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Illinois Country Living

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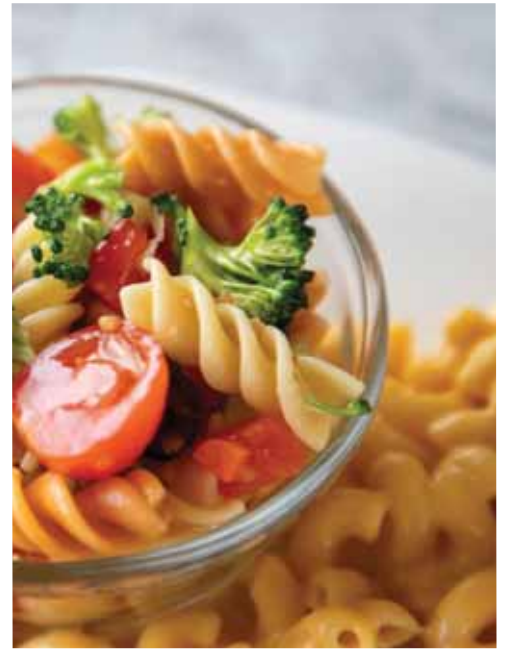
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IMAGE COURTESY OF VISIT UNFORGETTABLE FORGOTTONIA



PHOTO COURTESY OF STEPH MAZANOWSKI, MAZTER MINDZ MEDIA



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Featured photos by ICL's youngest readers.

On the cover: A Gloucestershire Old Spots pig at Winding Creek Farm

PHOTO COURTESY OF MAGGIE RAY

Paris Van Dyke and Aubrey Churchill represented Wabash Communications CO-OP during the 2023 Youth Tour. They are pictured at the National Mall in Washington, D.C.



Empowered by experience

A year as Illinois' YLC representative

TO SAY THAT SERVING as this year's Illinois Youth Leadership Council Representative (YLC) has changed my life forever would be an understatement. Being selected by Wabash Communications CO-OP, I attended Youth Day in Springfield as the first step in my yearlong journey.

That day in Springfield was filled with touring the Illinois State Capitol, meeting other students from across our great state, and speaking with state senators and representatives about the inner workings of our government. I knew from the moment I heard the 2022 YLC give her speech on that day that I wanted to be up on that stage the following year.

Starting the day with no previous knowledge as to what a cooperative stood for, I walked away with valuable knowledge that set me up for success in educating others about cooperatives. I got the news from Wabash Communications that it would sponsor my trip to Washington, D.C., and I joined 53 other students from across the state of Illinois for the trip.

While in D.C., we experienced the amazing monuments, museums and people in our nation's capital city. I enjoyed touring the United States Capitol and having the privilege of laying the wreath at The Tomb of The Unknown Soldier. Throughout the trip, we had lessons that taught us all about cooperative principles and values. We also had the chance to put the skills we learned to the test as we got to form our very own cooperative — The Chip and Pop Co-op.

I enjoyed serving on the co-op board and selling drinks and chips to our members on the trip. I walked away with some of the best friendships and memories that I will cherish forever.

In the fall, I had the opportunity to help Wabash Communications teach about broadband in the grade school classrooms at my local school in celebration of National Cooperative Month. I loved reading books to the young students to teach them internet safety.

In March 2024, I attended the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's PowerXChange conference in San Antonio, Texas, where I met the other YLC representatives from each state. I enjoyed getting to know each of them and learning about their states.

It was such a special week getting to sit in on the general sessions, listening to the speakers, and attending the Josh Turner concert, where I caught one of his guitar picks. From touring the River Walk on a boat cruise to learning its history, it was an experience of a lifetime.

I am so excited to attend the Youth Tour again this summer as a chaperone. I can't wait to watch another group of students be transformed by this trip. Thank you to Brooke Gross (Illinois' Youth Tour coordinator) and all the chaperones who helped make the Youth Tour possible.

Lastly, I would like to thank the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives and all the electric and telephone cooperatives in Illinois that make this possible for students just like me. I am forever grateful for this experience and the lasting impact it has left on my life. 💡

On June 14-21, more than 50 students representing electric and telephone cooperatives across Illinois will attend Youth Tour. They will join others from across the nation for the weeklong event to explore D.C., meet with elected officials and learn about the cooperative program.



Paris Van Dyke is a recent graduate of Clay Community High School and plans to attend Lake Land College in the ag transfer program. She attended the 2023 Youth Tour in Washington, D.C., representing her cooperative, Wabash Communications CO-OP. She was selected by her peers as Illinois' 2023-24 Youth Leadership Council representative.

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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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.

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JUNE CHECKLIST

Grill outdoors. Only use gas or charcoal grills outside. They are designed for outdoor use, where there is ventilation. Using one indoors can cause carbon monoxide to build, resulting in CO poisoning.

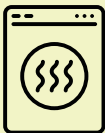


Wait 30 minutes. If you hear thunder, seek shelter

in a sturdy building. Wait at least a half hour after the last clap of thunder before going outdoors. Lightning can strike even after a storm passes.

Clean your lint trap.

Cleaning your dryer lint trap not only helps with efficiency, but it also helps prevent dryer fires.



Tip of the month.

Summer has arrived. Here are two ways to keep your summer energy bills in check: Raise the thermostat to the highest comfortable setting, and close curtains to block heat from the sun.



On April 16, representatives from electric cooperatives, generation and transmission cooperatives, and the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives visited the State Capitol in Springfield to meet with elected officials to discuss co-op issues.

Co-op leaders promote rural Illinois

Electric cooperative leaders advocated for rural Illinois on both the state and national level this spring during Electric Cooperative Lobby Day in Springfield on April 16 and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's Legislative Conference April 21-24. During both events, electric co-op representatives met with elected officials to discuss legislation concerning electric cooperatives.

"It is necessary that electric cooperative leaders engage with elected officials to discuss the issues impacting our co-ops and their consumer-members," said Nick Reitz, vice president of government relations at the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives (AIEC). "These events provide a great opportunity to advocate for our co-op priorities, share the impact of proposed legislation and tell our co-op story."

Springfield

During Lobby Day at the Illinois State Capitol, more than 80 cooperative leaders representing 29 distribution and generation and transmission cooperatives visited with state senators and representatives to discuss their opposition to proposed legislation that would decrease member control and cost efficiency of the not-for-profit electric co-ops throughout Illinois.

Illinois' electric cooperatives oppose House Bill 5315, which would force electric co-ops and municipal utilities to implement identical, unbalanced, one-size-fits-all solar net metering policies. It would take away the

Continued on page 8



Shelby Electric Cooperative President/CEO Josh Shallenberger talks with State Senator Doris Turner.

"Co-op leaders" continued from page 7

Sudoku

by Myles Mellor and Susan Flanagan

Each Sudoku puzzle consists of a 9X9 grid that has been subdivided into nine smaller grids of 3X3 squares. To solve the puzzle, each row, column and box must contain each of the numbers 1 to 9. Level: Medium

Solution on page 33.

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



Egyptian Electric Cooperative Association's Executive Vice President/General Manager Shane Hermetz, Member Service Manager Brooke Guthman and Engineering/Operations Manager Brad Austin meet with State Senator Terri Bryant (second from right).


IL ENTERTAINMENT CORNER



In honor of National Camera Day on June 29, let's focus on famous Illinois photographer Edward Weston. Weston was born March 24, 1886, in Highland Park, Ill., and grew up in Chicago. A shy young man, photography

became both an outlet and a passion, which he studied for a short period of time at the Illinois College of Photography in Effingham.

After seeing a modern art exhibit at the World's Fair in San Francisco, he began to develop his own artistic vision, moving away from the style of the time and instead embracing precision in the abstract. Among the many series and still lifes he created, his subjects included landscapes, clouds, shells, cypress, architecture, nudes and portraits.

Later, Weston suffered from Parkinson's disease. He died in 1958 and was posthumously inducted into the International Photography Hall of Fame, one of many recognitions he received. Weston has been called one of the most innovative and influential American photographers and is considered a master of 20th-century photography. 

current local and transparent process, one which provides all local consumer-members a direct voice in utility decisions, and instead would give control to the Illinois Commerce Commission.

Co-ops have net metering policies in place that ensure residential and small commercial consumers who self-generate receive fair credits for excess generation. Co-op policies balance fairness in a cost-effective manner for their entire membership.


"We have a responsibility as not-for-profit cooperatives to prioritize fairness and financial stability," Reitz said.

Illinois' electric co-ops also oppose House Bill 5021 and Senate Bill 3637. If passed, these bills would significantly change a core principle of electric cooperatives — local control. This legislation would give oversight authority of cooperative power generation resources to the Illinois Power Agency and rate-setting authority for distributed generation to the Illinois Commerce Commission. These bills would strip away co-ops' flexibility to economically plan for a long-term, sustainable future and ultimately increase rates for co-op consumer-members.

Washington, D.C.

