

SEPTEMBER 2024

# Illinois Country Living

## BREAKING THE SILENCE

*One woman's mission to empower  
the deaf community*

TRAVEL  
**The town that time forgot**

SUPPORT LOCAL  
**Family, farm and food**

FINEST COOKING  
**Sweet treats**

+

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# Illinois Country Living

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**On the cover: Philanthropist and small business owner Michelle Tjelmeland works to provide cochlear implant equipment to individuals across the U.S. and internationally.**

PHOTO COURTESY OF KARI BEDFORD



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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## Powerful past, future-focused

The enduring impact of Illinois' electric cooperatives

**OUR PAST IS POWERFUL.** It began with the bold spirit of those who formed the first electric cooperatives in their communities. While rural areas were being bypassed, they took matters into their own hands and said, “We’ll do it ourselves. Not only that, but we’ll also do it on a not-for-profit basis where any funds left over will go back to the members.”

Then, there were the rural Illinois families who struggled to scrape together \$5 to join their electric cooperative. What a powerful reaction they must have had when the lights first came on, and everything from washing machines to milking dairy cows changed.

Add to that, the powerful dedication lineworkers possessed in setting poles and stringing lines no matter the weather conditions, going out in the middle of the night to fix outages caused by storms and heading to other cooperatives to help when and where needed.

And, throughout cooperative history, there’s also the planning and sound decision-making of each cooperative’s board of directors — elected by the membership — alongside its co-op manager and employees. It is not easy to consistently provide electricity that is affordable and reliable.

The Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives (AIEC) is part of that powerful past. Now more than 80 years old, AIEC provides support, expertise and unity of purpose, as well as a place where all cooperatives in our state can come together to collaborate and share ideas.

Now, more than ever, electric cooperatives must be future-focused. There are almost 6,000

member-owned solar systems on our collective lines. On top of that, co-ops own renewable generation and have power purchase agreements for the energy produced by large renewable energy sources. We are leaders in renewable energy as part of our portfolios, and we do so without a legal mandate.

We must continue to strongly advocate our concerns about reliability when replacing dispatchable generation with intermittent generation. Co-ops must plan for when the member will have the most load. We need to have sufficient generation, and we need to have the reliable infrastructure to get it to the consumer-member. That may be the coldest day or the hottest day. And it may be when the wind is not blowing, or the sun is not shining. Electric cooperative members depend on us to deliver.

We have been around for a long time. More than 80 years. We’re not a fly-by-night startup. We’re local, we’re a part of the community, and we’re made up of democratically elected directors. We are not-for-profit. We’re just trying to provide reliable electricity at cost.

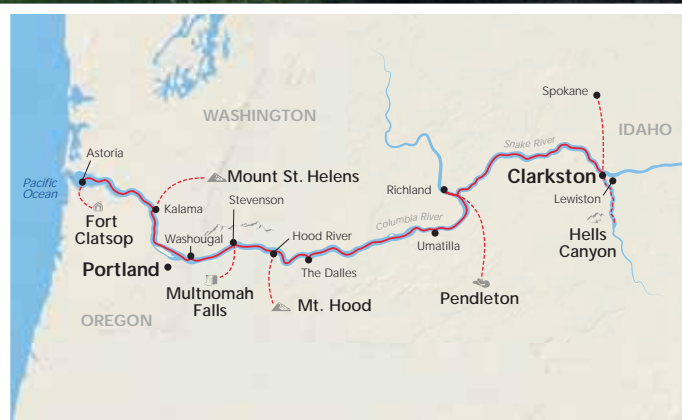
I want to emphasize that our success depends on the active participation and collaboration of every cooperative. I encourage you to engage with us, share your ideas, and take advantage of the programs and resources we offer. Together, we can overcome challenges and achieve our shared vision of providing safe, affordable and reliable energy to our communities.

Thank you for your continued support and dedication. Let’s work together to build a brighter future for our communities. 💡

This is an excerpt of Craig Sondgeroth’s CEO report presented during the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives’ annual meeting on Aug. 1, 2024.



