon in its name, Hinnerichs explains that it’s a nod to the community’s past and its lore. “I’ve heard that Coulterville was known as a really rough place 100 to 150 years ago,” he explains. “Supposedly, you didn’t want to get caught in Coulterville without a pistol.”

Previous owners used the legend as the basis for the eatery’s name and motif. Safe to say, the community and restaurant are much more welcoming than they may have been a century ago.

“We want everybody to know that when they are here, they are going to be treated like family,” he says. “We’re a blue-collar area, and we’re all about family. When people come in, they know they can get a downhome, country meal at a fair price,” he adds. 📍

LET’S EAT!

Pistol City Restaurant

505 E. Grand St., Coulterville

618-758-2443

pistolcityrestaurant.com

HOURS

Daily: 6 a.m.-1 a.m.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF PISTOL CITY RESTAURANT

Zesty delights

WHEN IT COMES TO citrus fruits, two varieties can always be found in my refrigerator at home. Tangerines are always on hand for snacking and lemons for cooking. Citrus, whether it's the juice or zest, adds vibrant flavors to recipes and can be used in a myriad of ways. From savory main courses to desserts to drinks, these versatile fruits add an extra boost to recipes. 💡

WE NEED RECIPES!

Upcoming recipes

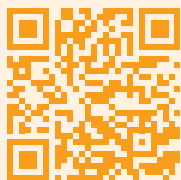
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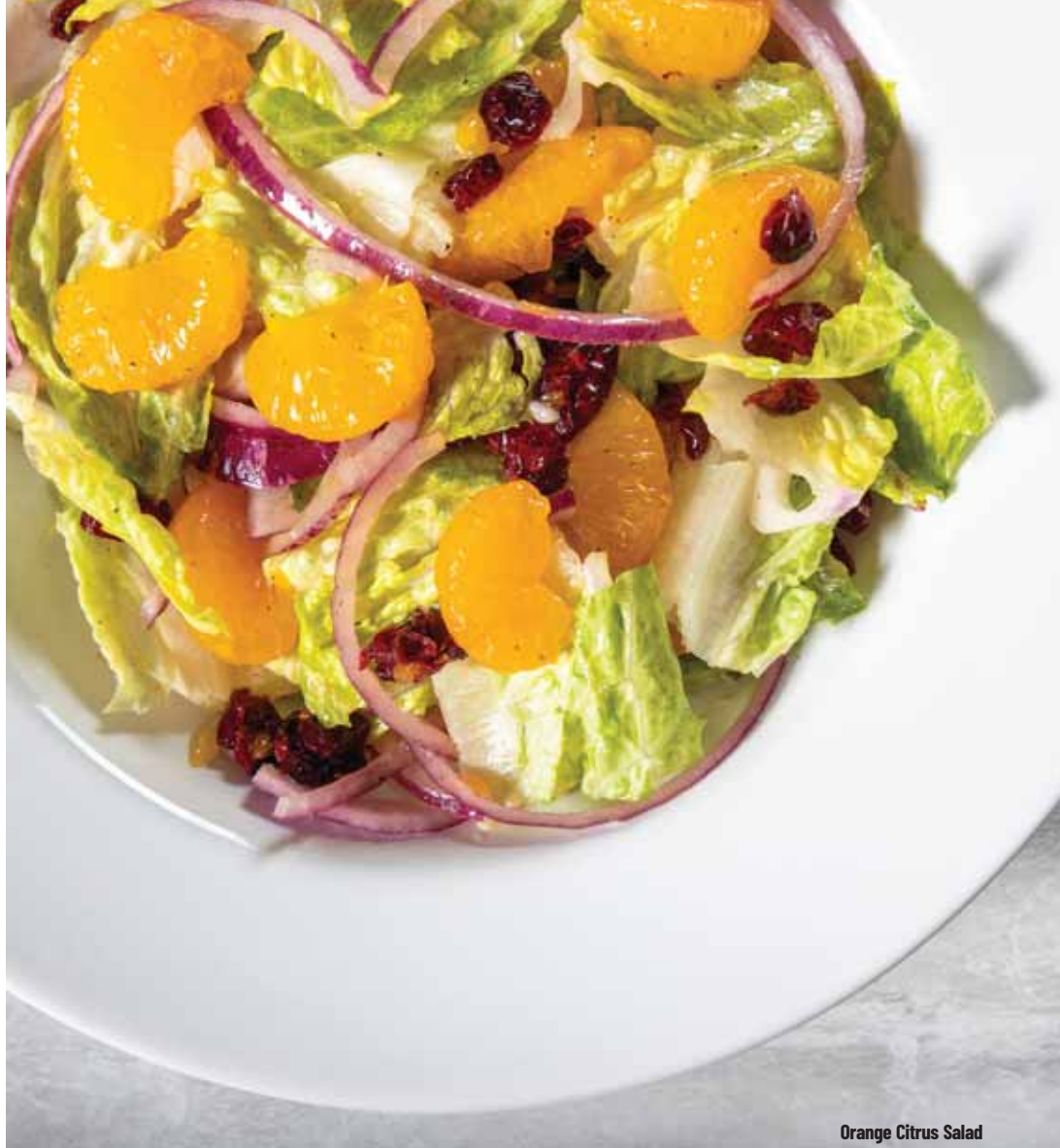
Microwave recipes