More than 1,200 electric cooperative leaders gathered in Washington, D.C., including 40 representing Illinois electric cooperative consumer-members, to urge Congress to oppose the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's power plant rule and support full funding of U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) programs that benefit rural America.

Illinois electric co-op leaders met with staff members in the offices of several elected officials, including Senator Dick Durbin and U.S. Representatives Nikki Budzinski, Mike Bost, Eric Sorensen, Mary Miller, Darin LaHood and Raja Krishnamoorthi.

"Legislative Conference is a chance for Congress to hear directly from their co-op constituents," said Hill Thomas, NRECA's vice president of legislative affairs. "Because we are electric utility experts and have our finger on the pulse of rural communities, our members make very effective advocates." 

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Where is it?

The winners of the April hidden object contest were Donna Nadig of JCE Co-op and Barbara Holmes of Shelby Electric Cooperative. Congratulations! Your ICL campfire mugs have been sent.

May's camera was hidden in the flowers on page 32 in the GardenWise section. 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. June 6 is National Yo-Yo Day, so be on the lookout for the classic children's toy. 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. 



New EPA power plant rules threaten grid reliability

On April 25, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released four major new regulations for the electric industry, including a much-anticipated rule to cut emissions from power plants, a sweeping move that will aggravate reliability concerns for electric cooperatives and other utilities nationwide.

"The path outlined by the EPA is unlawful, unrealistic and unachievable," said Jim Matheson, CEO of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. "It undermines electric reliability and poses grave consequences for an already stressed electric grid."

The power plant rule constrains existing coal and new natural gas plants by requiring them to install carbon capture and storage (CCS) technology that is not yet reliable or commercially available.


"The new EPA rules ignore our nation's ongoing electric reliability challenges and are the wrong approach at a critical time for our nation's energy future," Matheson said.

The power plant rule will force the early closure of electricity generation sources that are available 24/7 and will also impede the construction of new natural gas plants. In

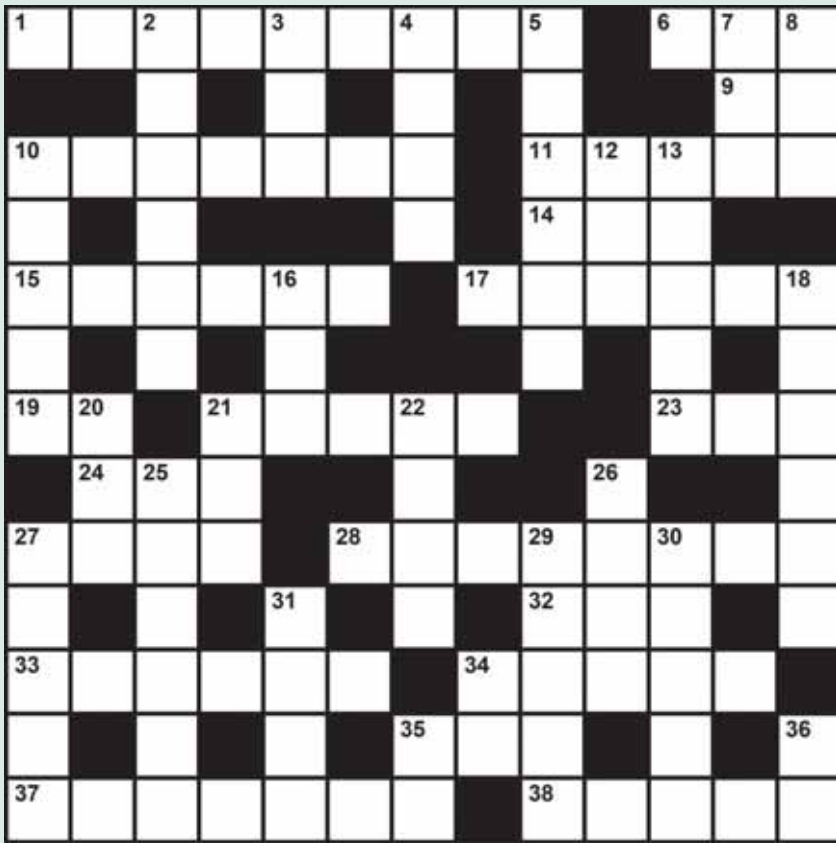
addition to these new rules, electric utilities are facing a surge in demand for electricity from factors like transportation electrification and the rapid expansion of data centers to support artificial intelligence, e-commerce and cryptocurrency.

Under the new rule, existing coal-fired power plants that plan to operate past the start of 2039 must install CCS to capture 90% of emissions by 2032. The rule also requires new natural gas plants that operate more than 40% of the time to install CCS and capture 90% of their carbon emissions by 2032. These standards, and their reliance on unproven CCS technology, will undermine electric reliability.

Electric cooperatives understand the need to keep the lights on at a cost local families and businesses can afford. Clean energy technologies must be balanced with generation sources that are always available to ensure a reliable electric grid.

Electric cooperatives across the U.S. deliver power to 42 million Americans. Their top priority is to meet consumer-members' energy needs. Reliable electricity is necessary to do that. 

NRECA



Across

- 1 Someone you look up to, 2 words
- 6 He's celebrated on June 16
- 9 Short for Dad
- 10 Endearing
- 11 Presents like photo books and tool kits
- 14 Bustle
- 15 Coach and teacher all in one
- 17 Dads are often involved in this youth social movement providing informal education
- 19 Wall __, abbr.
- 21 "A father is someone you can look up to no matter how tall you grow," for example
- 23 "Make Love Stay," ____ Fogelberg song
- 24 Walletful
- 27 Close emotional connection

- 28 Sometimes corny old chestnut gags, 2 words
- 32 Very very long time
- 33 Father's Day gift that might have a loving message sewn into it, 2 words
- 34 Where dads like to cook on the BBQ
- 35 Bart Simpson's perpetual age
- 37 Kind of bass
- 38 Popular meat entree

Down

- 2 Warmhearted
- 3 1997 Smith/Jones blockbuster film, briefly
- 4 Sketched
- 5 What a father leaves behind to his family
- 7 Likely
- 8 Court VIPs
- 10 Bar fruits

- 12 Wedding agreement, 2 words
- 13 Discovered
- 16 Dear ____ Dad!
- 18 Most clear-headed
- 20 Common ticket buyer's request
- 21 Include, word in many recipes
- 22 Equipment
- 25 A person who acts as a strong and reliable support in the family
- 26 Cheer, with for
- 27 Mouthfuls
- 29 Denims, e.g.
- 30 Swiss Army ____
- 31 Journey
- 34 Exercise training, for short
- 35 Flag football score, abbr.
- 36 Approve

Solution on page 33.



Illinois electric co-op to receive grant for renewable energy project

Adams Electric Cooperative's Green Energy Project was selected as one of 19 community-led clean energy projects across 12 states and 13 tribal nations and communities to receive more than \$78 million to develop and deploy sustainable clean energy solutions and expand access to reliable and affordable energy in rural and remote communities across the country.

Headquartered in Camp Point, Adams Electric was selected by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Office of Clean Energy Demonstrations to begin award negotiations for up to \$5 million in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding as part of the Energy Improvements in Rural or Remote Areas (ERA) program.

The co-op's project involves installing a 1 MW wind turbine and a 1 MW solar PV array in Schuyler County. The two types of generation complement each other with solar generation being better in the summertime and wind generation in the wintertime.

The two facilities should produce approximately 3.6M kWhs per year or about 300 homes' energy needs. The project will ultimately benefit the co-op's consumer-members in Adams, Brown, Schuyler, Hancock, McDonough, Pike and Fulton counties by reducing energy costs, while potentially reducing greenhouse gas emissions by more than 40,000 tons each year.

Adams Electric plans to hire local contractors for construction and maintenance to generate jobs in the community. With the addition of a wind turbine in the eastern part of its territory and its first solar array, the cooperative looks forward to expanding its offering of educational tours to co-op and community members, students and youth organizations.

To learn more about the ERA program and projects selected, go to energy.gov/oced/era.

JUNE Datebook

LET'S GO!

1 Christopher Homecoming Car Show

CHRISTOPHER
Antique and classic cars will be on display

2 Gym Bob's Jamboree Show

BIBLE GROVE
Experience the monthly opry-style live music show

8 Stargazing

GALENA
Learn about the constellations and stars from professional and amateur astronomers

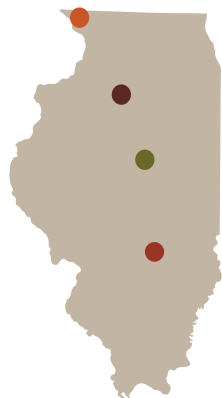
9 Pickers Market

LITCHFIELD
Enjoy an open-air market filled with antique and vintage collectibles, live music and lots of food

22 Tractors and ButterBurgers

EFFINGHAM
Culver's of Effingham and Mill Road Thresherman's Association partner for a unique tractor show

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



ShrimpFest and Brew Hullabaloo

JUNE

1

Princeton Rotary Club presents its 3rd annual ShrimpFest and Brew Hullabaloo. Enjoy live music, food and beverages. Food trucks will fire up their griddles, and members of the Princeton Rotary will cook and serve grilled and fried shrimp boats. Kids' activities include face painting, play areas, train rides and more. Proceeds from ShrimpFest will provide local high school students with scholarships and benefit various community groups and organizations.