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



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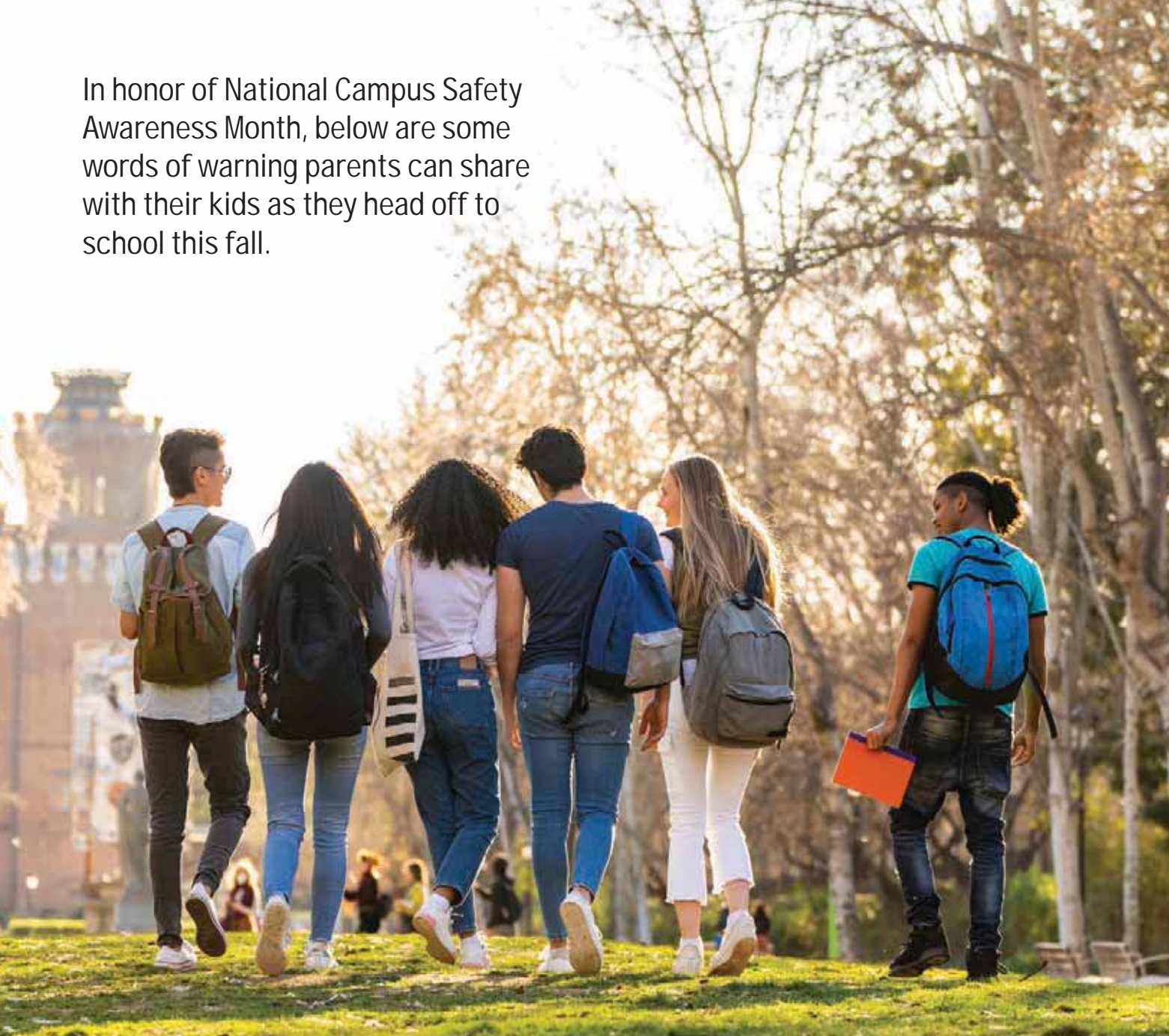
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In honor of National Campus Safety Awareness Month, below are some words of warning parents can share with their kids as they head off to school this fall.



## SIX TIPS ON WAYS TO STAY SAFE IN A COLLEGE SETTING:

1. Avoid walking alone at night.
2. Lock doors and secure belongings.
3. Pay attention to residence hall visitors.
4. Have a plan when going out.
5. Be aware of available campus safety services.
6. Report suspicious activity.

*Source: U.S. News & World Report*



## SEPTEMBER CHECKLIST

September is National Baby Safety Month, which is a reminder to safeguard your home and minimize the risk of electrical accidents.

### Childproof outlets.

If outlets in your home are not tamper-resistant, be sure to utilize covers or caps to prevent children from inserting items into them.

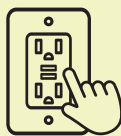


### Secure cords.

Keep electrical cords away from high-traffic areas in the home and out of reach of small children. Regularly check the cords for damage or exposed wires.

### Test regularly.

Ensure ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) electrical outlets are installed in rooms with water sources and test them monthly to ensure they are working properly.



### Talk about safety.

When they're old enough, teach your children about the importance of electrical safety.