Egg dishes

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.



Orange Citrus Salad

Orange Citrus Salad

Submitted by *Curtis G. Quindry, Norris Electric Cooperative*
Servings: 4

- 1 head romaine lettuce or romaine hearts
- 1 can mandarin oranges, drained, or 3 clementines or tangerines, peeled and cut into sections
- 1 red onion, thinly sliced
- 1/2 cup dried cranberries

Dressing:

- 2 tablespoons orange juice
- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 1/2 cup vegetable or olive oil
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- Fresh ground pepper, to taste

In a serving bowl, toss salad ingredients. In a small bowl, whisk together orange juice and vinegar. Gradually whisk in oil and season with mustard, salt and pepper. Dress salad shortly before serving. Nutrition information: 283 calories; 25.4g fat; 328mg sodium; 15.2g carbohydrates; 1.4g protein.

Orange Glazed Chicken

Submitted by *Ginny Ratts, Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative*
Servings: 1

- 1 tablespoon flour
- 1/2 teaspoon salt, optional
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 1 boneless, skinless chicken breast
- 2 teaspoons vegetable oil
- 1 teaspoon orange marmalade
- 1 dash nutmeg
- 1/2 cup orange juice

Combine flour, salt and pepper and coat chicken breast with it. In a skillet, heat oil on medium and brown chicken, about 4-5 minutes on each side. Spread marmalade on top of chicken and sprinkle with nutmeg. Add orange juice and simmer for 10-15 minutes or until juices run clear. Nutrition information: 770 calories; 9.9g fat; 1,253mg sodium; 152.9g carbohydrates; 22.8g protein.

No-Bake Key Lime Pie

Submitted by Norma Morris, Menard Electric Cooperative

Servings: 8

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| Crust: | 1 can sweetened condensed milk |
| 1-1/2 cups graham cracker crumbs | 1/2 cup key lime juice |
| 3 tablespoons sugar | Zest from 2 key limes |
| 6 tablespoons butter, melted | Topping: |
| Filling: | 1 cup heavy whipping cream |
| 8 ounces cream cheese, softened | 3 tablespoons powdered sugar |
| 1 cup heavy whipping cream | Lime zest, optional |

Mix the crust ingredients and press into a 9-inch pie pan. Use the bottom of a flat glass or measuring cup to evenly press along the bottom and sides. Place in refrigerator until the filling is ready. In a large bowl, whip cream to stiff peaks and set aside. In another bowl, use the paddle attachment on mixer to beat the cream cheese until smooth. Add sweetened condensed milk, lime juice and lime zest and mix using the whisk attachment. Fold in the whipped cream. Pour into the chilled crust and refrigerate for at least 3 hours or overnight. Whip the cream and powdered sugar together until medium-stiff peaks form. Top the pie with the whipped topping. Add fresh lime zest, if desired. **Note:** To cut down on the sugar, substitute with artificial sweetener and replace homemade whipped topping with sugar-free Cool Whip. Nutrition information: 726 calories; 45g fat; 303mg sodium; 77.9g carbohydrates; 8.2g protein.

Butter Citrus Cake

Submitted by Julie Douglas, Shelby Electric Cooperative

Servings: 10

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 box butter golden cake mix, plus ingredients listed on box | 1 large box instant vanilla pudding mix |
| 1 small can mandarin oranges, undrained | 1 8-ounce container extra creamy Cool Whip, thawed |
| 1 large can crushed pineapple, undrained | Fresh mint, optional garnish |

Preheat oven as directed on cake mix box. In a large bowl, prepare cake mix according to package directions. Fold undrained oranges into batter until combined, reserving a few for decoration. Spray two 9-inch round cake pans with baking spray and divide the cake batter between pans. Bake according to directions on box. Once cool, remove from pans and cool completely on a wire rack. In another bowl, mix Cool Whip, undrained pineapple and pudding mix until well incorporated. Cover and refrigerate until the cake is ready to frost. Place one cake on a serving platter and add a generous amount of frosting. Place the second cake on top and finish frosting the top and sides. Decorate the top of the cake with remaining oranges and sprigs of mint. Serve cold and refrigerate leftovers. Nutrition information: 754 calories; 38.3g fat; 415mg sodium; 110.4g carbohydrates; 4.7g protein.