June 1, 2024: 11 a.m.-9 p.m.

- Rotary Park, 13593 Bicentennial Drive, Princeton
Admission: free
princetonshrimpfest.com

Millroad Thresherman Annual Tractor Drive

JUNE

15

Learn about the history of Effingham County through the area churches. Plus, drive your tractor through the beautiful Illinois countryside or ride along. Several stops will include tours of churches, food and presentations by local historians. Pre-registration is preferred. Make your reservation at millroadthresherman.org/tractor-drive.

June 15, 2024: 7:30 a.m.-5 p.m.

- Begins at St. Clare Catholic Church, 216 N. 9th St., Altamont
Admission: varies
millroadthresherman.org



Woodland Fairy Garden Walk

JUNE

15

Walk among the fairies at the Belden School grounds. Volunteers will create, build and install fairy gardens around the 1859 limestone one-room schoolhouse. Guests may tour the tiny homes while wearing fairy wings (optional) and munching on fresh baked goods. There will also be a special tent where children can make fairy wands. Volunteer docents will be onsite sharing stories of the school during the open house.

June 15, 2024: 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

- Belden School, 52 Heatherdowns Lane, Galena
Admission: free
815-777-9550 or thegalenaterritory.com

Lavender and Lemons Kitchen Tour

JUNE

15

The tour provides ideas and inspiration for kitchen design. It will feature seven new or newly remodeled kitchens in many styles, sizes and budgets. All proceeds will benefit the Illinois Symphony Orchestra's outreach and music education programs in Bloomington-Normal. Tickets are available at The Garlic Press and The Olive Bin in Normal, and in Bloomington at Casey's Garden Shop & Florist, Hy-Vee, Growing Grounds, AB Hatchery and Wendell Niepagen Greenhouses.

June 15, 2024: 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

- Various locations, Bloomington-Normal
Admission: \$25
ilsymphony.org/concerts-events/lavender-lemons-a-tour-of-kitchens-more/1



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Anatomy of a power outage

A STRAY LIGHTNING BOLT connects a menacing cloud with a power pole about a mile from your home. Your lights flicker briefly before going out. Things become eerily quiet as all your home's devices equipped with motors and fans stop providing their constant symphony of background noise.

You're experiencing a power outage, so you reach for your phone and call your electric co-op. Good move. Sometimes, consumer-members don't call, because they assume their neighbors will. However, the more who do call, the more quickly the co-op can pinpoint the outage location.

Back at the office, the co-op's grid system operator notices the sudden pause at the moment 300 million volts of lightning dance around a transformer, and they triangulate the location of the outage. The system estimates 500 members are in the dark as a line crew steers their trucks in that direction.

Thirty minutes later, the lineworkers slowly drive along a stretch of road, keeping one eye on traffic while inspecting every pole, wire and transformer. In another 8

minutes, they stop and step out for a closer look. The mystery is solved with one glance at the burn mark across the surface of the transformer. Reaching the truck and ensuring it's safe, they move closer to the line.

If you watch the lineworkers, you might mistakenly assume they're not motivated. After all, you're dealing with a power outage. You want it to end as soon as possible, and it looks like they're simply taking their sweet time while you're missing the ballgame. But there's a reason the lineworkers aren't rushing or running around.

Those power lines carry high-voltage electricity. It's safe when all elements of the system are in good working order, but it's potentially deadly when that's not the case. Lineworkers approach what they do deliberately, efficiently and, most of all, safely. Every action they take is carefully planned so they can spot potential hazards. When performing tasks, they follow standard procedures and safety requirements to ensure the repair is effective and sound. Working that way may take a little extra time, but it means

they'll make it home safely at the end of the day (or night).

Less than an hour after finding the cause of the outage, the lineworkers load their tools and gear back onto the trucks. This time, the problem was easy to spot, the repair was fairly straightforward, and the weather cooperated. But no two outages are exactly alike. The next one could be in severe weather or on a remote segment far off the main road. It could involve a fallen tree that needs to be cut with chainsaws or a broken utility pole that needs replacing. It doesn't matter, because lineworkers will get to the location and fix the problem as quickly as safety allows.

Driving back to the co-op, the lineworkers watch the passing homes and smile, because the warm glow coming from the windows means the power is on again. Some members in their yards wave as the trucks pass by. They may not know why the electricity went off or what was involved in bringing it back, but thanks to the lineworkers and employees back at the co-op, life is back to normal. 💡



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.



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PHOTO COURTESY OF MARK GILLILAND

Completing simple energy-saving tasks before you leave for vacation will reduce unnecessary energy waste and unneeded wear and tear on your home's electrical equipment.

Set your home to vacay mode

JUST LIKE YOU, THE equipment in your home works hard to get through the daily grind. While enjoying a new adventure during your well-deserved vacation, give your home's equipment time off, too. Doing so can reduce unnecessary energy waste and unneeded wear and tear on your heating and cooling system, appliances and more. It's simple to set your home to vacay mode.

Your heating and cooling system keeps you comfortable. If you aren't there, it doesn't need to be quite so comfortable in your home. Setting the thermostat closer to the outdoor temperature can save energy and money. I don't recommend completely turning off the heating or cooling system, however. In extreme weather, it helps protect your home from freezing pipes or damage from excessive heat.

As a general rule, set your thermostat 5 to 10 degrees closer to the outdoor temperature when you aren't home. Each home is different,

and the weather varies, so you need to consider the right temperature balance for your home.

Installing a smart thermostat gives you the ability to control your settings remotely from your smartphone. This allows you to adjust the temperature after you leave home and right before you return.

Most water heaters include a vacation mode setting. This setting drops the temperature to reduce wasted energy when you're away. A storage water heater is like an insulated tea kettle, standing by and ready for you to have hot water whenever you need it. Changing the setting to vacation mode keeps it on at a lower setting, saving energy. Leave yourself a note with a reminder to turn it back on when you get home, so you don't wind up with a disappointing shower before the first day back at work.

Closing the curtains can provide two benefits. It can keep heat from the sun at bay. This reduces the load on your heating and cooling system, which saves energy. It also has the

benefit of blocking visibility into your home when you're away.

For security, some people use timers or leave on exterior lights. Make sure any lights left on are LEDs, instead of incandescent or compact fluorescent bulbs. LEDs use less energy and have less impact on your electric use when left on all night. You can also consider adding smart LEDs to your home. Smart LEDs can also be controlled remotely through an app on your phone.

Did you know some devices in your home continue to draw power from your electrical outlets even when turned off? Before you leave, walk through your home and unplug devices and small appliances. Make sure gaming consoles and computers are fully powered down. Unplugging any devices that have lights, clocks or use standby mode can also reduce wasted energy.

Having peace of mind that your home is powered down and secure can help you enjoy your vacation. After all, we all need an occasional break. 💡



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



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It's a car ... it's a generator ... it's a power source

The future of EV technology is here

IN RECENT YEARS, THE electric industry has been abuzz about an alternative source of power parked right outside many homes — electric vehicles (EVs). Emerging technology offers the capability — for

equipment to safely execute the transfer of power.

The third type, vehicle-to-load (V2L), allows an EV to directly power regular household appliances or charge other EVs. This type does

to disconnect your house from the grid and power it with your vehicle.

Ford introduced the F-150 Lightning in 2021. During the ice storm that struck Texas that year and left millions of residents without power, Ford dealerships loaned out their all-electric F-150s as generators. This action encouraged other EV manufacturers to consider the potential of their EV models as generators, but it is not as simple as plugging an EV into a home's power grid.

While other EVs, like the Nissan Leaf and Volkswagen EVs from 2022 onward, can perform bidirectional charging, currently only Ford offers the necessary components to make this work in a residential home. The system, known as Intelligent Backup Power, is currently available in conjunction with the F-150 Lightning and requires professional installation at an additional cost to the homeowner.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE FORD MOTOR COMPANY

Advanced electric vehicle battery technology allows an EV to directly power regular household appliances, categorized by vehicle-to-load.

some EV owners now, and perhaps for many other owners in the years to come — to use their EV batteries for more than just powering their electric car, SUV or truck.

According to Clean Energy Reviews (CER), emerging EV battery technology falls into three categories. The first is vehicle-to-grid (V2G), which allows EVs to export energy into the grid when demand is high. If thousands of EVs with V2G technology help supply energy to the grid when demand is high, this technology “has the potential to transform how electricity is stored and generated on a massive scale,” according to CER.