SouthEastern Illinois Electric Cooperative (SEIEC) representatives present State Representative Patrick Windhorst with the 2024 Illinois Electric Cooperatives' Public Service Award. Pictured from left: SEIEC Board Directors Joe Marlo and Dale Schierbaum, Representative Windhorst, Board Director Pamela Bramlet, President/CEO Dustin Tripp and Board Director Jamie Scherrer.

## Illinois electric co-ops honor three legislators for public service

During the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives' (AIEC's) annual meeting Aug. 1-2, three elected officials were named recipients of Illinois Electric Cooperatives' Public Service Award. This year's recipients included State Representative Patrick Windhorst and State Senators Steve McClure and Patrick Joyce. The award is given in recognition of dedicated public service to all citizens of the state of Illinois and for outstanding contributions to the rural electrification program.

### State Representative Patrick Windhorst

"State Representative Windhorst is a strong advocate and one of the leading voices on the issues impacting rural Illinois as a Republican floor leader, and he does a great job of stressing those concerns during each bill debate," said Nick Reitz, vice president of government relations for the AIEC. "We really appreciate that his door is always open to discuss our thoughts on energy legislation being debated and how it would impact the electric cooperatives in his district."

Windhorst represents the 117th House District in southern Illinois, which includes the service territories of SouthEastern Illinois Electric Cooperative, Southern Illinois Electric Cooperative and Wayne-White Counties Electric Cooperative. He is a Republican and has served as a State Representative since January 2019.

"I appreciate this tremendous honor," Windhorst said. "Making sure that we're providing clean, safe, affordable and efficient electricity to rural Illinois is vitally important. Your cooperatives provide electricity to thousands of southern Illinoisans and throughout the state, and you play a vital role in making sure that we have economic development and rural development. I want to thank you for considering me and for giving me this award."

### State Senator Steve McClure

"State Senator McClure has been a great supporter of the electric cooperatives in his district and throughout the state," said Reitz. "He's a strong advocate and

Continued on page 8

**Sudoku**

by Myles Mellor and Susan Flanagan

To solve the puzzle, each row, column and box must contain each of the numbers 1 to 9. Level: Medium

Solution on page 33.

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

"Public service" continued from page 7



Coles-Moultrie Electric Cooperative's President/CEO Amy Bortrager (left) and Board Director Jeffery Hudson (right) present State Senator Steve McClure (center) with the 2024 Illinois Electric Cooperatives' Public Service Award.

voice on the issues impacting rural Illinois. As a member of the Senate Environment and Conservation Committee, he is always eager to hear our thoughts on environmental and energy legislation being debated and how it would impact the industry and the electric cooperatives in his district. He never misses a Youth Day and a chance to visit and interact with the students representing their co-ops. That engagement is always so neat to see."

McClure represents the 54th Senate District in central Illinois, which includes the service territories of Coles-Moultrie Electric Cooperative, M.J.M. Electric Cooperative, Menard Electric Cooperative, Norris Electric Cooperative, Shelby Electric Cooperative and Southwestern Electric Cooperative. He is a Republican and has served as a State Senator since January 2019.

"I'm really honored to receive this [award], because it's from all of you," McClure said. "You are important not just for our state, but for the constituents who are members. [You make it] easy for me to understand where you stand on the issues. ... You let me know what I've got to do to serve you in the best ways that I can. ... I just hope I can continue to work with you for many years to come. Thank you for what you do and thank you very much for this award."

**State Senator Patrick Joyce**

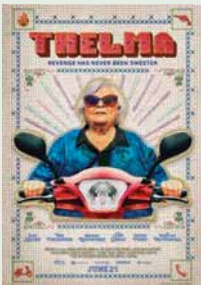
"State Senator Joyce has been a great friend and supporter of the rural electric cooperative program since first being elected," Reitz said. "He is a strong advocate and voice for the issues impacting communities throughout rural Illinois. As a member of the Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee, his door is always open to discuss energy legislation being debated and how it would impact the industry and electric cooperatives throughout Illinois."

Joyce was unable to attend the meeting and will accept the award at a later date. Joyce represents the 40th Senate District in northeastern Illinois. He is a Democrat and has served as a State Senator since November 2019.

"As a fourth-generation farmer, Senator Joyce understands and relates well to the areas that we serve as electric cooperatives, and I think it's great when people with that background serve in the Illinois General Assembly," said Craig Sondgeroth, AIEC president/CEO. "On behalf of Illinois' electric cooperatives, I want to congratulate Senator Joyce, Senator McClure and Representative Windhorst on winning our 2024 Public Service Award. You are all well-deserving, and we appreciate your support."