Delightfully Refreshing Cucumber Lemonade

Submitted by Jill Asbury, Egyptian Electric Cooperative Association

Servings: 6

- | | |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| 2 cups water | 2 cucumbers |
| 1 cup sugar | 12 lemons |

Prepare simple syrup by combining water and sugar in a saucepan. Heat until sugar dissolves without boiling the mixture. Set aside to cool. Slice 2 cucumbers and place in a food processor and pulse until there is only pulp. Strain the liquid. Juice 12 lemons. Mix the simple syrup, cucumber liquid and lemon juice together in a large pitcher. Pour over a tall glass of ice and garnish with a slice of cucumber and a wedge of lemon. Nutrition information: 144 calories; 0.2g fat; 2mg sodium; 38.1g carbohydrates; 0.7g protein.



No-Bake Key Lime Pie



Butter Citrus Cake

Spring into asparagus

ILLINOIS HAS EXPERIENCED A mild winter for 2024. Dandelions popped up in my yard on Feb. 8. March saw an early bloom for several trees, such as maples. However, even with these early flowers, there is one thing that really makes spring feel like spring — asparagus.



Asparagus is one of the few garden crops we grow that is a perennial. Plant it once, and it will come back each spring. Sounds too good to be true? The plant is easy to grow and can be found springing up in backyards around Illinois. So, how can you get asparagus off to a good start and keep it going season after season?

Selecting which type to grow

Asparagus plants are dioicous, meaning they are either male or female. While female plants tend to produce larger spears, they produce fewer of them. In addition, female plants will produce fruit and seeds, which take considerable energy from the plant, and

sprout new seedlings, which may cause overcrowding, making them weedy. As a result, most gardeners prefer the easy management of male asparagus.

While you can buy inexpensive asparagus seeds, many gardeners opt for asparagus crowns.

Crowns are 1-year-old plants that come from a known cultivar and will almost always be male. If you decide to grow asparagus from seed, you'll need to wait three or four years before you can start harvesting. With crowns, you can begin harvesting small amounts the year after they are planted.

Planting

Asparagus roots grow deep and spread out 5 feet or more. So, be sure your asparagus patch has plenty of room and is in full sun. Asparagus can be

planted as soon as the ground can be worked in the spring (typically March 15-April 15).

- Dig a trench that is 12-18 inches wide and 6 inches deep.
- Place the crowns 9-12 inches apart in the trench, making sure the bud side is up.
- Once the crowns are in the trench, you don't want to fill the trench with soil. Instead, cover them with 2 inches of soil and continue to fill the trench as the plants grow taller during the growing season.

Maintenance

The most common issue I encounter with asparagus is

controlling weeds. In the early spring before asparagus shoots emerge, shallowly cultivate your soil to eliminate weeds. Then, add a layer of mulch to help suppress weeds. As the growing season goes on, continue to remove weeds. Arborist wood chips, straw or shredded fall leaves work well as a mulch that will break down and add nutrients back to the soil.

Even though it can be a bit unsightly, it's best to leave the fern-like growth until it begins to die back in the fall. Like spring bulbs, the foliage of asparagus helps generate energy for the following year.

Harvest

Biting into a spear of freshly picked asparagus gives a satisfying crunch that can be enjoyed right in the garden, but questions often surround asparagus harvest. Picking too much too early will lead to weak plants and lower yields down the road. Here are some tips:

- The year you plant your asparagus crowns, avoid harvesting any. Let the spears grow and develop "ferns" (leaves).
- The year after planting, harvest for up to two weeks.
- In the third year, harvest for up to four weeks.
- Finally, in year four and onwards, harvest through May or June, as long as the spears are larger than 3/8 inch in diameter (the thickness of a pencil).
- Harvest spears when they are 5-8 inches tall by either cutting or snapping.

Asparagus is a versatile and nutritious vegetable that can be enjoyed in many ways. Once harvested, they can be roasted, grilled, steamed, sauteed, pickled or left raw. The options are endless. 💡



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

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UPCOMING THEMES

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

July - Sky

August - Vintage cars or trucks

September - Outdoor adventures



1



2



3



4



5



6

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