The second type, vehicle-to-home (V2H), is when energy stored in an EV is used to power a home or business. However, this is not a common practice yet, since this type of setup requires a bidirectional charger and other specialized

not require a bidirectional charger since it is built into the vehicle. For example, the Ford F-150 Lightning can supply 9.6 kilowatts of power through its up to 11 120-volt and 240-volt outlets. Other vehicles with V2L technology include the Hyundai IONIQ 5 and the Kia EV6, according to CER.

Using EVs to power homes

Many all-electric vehicle batteries store approximately 67 kWh, which provides more than enough juice to power a home for three days in the event of a major power outage. This is significant given that vehicles are parked and unused for approximately 95% of their lifespan.

However, using an EV as a generator during power outages requires specialized equipment: an 80-amp bidirectional charger and a home integration system, which is a hardware unit that allows you

Is using your EV battery safe?

It is essential to ensure your vehicle's battery is in top condition and that the installation of the bidirectional charger and home integration system is done by a professional electrician or licensed contractor, thereby minimizing the risk of fire to your home and vehicle.

Safety note

Bidirectional chargers and associated hardware/equipment should be installed by a licensed contractor who can assess your home to ensure it can handle the charger's load and that all components are wired to code. Overloaded circuits can overheat, which can cause a fire. Only manufacturer-approved brands of EV chargers should be used. ⚠️



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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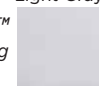
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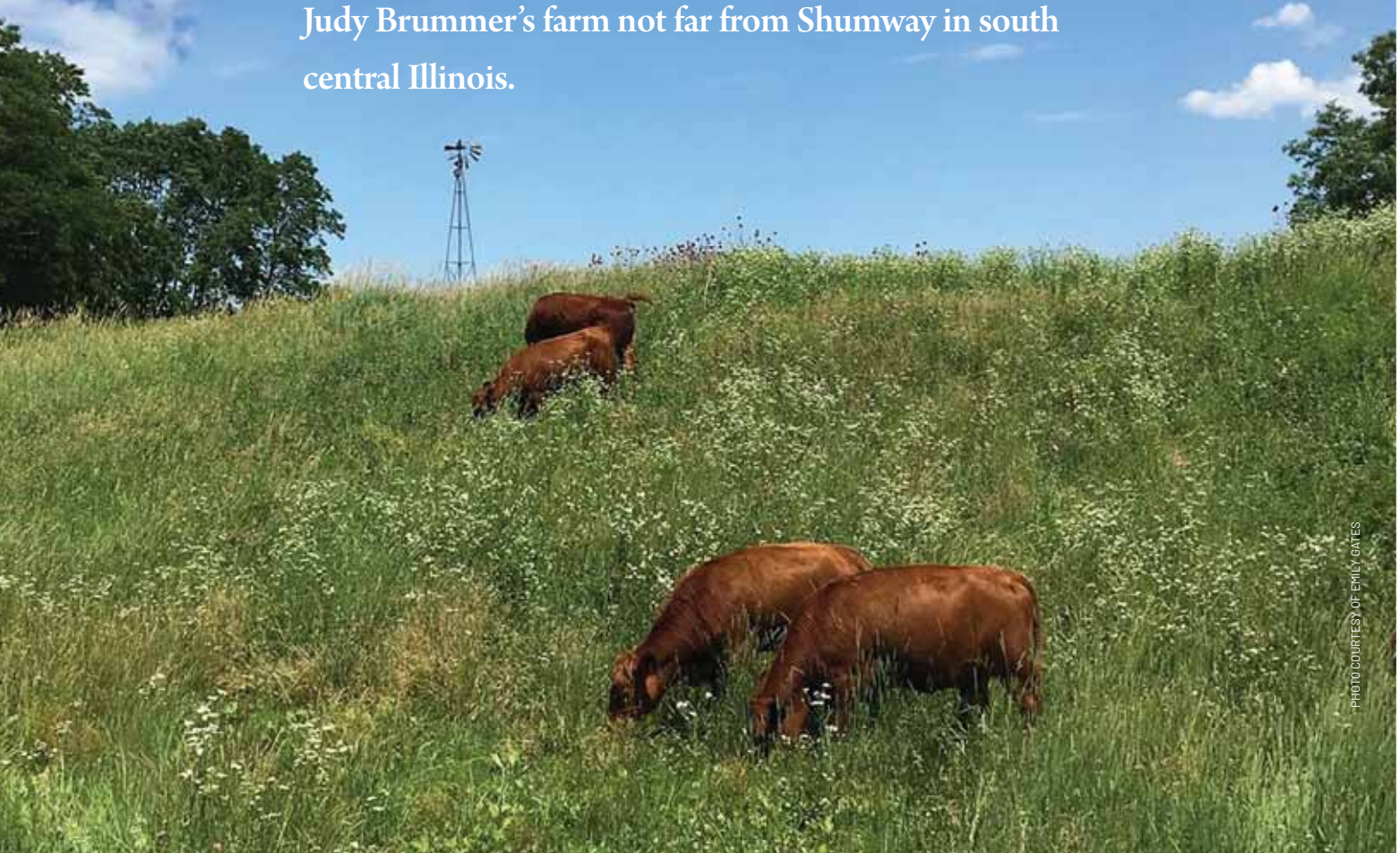


RAISING HERITAGE BREEDS

Illinois farmers champion endangered livestock

By Les O'Dell

THE CATTLE EMILY AND Nate Gates raise near Avon, Ill., are different than the livestock on neighboring farms. The same can be said for many of the animals at Maggie and Todd Ray's Winding Creek Farm and Stock in Argenta, outside Decatur. Likewise, there's something special about the horses at Michael and Judy Brummer's farm not far from Shumway in south central Illinois.



The Gates, Rays and Brummers are among dozens of Illinois farmers and homesteaders raising heirloom breeds of agricultural livestock — animals once common across the nation, but now considered endangered.

Known as heritage breeds, these are traditional livestock breeds that are a throwback to a time before industrial agriculture became a mainstream practice. According to The Livestock Conservancy, a North Carolina-based not-for-profit organization that works to promote and protect these animals, these breeds were carefully selected and bred over time to develop traits that made them well-adapted to the local environment, and they thrived under farming practices and cultural conditions that are different from those found in modern agriculture.

Because of unique characteristics (such as slower rates of weight gain, for example), these breeds fell out of favor with commercial producers, pushing some of the old breeds to the brink of extinction. Today, The Livestock Conservancy lists more than 180 agricultural breeds across 11 species on its Conservation Priority List (CPL), an annual report ranking their danger of disappearance. Breeds are classified from the most serious (“critical”) to other levels of “threatened,” “watch” and “recovering,” stepping down in severity with each classification. Based on these rankings, conservationists work to preserve these breeds.

“Our mission is to conserve the biodiversity of our farm animals,” explains Alison Martin, program director for The Livestock Conservancy. “We just want to make sure they don’t disappear from the American landscape, because the traits that they carry

may have value for the unknowns in the future of farming.”

Brummers raise heritage breed horses (in their case, Rocky Mountain horses, listed as “threatened” on the CPL), Judy serves as interim executive director of The Livestock Conservancy. A consumer-member of Shelby Electric Cooperative, she says efforts to save these breeds require a multifaceted approach.

“More than 4,000 volunteer breeders and 150-plus breed associations work diligently to ensure these endangered breeds don’t disappear from our farms, ranches and backyards throughout America,” she explains. “In addition to historical roles often tracing back more than 500 years in North America, these breeds have made important contributions to our country’s sustainable food and fiber needs of today and tomorrow.”

The protection of biodiversity and genetic resources is an important reason for protecting these breeds, Martin says, but many producers choose heritage animals

“Our mission is to conserve the biodiversity of our farm animals. We just want to make sure they don’t disappear from the American landscape

...”

Alison Martin, The Livestock Conservancy

because they want to make a difference. “None of us have a crystal ball to see what the future of agriculture is going to look like, and we’re already seeing changes in farming that are leading some people to bring in genetics for other breeds. It’s happened due to changes in



Emily and Nate Gates raise Dexter cattle (pictured grazing on left), which are listed as a “Recovering” livestock breed.

PHOTO COURTESY OF EMILY GATES

consumer choices, and it’s happened because some of the mainstream breeds are getting narrow genetically. This is about keeping these breeds around as a genetic reservoir,” she says.

Maggie Ray says raising farm-friendly animals the old-fashioned way was attractive to her family. The Rays have a variety of animals, including American Buff geese (“watch” on the CPL), several varieties of heritage breed turkeys and Gloucestershire Old Spot pigs (listed as “threatened”).

“If we’re helping to save the planet, you might as well do it with something that needs help,” Maggie says. “Keeping these old genetics alive and reintroducing some of the benefits of them even to more commercial lines is important, things like good mothering abilities and more.”

For farmers like the Gates, consumer-members of Spoon River

Electric Cooperative, the ability to find animals that would be easy to raise while “doing good” was a priority. Research on cattle breeds led the Fulton County family to Dexter cattle, a breed known as smaller-framed, multipurpose cattle, rated as “recovering” on the CPL.

“We knew we wanted a heritage breed, and we landed on the Dexters,” Emily recalls. “They seemed very docile and manageable size-wise, and they seemed like a very good fit for our family.”

The pull to heritage breeds for the Gates came from a desire to be environmentally-friendly in their farming practices. “We did a lot of education with our sons about the environment and animals and [had] conversations about why it’s important for humans to be responsible caretakers of the earth and our fellow species,” Emily explains. “It seemed an obvious choice for

us to select a breed that maybe needed a little extra advocacy. If you look at the list of heritage breeds and start reading about them, they each offer such amazing traits. The diversity is wonderful.”

“We wanted a breed that didn’t need to fatten on the feed lot,” Nate adds. “We wanted animals that could selectively graze what they needed at any given time. It’s really interesting to watch them graze and see them picking and choosing different plants at different times of the year, and even selecting different parts of the plant, depending on what they know they need.”

The Gates raise many of their cattle at their ZeeLee Cattle Company on “shares,” where consumers purchase products as much as a year or two in advance.

For some, the selling point of heritage breeds is that the products from the animals are noticeably different — some would say better. Roger Schutteck of Big Muddy Hogs in the Williamson County community of Hurst raises Mulefoot and Red Wattle hogs for



Judy Brammer raises Rocky Mountain horses, listed as “threatened” on the Conservation Priority List.

his direct-to-consumer pork company. He says the final products appeal to customers.

“I think because they are outside, it impacts the quality of the meat,” Schutteck explains. “The marbling — the intermuscular fat — in a Mulefoot hog is similar to a prime grade beef steak. It’s a lot more forgiving when you cook it than other pork, and it’s just a more tender, juicier meat.”

Mulefoot hogs, listed as “critical” on the CPL, are docile and intelligent, and are known for distinctive solid, uncloven hoofs. The Red Wattle pig (indicated as “threatened”) is a breed unique to North America. Red Wattle sows are excellent mothers, farrowing seven to 12 piglets per litter. Both breeds are also known for their hardiness and fare well in Illinois’ varying weather.

“These breeds are more suited to being outside in a more natural environment. They do better in the woods and on pasture and in marshy areas. They are going to graze and forage and eat a wide variety of things along with the grain they get,” Schutteck says. “That



Maggie and Todd Ray raise several heritage breeds, including the “threatened” Gloucestershire Old Spot pigs.

Roger Schutteck of Big Muddy Hogs raises Mulefoot (listed as “critical”) and Red Wattle (listed as “threatened”) hogs for his direct-to-consumer pork company.

all translates into a better flavor in the meat and fat profile. It’s more buttery and such a better flavor.”

Schutteck, a consumer-member of Egyptian Electric Cooperative Association, sells his products at a weekly farmers market in Hurst.

The Rays agree that heritage breeds bring a unique flavor profile. Among their flocks are heritage breed turkeys, produced for consumers who place orders in the late spring for Thanksgiving. These birds differ from those found in grocery stores, she said.

“We don’t breed for weight or size,” Maggie says, explaining that because the turkeys are raised outside, the meat profile is different. “There’s a lot more dark meat, because these turkeys were out moving around, using muscles, and it creates flavor throughout as opposed to size. It’s like having turkey leg flavor throughout.”

Maggie says her farm also sells heritage breed pork products direct to consumers. Although it may seem counterproductive, many producers say a key to protecting heritage breeds is to consume products from these animals.

“It’s absolutely imperative that we keep raising these hogs, and, while it might not make sense on the surface, it is imperative that we eat these hogs,” Schutteck explains. “Because if you create a market for this high-quality pork from these breeds, it’s going to encourage other farms to keep these breeds, and it’ll multiply the numbers and bring them back from the verge of extinction. You have to raise these hogs and you have to eat these hogs if you want to be able to keep these hogs.”

Officials at The Livestock Conservancy refer to it as “giving these animals a job,” and the organization works to expand markets for heritage livestock products. The



group is working to develop a way of connecting consumers to endangered-breed food products, and it has found success with “Shave ’Em to Save ’Em,” an effort to encourage fiber artists, weavers and spinners to discover new wools from heritage breed sheep.

The programs seem to pay off. Since first establishing the CPL 37 years ago, the organization has yet to lose a breed to extinction. In fact, in the last dozen years, 12 breeds have “graduated” off the CPL, meaning animal populations are such that the breed no longer needs continual monitoring. In 2024, two breeds — Southdown sheep and Hereford pigs — graduated from the list, and 15 breeds were reclassified within the CPL’s four tiers, most in a positive direction.

For some heritage livestock enthusiasts, raising the animals are a tie to a simpler era. Judy says her research on horse breeds led her to discover that Rocky Mountain horses may have been the breed her ancestors used on their own farms generations ago. “I put value on the history of my own family, and knowing that these are likely the same kind of horses that my

family enjoyed as they traveled westward many years ago is an extra plus.”

History aside, the importance of securing heritage livestock breeds is not lost on her. “Many of these once-common farm animals face extinction if we do not take action now,” Brummer adds. “Rare farm animals represent an irreplaceable piece of the Earth’s biodiversity. They offer incredible genetic diversity that may be needed in the future for disease resistance or unique production traits. Saving these breeds is vital to meeting today’s sustainability challenges and ensuring food security for the future.”

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LIZZIE MAGIE'S LEGACY LIVES ON

Macomb pays homage to Monopoly creator

By Lisa Cherry

"GO DIRECTLY TO JAIL. Do not pass go. Do not collect \$200." It's a familiar phrase for the many generations who have enjoyed the Parker Brothers board game Monopoly. Little did the people of Macomb, Ill., know — until recent years, that is — that the original game maker was once also a resident. Now, 75 years following her death, her hometown is paying homage with the world's largest Monopoly game — played through an app on the downtown square.

Lizzie Magie, born May 9, 1866, in Macomb, didn't receive credit for creating the game until after her death. Jock Hedblade, executive director of the Macomb Area Convention & Visitors Bureau, says the truth only became known to the world after the release of "The Monopolists: Obsession, Fury, and the Scandal Behind the World's Favorite Board Game," written by New York Times reporter Mary Pilon and published in 2016.

In the book, the author reveals why Magie was not rightfully acknowledged during her lifetime; ironically, the story demonstrates the dark side of the capitalism the game (in its current form) celebrates. As it turned out, she had invented and patented a nearly identical version called The Landlord's Game decades prior — but someone else made a fortune selling it to Parker Brothers.

At the time the news broke, Hedblade was working as a national television producer in Chicago and often visited his hometown of Macomb. "Folks [here] learned [about] it like everybody else did. We didn't know this story," he says, recalling that on a past visit his brother commented, "Isn't it uncanny how the downtown square looks like a Monopoly board?" Hedblade adds that later, while researching, they discovered that the town jail originally resided in one of the corners of the square, just like the game.

His career path shifted sometime later, leading Hedblade to his current position back home. "I threw my hat in the ring, and lo and behold, I got the job," he says. "We didn't have any 365-day-a-year attractions ... we had our festivals. They're still fantastic ... but [not] unique to any other communities." To remedy that, the team began planning projects that would set Macomb apart.

"We got a mural started [and] became an Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area. ... The thought [was], we've got to work toward our connection to Monopoly ... it would be wholly unique to this town," Hedblade says. After six years, the idea has become a reality.

Those first two projects were crucial to getting the trust and buy-in necessary from the community to

embrace the all-encompassing idea of creating an integrated, life-size version of the game. During that time, the committee reached out to Hasbro, the game's current maker, but was unable to connect with anyone there. Because of that, certain adjustments had to be made.

According to Hedblade, the new game, dubbed Macombopoly, is based on Magie's original version, The Landlord's Game. "We are putting up large game pieces on each corner of the square ... you'll see the actual evolution of the game itself," he adds. "On the corners of the square [on the sidewalks], you'll have your go, you'll have your jail, you'll have your free parking, your go to jail."

The game "board" on the square is just the beginning. The accompanying app, developed by eAtlas in Chicago, utilizes artificial intelligence to enable representations of Abraham Lincoln and Lizzie Magie to speak to players and allow historic photos to come to life, sharing the town's history back to the mid-1800s in a dynamic virtual experience.

"This was just a process that we worked through. We got a grant from the state of Illinois for \$40,000 and raised the matching part of that grant," says Hedblade. "The Illinois Tourism Office coming through with the grant not only helped us financially but really legitimized the project for both us and the rest of the state."

It was a group effort that brought the game to fruition. "We have a small but strong committee," he adds. "But I have to say the community itself has been extremely supportive of this. We've got all kinds of businesses involved in this, and individuals from the community have donated money to make this project happen, so it's been a full community effort to get this thing going."

"Without all of that, we would have never been able to get to this point," says Hedblade. He believes the team's early successes with previous tourism projects laid the groundwork. "People knew we were going to bring this thing in on time and under budget and bring something that they could all be proud of. We appreciate that trust."

Local businesses currently can participate in the game free of charge, with coupons and promotions that players can use when they choose. In the app, players are asked trivia questions and given video, photo and text clues. Answering correctly earns them Monopoly money, and occasionally, those coupons.

"The whole goal of this was to not only bring people to town, but to drive them into the businesses. ... We've asked [local businesses] to incentivize people to walk in," Hedblade says. Currently, more than 20 are participating, but Hedblade guesses more will want to be involved once people see how it works.

Getting the word out beyond the town limits was another aspect of the project. In addition to billboards,

the committee relied heavily on partnerships with The JKO Agency, a public relations firm in California, and Wayward Travel, which specializes in itineraries and day trips and handles social media for the attraction.

Hedblade emphasizes that this is only phase one of the plan. "We're just in the testing phase of the game right now, and we're already talking about a 2.0," he says. "[That] gives us another opportunity ... to promote it and say, 'Hey, we've got a whole new, improved version of Macombopoly.'"

Version 1.0 launched May 9 — Lizzie Magie's birthday. The game is a yearlong, permanent attraction. "It will be up for as long as the city and the townspeople wish to have it," says Hedblade.

Also in the works, which he hopes will increase interest in the game, is an upcoming Monopoly movie starring Margot Robbie as Magie. "There's no better person ... because [Lizzie] was an empowered woman," he says. "The story about her keeps hanging on out there, and people are super interested in it." 📢





Float your boat

Dealership is first of its kind on Lake Shelbyville

By Lisa Cherry

'TIS THE SEASON FOR having fun in the sun and getting out on the water. Near the shimmering waters of Lake Shelbyville stands a new business that opened last year about a half mile north of Sullivan Marina and Campground — 32 Marine, a full-service marine supply and services store on Coles-Moultrie Electric Cooperative lines.

“We just saw the need in the area,” says Matt Bates. “We were all born and raised here and lived here for 40 years. We were boating one day and were talking about [how] it’s kind of crazy that people come from all over the place to boat on Lake Shelbyville, and there’s no boat dealership in town.”

That realization inspired Matt, his brother and their families to meet that need. His brother and sister-in-law, Will and Tasha Bates, own the establishment, Matt is general manager, and his wife Tara also works for the business. Both couples’ children help as well.

The location was previously home to a roofing company, which moved to Mattoon. The Bates family repurposed the building to fit their needs for the new business venture. “As far as the planning and setup [went], it involved arranging agreements with different boat manufacturers and deciding what boat lines we were going to carry, setting up a service department, securing financing and stuff like that,” Matt says.




Matt Bates

When asked his favorite aspect of the business, “Probably the unpredictability of every day,” he says. “Every day is an adventure. You never quite know what you’re going to get.” Matt’s response to his least favorite aspect is delivered with a hint of irony. “My least favorite part would be, I guess, the unpredictability,” he laughs. “It’s definitely a double-edged sword.”

After only a year in business, Matt says the operation has a solid customer base, and that during boating season, their sales reps and service techs see thousands of customers. “The community has been supportive,” he explains. “And we hold a lot of certifications people value as far as the brands we service and that we’re certified to service.”

According to Matt, the business took off immediately. “It’s been busy from day one,” he says. “We’re going to continue to expand staff-wise, [with the] services we’re able to offer, and the volume we’re able to [handle].”

Among the boat lines for sale (and servicing) at the dealership are Moomba, Supra, Monterey, Xpress, Lowe and Veranda. A pro shop is also on the premises, stocked with an inventory including life jackets, wakeboards, fishing tackle and, of course, boat parts and cleaning supplies. 32 Marine is also a BOTE brand dealer and carries lake inflatables, kayaks and paddleboards.

“We’re here to serve central Illinois and Lake Shelbyville boating, and we can service pretty much anything,” says Matt. 

SHOW SUPPORT

Small business owners can request to be featured in the Support Local section of Illinois Country Living magazine by submitting the form at icl.coop/local.

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Tue-Sat: 9 a.m.-6 p.m.
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Scientific Discovery Stuns Doctors

Biblical Bush Relieves Joint Discomfort in as Little as 5 Days

Legendary “special herb” gives new life to old joints without clobbering you. So safe you can take it every day without worry.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 54 million Americans are suffering from joint discomfort.

This epidemic rise in aching joints has led to a search for alternative treatments—as many sufferers want relief without the harmful side effects of conventional “solutions.”

Leading the way from nature’s pharmacy is the new “King of Oils” that pioneering Florida MD and anti-aging specialist Dr. Al Sears calls “the most significant breakthrough I’ve ever found for easing joint discomfort.”

Biblical scholars treasured this “holy oil.” Ancient healers valued it more than gold for its medicinal properties. Marco Polo prized it as he blazed the Silk Road. And Ayurvedic practitioners, to this day, rely on it for healing and detoxification.

Yet what really caught Dr. Sears’ attention is how modern medical findings now prove this “King of Oils” can powerfully...

Deactivate 400 Agony-Causing Genes

If you want genuine, long-lasting relief for joint discomfort, you must address inflammation. Too much inflammation will wreak havoc on joints, break down cartilage and cause unending discomfort. This is why so many natural joint relief solutions try to stop one of the main inflammatory genes called COX-2.

But the truth is, there are hundreds of agony-causing genes like COX-2, 5-LOX, iNOS, TNK, Interleukin 1,6,8 and many more—and stopping just one of them won’t give you all the relief you need.

Doctors and scientists now confirm the “King of Oils”—Indian Frankincense—deactivates not one but 400 agony-causing genes. It does so by shutting down the inflammation command center called Nuclear Factor Kappa Beta.

NK-Kappa B is like a switch that can turn 400 inflammatory genes “on” or “off.” A study in *Journal of Food Lipids* reports that Indian Frankincense powerfully deactivates NF-Kappa B. This journal adds that Indian Frankincense is “so powerful it shuts down the pathway triggering aching joints.”

Relief That’s 10 Times Faster... and in Just 5 Days

Many joint sufferers prefer natural solutions but say they work too slowly. Take the best-seller glucosamine. Good as it is, the National Institutes of Health reports that glucosamine takes as long as eight weeks to work.

Yet in a study published in the *International Journal of Medical Sciences*, 60 patients with stiff knees took 100 mg of Indian Frankincense or a pla-



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

cebo daily for 30 days. Remarkably, Indian Frankincense “significantly improved joint function and relieved discomfort in as early as five days.” That’s relief that is 10 times faster than glucosamine.

78% Better Relief Than the Most Popular Joint Solution

In another study, people suffering from discomfort took a formula containing Indian Frankincense and another natural substance or a popular man-made joint solution every day for 12 weeks.

The results? Stunning! At the end of the study, 64% of those taking the Indian Frankincense formula saw their joint discomfort go from moderate or severe to mild or no discomfort. Only 28% of those taking the placebo got the relief they wanted. So Indian Frankincense delivered relief at a 78% better clip than the popular man-made formula.

In addition, in a randomized, double blind, placebo controlled study, patients suffering from knee discomfort took Indian Frankincense or a placebo daily for eight weeks. Then the groups switched and got the opposite intervention. Every one of the patients taking Indian Frankincense got relief. That’s a 100% success rate—numbers unseen by typical solutions.

In addition, BMJ (formerly the *British Medical Journal*) reports that Indian Frankincense is safe for joint relief — so safe and natural you can take it every day.

Because of clinically proven results like this, Dr. Sears has made Indian Frankincense the centerpiece of a new natural joint relief formula called **Mobilify**.

Great Results for Knees, Hips, Shoulders and Joints

Joni D. says, “**Mobilify** really helps with soreness, stiffness and mild temporary pain. The day

after taking it, I was completely back to normal—so fast.” Shirley M. adds, “Two weeks after taking **Mobilify**, I had no knee discomfort and could go up and down the staircase.” Larry M. says, “After a week and a half of taking **Mobilify**, the discomfort, stiffness and minor aches went away... it’s almost like being reborn.” And avid golfer Dennis H. says, “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.”

How to Get Mobilify

Right now, the only way to get this powerful, unique formula that clobbers creaking joints in as little as five days without clobbering you is with Dr. Sears’ breakthrough **Mobilify** formula. 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 **1-800-299-1542**. “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 ever 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 **1-800-299-1542** 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 this limited time offer provided at a significant discount. To take advantage of this exclusive offer use Promo Code: **ICLMB624** when you call.



Not just fun and games, there's also food

PHOTO COURTESY OF STEPH MAZANOWSKI, MAZTER MINDZ MEDIA

By *Kayla Adkins*

GILL STREET SPORTS BAR and Restaurant offers more than food — a lot more. From sand volleyball games and live music to axe throwing, gaming and bags tournaments, there are plenty of activities to choose from at the restaurant, located in Bloomington.

“We’re definitely a unique destination,” says Scott Brown, one of the owners of the 20-year-old establishment. “If you come out here on a Friday or Saturday night for music, you will absolutely be blown away with the vibe and how cool the place is. With the music, sunshine and people playing volleyball, it’s just a really chill way to spend an evening eating and enjoying some cold beverages.”

On Corn Belt Energy Corporation lines, Gill Street has proven to be a popular destination for all ages, including locals ranging in age all the way from 18 to well in their 80s. “We don’t get a lot of tourists,” Brown says. “We’re tucked

into a spot you’re not going to accidentally find. You have to be looking for us.”

Brown has been in the restaurant industry for 35 years, starting as a server in college, and he learned to listen to employees to help fill out the menu options.

“Our creativity comes from the staff,” Brown says. “Our menu items — basically all the sandwiches — have been created by me, other managers and staff members.” He explains that sometimes employees will modify a sandwich, and it will be introduced as a special. If there’s a positive response, it may end up on the regular menu.

Popular sandwiches include the Salayo Chicken Club (marinated grilled chicken breast, Swiss cheese, bacon, lettuce, tomato and their signature Salayo sauce on a telera roll), the Cuban (a favorite of Brown’s), and the Siracha Bourbon Steak. Gill Street’s Signature Grinder consists of ham, salami,

pepperoni, mozzarella, lettuce, tomato and Italian dressing on a hoagie roll.

Tacos and quesadillas are other sought-after menu items. Quesadillas are filled with cheese, onion, tomato and a choice of chicken, steak or chorizo. For a little extra flavor, the chicken can be tossed in one of the signature wing sauces. Taco dishes include fish, carne asada, carnitas and chicken asada. Another of Brown’s personal favorites is the Cajun fish taco. The options don’t end there, however.

“The wings and pizza help give us the sports-bar feel,” Brown says. And, while their signature Hot ‘n Spicy BBQ sauce is easily the top pick for the wings, Brown has trouble pinpointing a favorite pizza, as patrons often customize their own pie. “[People] who order the Mac & Cheese Pizza often top it with our crispy buffalo chicken . . . that crispy chicken is so good with that pizza,” he adds.

Desserts are large enough to share. Hot, gooey Oreos are coated and deep fried, or patrons can opt for the chocolate chip skillet cookie. Both are served with vanilla ice cream, caramel sauce, chocolate syrup and powdered sugar.

As with any traditional sports bar, TVs line the walls, giving visitors an array of sports to watch. Sand volleyball leagues continue throughout the summer on two courts behind the building. During winter months, bags leagues occupy the enclosed patio. All year round, adults can also test their luck in the newly remodeled gaming area.

Axe throwing became yet another source of entertainment at the venue in fall 2019. Hosted by Rocket Axe, a central Illinois axe throwing company, players can enjoy hitting the target under the careful supervision of expert axe coaches. Reservations must be made in advance on the Gill Street website.

In addition to the restaurant and other activities, Gill Street offers space for parties in the restaurant and on its outdoor patios. You can even catch the restaurant on the road at its Gill Street EatZ food truck.

Back at the brick-and-mortar restaurant, with trees surrounding the outdoor area, the sand volleyball courts and live music playing, Brown says, “It doesn’t even feel like you’re in town. . . . You rarely get any street noise or traffic sounds. It’s just super peaceful, and with the music, you can’t hear anything else. It’s like you’re on a different planet.”



PHOTO COURTESY OF STEPH MAZANOWSKI, MAZTER MINDZ MEDIA



LET'S EAT!

Gill Street Sports Bar and Restaurant

3002B Gill St., Bloomington

309-661-6387

gillstreet.net

Follow Gill Street's Facebook page for upcoming bands and events.

HOURS

Mon-Thu: 11 a.m.-1 a.m.

Fri-Sat: 11 a.m.-2a.m.

Sun: 11 a.m.-11 p.m.



Left: There are many activities at Gill Street, including sand volleyball.

Top: The Signature Grinder consists of ham, salami, pepperoni, mozzarella, lettuce, tomato and Italian dressing on a hoagie roll.

Middle: The Italian Beef sandwich is served with mild giardiniera, provolone cheese, pepperoncini and au jus.

Bottom: Deep fried Oreos are served with vanilla ice cream, caramel sauce, chocolate syrup and powdered sugar.

Sharing is caring

WHETHER IT'S FAMILY REUNIONS, church gatherings, holidays or just because, potlucks have a way of bringing people together through food. To me, it can also be an adventure, because you don't know what to expect. The diverse and often surprising variety of food provides a chance to sample all kinds of recipes. However, the struggle is finding room on your plate to get a little bit of everything. For your next potluck, here are a few recipes that are sure to be crowd-pleasers. 💡

WE NEED RECIPES!

Upcoming recipes

- World foods
- Microwave recipes
- Egg dishes
- Keto recipes

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.



Sloppy Joes for a Crowd

Submitted by Barb Johnson, Clinton County Electric Cooperative
Servings: 100

- | | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 20 pounds ground beef | 1 pound brown sugar | 128 ounces ketchup |
| 3 cups onions, chopped | 1 cup mustard | Salt and pepper, to taste |
| 1/4 cup Worcestershire sauce | 2 tablespoons chili powder | |

Brown the ground beef and drain the grease. Mix browned meat and all other ingredients in a large electric roaster set to 350 F and stir frequently for 1 hour. Turn down the heat and simmer until ready to serve. **Editor's note:** In Johnson's submission, she indicated that this recipe can be divided between several slow cookers if an electric roaster isn't available and said the recipe has been successfully halved and quartered for smaller groups. In the ICL test kitchen, this recipe was quartered and put into a slow cooker on high for 2 hours.

Crock-Pot Mac N Cheese

Submitted by Agnes Boehning, Clinton County Electric Cooperative
Servings: 10-12

- | | | |
|--|------------------------|--|
| 16 ounces macaroni, cooked and drained | 2 cups evaporated milk | 4 cups cheddar cheese, shredded |
| 4 tablespoons cooking oil | 2 cups milk | 2 cups Velveeta, diced into 1/2-inch cubes |
| 4 tablespoons butter, melted | 2 teaspoons salt | |

Line a slow cooker with liner for easy clean-up. Put cooked macaroni in slow cooker. Add oil and butter and mix. Stir in the rest of the ingredients. Cook on low for 2 hours, stirring at each hour mark.



Mixed Vegetable Casserole

Submitted by Joan D. Teal, Southern Illinois Electric Cooperative
Servings: 10-12

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| 1 20-ounce bag frozen mixed vegetables | 1/2 teaspoon salt | 1 cup crushed Ritz crackers or fried onions |
| 1 cup celery, chopped | 1-1/2 cups sharp or mild cheddar cheese, shredded | |
| 1/2 cup onion, chopped | 2 cups mayonnaise | |
| 1/2 teaspoon sugar | | |

Preheat oven to 350 F. In a pan over medium heat, cook the first five ingredients until the vegetables are crisp-tender, about 8 minutes. Drain and stir in the shredded cheese. The cheese will begin to melt in the hot veggies. Then fold the mayonnaise into the vegetable mixture. Pour mixture into a buttered 9X13-inch casserole dish. Top the casserole with cracker crumbs or fried onions. Bake for 30-35 minutes, or until bubbly.

Rainbow Pasta Salad

Submitted by Rosemary Wiley, Southern Illinois Electric Cooperative
Servings: 10-12

- | | | |
|--|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1 12-ounce package tricolor rotini pasta | 1/2 cup green bell pepper, chopped | 20 green or black olives, halved |
| 1/2 cup broccoli, chopped | 1/2 cup red bell pepper, chopped | 1-1/2 cups light Italian dressing |
| 1/2 cup carrots, chopped | 1/2 cup cucumber, chopped | |
| 10 cherry tomatoes, halved | | |

Cook pasta according to package directions. Let cool for 10 minutes. Chop vegetables and olives and add to cooled pasta. Pour light Italian dressing over pasta and vegetables. Mix well. Chill for 4 hours to blend flavors.

Strawberry Pretzel Salad

Submitted by Patricia Mahoney, Menard Electric Cooperative
Servings: 10-12

Crust:

- 2 cups pretzels, crushed
- 12 tablespoons butter or margarine, melted
- 1/4 cup sugar

Filling:

- 8 ounces Cool Whip, thawed
- 8 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 1/2 cup sugar

Topping:

- 2 cups water
- 1 23-ounce container frozen strawberries
- 2 small packages strawberry gelatin

Preheat oven to 350 F. Combine crust ingredients and spread in a greased 9X13-inch pan. Bake for 10 minutes. Cool completely. Blend the filling ingredients and spread over the cooled crust. For the topping, dissolve gelatin in very hot water. Stir in the strawberries. Allow the strawberry mixture to cool and begin to set, and then pour it over the filling. Refrigerate until the topping is fully set.





Tomatoes on the brain

The science behind the beloved garden fruit

THE TOMATO. A NATIVE to Central America, it has been bred over centuries to become a staple summer crop. Gardeners across the U.S. compete openly or covertly to be the first with ripe tomatoes. Ribbons and trophies are handed out in nearly every community for the best-tasting tomato. Competitive tomato growers hold dear to secret cultural practices. Some of these tricks never leave the confines of the family and are passed through generations.

So, with our reverence for tomatoes in Illinois, what's up with all the flavorless versions at the height of tomato growing season? At the grocery store or restaurant, our sacred fruit holds little in common with the tomatoes I ate as a child and now grow at home. When the server comes to collect our plates at a restaurant, we always send back the parsley and the pale red excuse for a tomato. Who uses a tomato as a garnish, anyway?

Adults may love them, but most children must be persuaded of a tomato's virtues, including me, admittedly. So today, why do I balk at supermarket tomatoes while craving delicious tomatoes fresh from the vine? The answer may lie more in our noses than our stomachs.

Scent has deep ties to our brains, and the nose is the key to tasting what we put in our mouths. The olfactory bulb, the organ in our nose that processes smells, has a direct connection to the amygdala (emotional) and hippocampus (memory) brain areas.

Tomatoes are full of aromatic volatiles, fragrant compounds that make their way into the olfactory bulb. Smelling a tomato's distinct aroma compounds sends a signal to the hippocampus and amygdala, which then lights up with the memory and emotions associated with when we first experienced that taste or scent.

Last week, I craved a turkey sandwich with a fresh sliced tomato and a chocolate shake, because that's what my mom would make on a hot summer day for lunch. (OK, the chocolate shake was an occasional treat.) Without a fresh garden tomato, summer lunches just wouldn't be the same.

For decades, breeders have been obsessed with the ratio of sugars to acids in tomatoes. While this balance of sugar and acid makes up a significant portion of what we taste when biting into a tomato, the aroma volatiles are what lend complexity to a tomato's flavor.

The 2012 study, "The Chemical Interactions Underlying Tomato Flavor Preference," shows that some of the most abundant aroma volatiles in tomatoes do not contribute to consumer liking. Instead, the research identified less abundant compounds that do — particularly a volatile compound named geranial.

Tomatoes with higher levels of geranial drew the preference of taste testers. Additionally, the research found that aroma volatiles like geranial could increase perceived sweetness without increasing the sugars in the fruit.

The herb basil contains high amounts of geranial, which must be why it pairs so well with tomatoes and can be used to revive an otherwise bland-tasting tomato.

While tomato breeders continue to work on improving the flavor of grocery store tomatoes, we can still enjoy some of our old favorites from the garden. Why do we grow tomatoes? Because they help us make summer memories.

While some gardeners have their tomato secrets, the University of Illinois Extension is happy to share its knowledge. Check out our page at go.illinois.edu/tomato for tomato-growing tips. 💡



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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"Home Mortgage" No-Crumble Cookies

Submitted by Jaime L. Tooley, Licensed Mortgage "Baker" of 22 years serving: IL, FL, MI, MO, NE



In a mixing bowl, combine:

- 1 cup knowledge of current situation
- 1/2 cup desire or vision
- 1/4 cup future mortgage goals
- A dash of trust
- 100 or more sprinkles of integrity (because everything's better with sprinkles)

In a separate container, whisk:

- 40+ lenders & programs
- 1 cup brainstorming
- 3 heaping tbsp honesty
- 4 tsp of teamwork
- Down payment assistance (when available)

Directions: Sift together the first 4 ingredients. Call me to give a quick scenario of your current situation. I will provide the remaining ingredients, allowing for substitutions & adding suggestions to taste. 10-15 minutes of your time to receive a cost-free analysis of how I can help to improve your current financial situation. Lock in & let bake for 30-45 days. **Enjoy your sweet new mortgage!**

Jaime L. Tooley
Mortgage Loan Originator
636.266.8282
jtooley@usa-mortgage.com
Co. NMLS: 227262 | NMLS: 1313081

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Coles-Moultrie Electric Cooperative
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Clinton County Electric Cooperative
6. **QUENTIN HUIZENGA, AGE 13**
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UPCOMING THEMES

- August - Vintage cars or trucks
- September - Outdoor adventures
- October - Fall foliage
- November - Shapes

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Collins Plmb, Htg & Clg
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Thomasboro

Hoveln Htg & Clg
(217) 643-2125

Virden

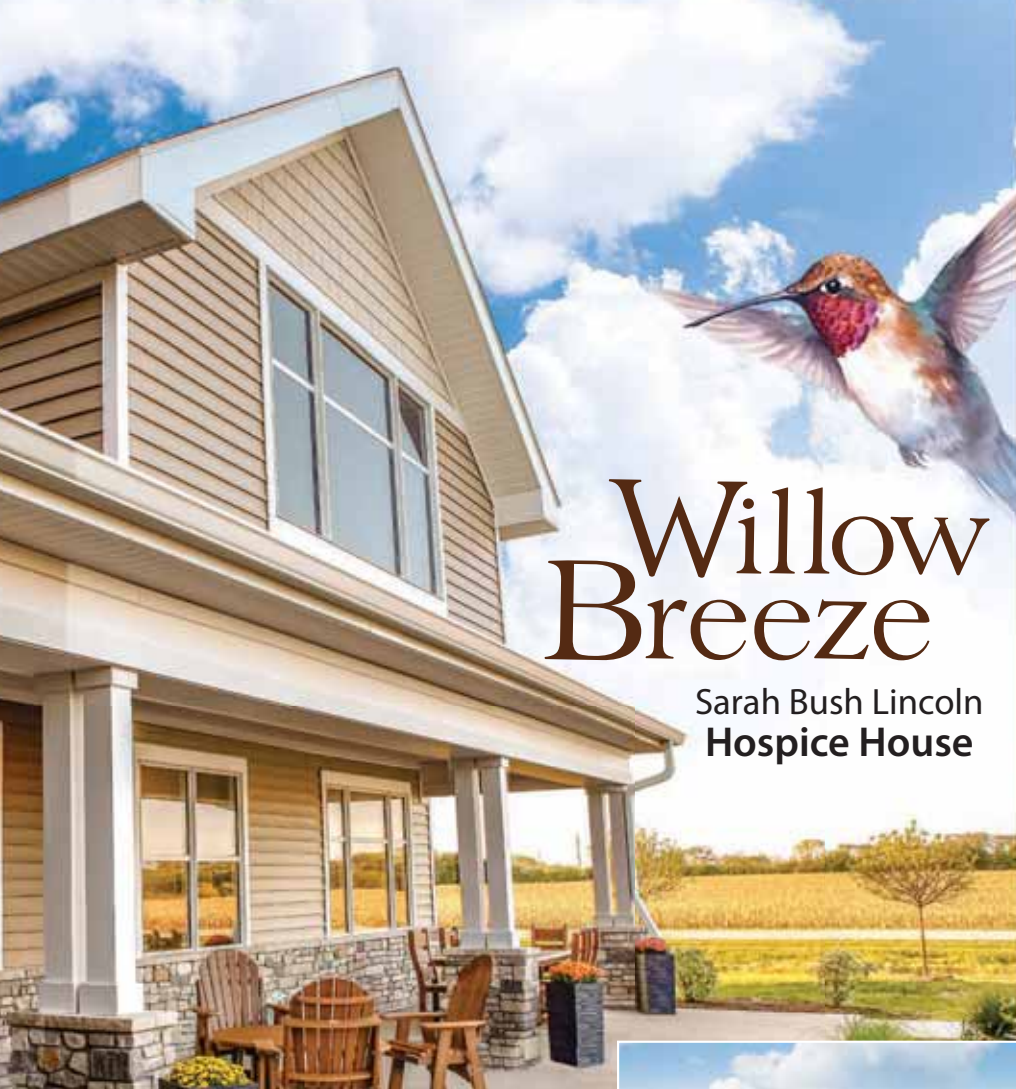
Snell Pbg & Htg
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*30% through 2032, 26% through 2033 and 22% through 2034



Willow Breeze

Sarah Bush Lincoln Hospice House



Making Every Moment Count

Sarah Bush Lincoln Hospice believes in embracing life's final journey with dignity, compassion, and the utmost care. With peaceful surroundings, a serene atmosphere and rooms designed for tranquility, Willow Breeze is a sanctuary of comfort where your physical, emotional and spiritual needs are met.

Offering:

- Eight private suites for people of all ages
- Walk-out patios that overlook a landscaped pond
- Covered patio to enjoy the outdoors
- Walking path partially around the pond
- Family quiet rooms that accommodate overnight guests
- Family kitchen and coffee bar
- Library, work space, chapel, activity room
- Visiting hours 24 hours a day, seven days a week

Come for a Visit

We invite you to visit Willow Breeze, take a tour, meet our dedicated team, and learn about how we can support you and your family during this significant time.

For more information or to schedule a visit, please call SBL Hospice.

1-800-454-4055

 Sarah Bush Lincoln