**IL ENTERTAINMENT CORNER**

Character actress June Louise Squibb was born Nov. 6, 1929, in Vandalia. Now 94, Squibb has had an illustrious career onstage and on the small and big screens. Following several parts in theater productions, she made her Broadway debut in "Gypsy" as Electra in 1960. Her first film role would come 30 years later in Woody Allen's "Alice" at age 61.



Amid those milestones were numerous guest appearances on well-known TV shows like "Grey's Anatomy" and "Law & Order," as well as recurring roles in "Ghost Whisperer," "Shameless" and "Good Girls." She also had supporting roles in many films, notably in "About Schmidt" opposite Jack Nicholson.

Squibb was nominated for an Academy Award, a Golden Globe and the Screen Actors Guild Award, among others, for best supporting actress for her performance as Kate Grant in the 2013 film "Nebraska."

With all of these accomplishments, however, it appears she is not turning in her SAG card just yet. Most recently, she enjoyed her first leading role as the title character in the comedy film "Thelma" and was the voice of Nostalgia in Pixar's animated film "Inside Out 2," both released in 2024. Next on the list are the films "Lost & Found in Cleveland" and "Eleanor the Great."



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## Where is it?

The winners of the July hidden object contest were Floyd Richey of Coles-Moultrie Electric Cooperative and Ray Bense of Monroe County Electric Cooperative. Congratulations! Your ICL campfire mugs have been sent.

August's watermelon was hidden in the deer photo on page 32. 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 International Literacy Day, celebrated each year on Sept. 8, be on the lookout for a stack of books. The symbol can vary in size and will never be on this page, a lettered page or in an ad.

Entries must include your name, address, name of your electric co-op (nonmembers are also eligible), and the page number and location of the symbol. Visit [icl.coop/hiddenobject](http://icl.coop/hiddenobject) and fill out the entry form (also found under Contact Us on the website) or mail a postcard 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 postmarked or received digitally by the 15th. Winners' names and the symbol's location will be published in each month's issue of Illinois Country Living.

## Lineworker scholarship recipient announced



Lukas Roberts

The 2024 recipient of the LaVern and Nola McEntire Memorial Lineworker's Scholarship is Lukas Roberts of Sherman. Roberts is a graduate of Williamsville High School and is currently enrolled at Lincoln Land Community

College (LLCC) in the electric distribution lineworker program.

"My goals as a lineworker [will be] to make a good living to provide for my future family and to travel to areas hit by natural disasters to help them restore their way of life," Roberts said in his application. "I always like the opportunity to help people."

The scholarship, awarded for the first time in 2011, was endowed by LaVern and Nola McEntire. LaVern served as a lineworker for more than 42 years at McDonough Power Cooperative. He and wife Nola set up the scholarship to assist students attending lineworker's school at LLCC.

The \$2,000 scholarship is awarded annually to an individual who is related to an Illinois rural electric cooperative employee or director; is the son or daughter of an Illinois electric cooperative member; is enrolled in the Lincoln Land lineworker's school; or has served or is currently serving in the U.S. armed forces or National Guard.

## Rubenacker elected AIEC board chairman



Rick Rubenacker

The Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives' (AIEC's) board of directors held a reorganizational meeting on Aug. 2, directly following the AIEC's 2024 annual meeting, and unanimously elected Rick Rubenacker as its new board chairman.

Representing Wayne-White Counties Electric Cooperative (WWCEC) on the AIEC board of directors, Rubenacker is a sixth-generation grain farmer in southern Illinois, where he also raises his three young children

with his wife Emily. Rubenacker graduated from the University of Illinois with an agricultural engineering degree and serves as treasurer on the WWCEC board of directors.



Scott Ury

Scott Ury was the AIEC board chairman from 2022 to 2024 and is the secretary-treasurer on the board of directors for Southern Illinois Electric Cooperative. The AIEC thanks Ury for his dedication and service as board chairman.

## EIA expects record-high power consumption this year

In the wake of a record-breaking heat wave, total power consumption is expected to hit new highs nationwide in 2024, according to the Energy Information Administration (EIA).

In its latest Short-Term Energy Outlook, EIA expects demand will be about 2% higher during the second half of this year compared to the same period in 2023. Total consumption is expected to reach 4,123 billion kilowatt-hours (kWh) in 2024, compared to 4,000 billion kWh in 2023.

The agency projects even higher demand in 2025 — 4,197 billion kWh. Among the factors driving high electricity demand is the rapid development of data centers and cryptocurrency mining operations, according to a recent edition of EIA's Today in Energy.

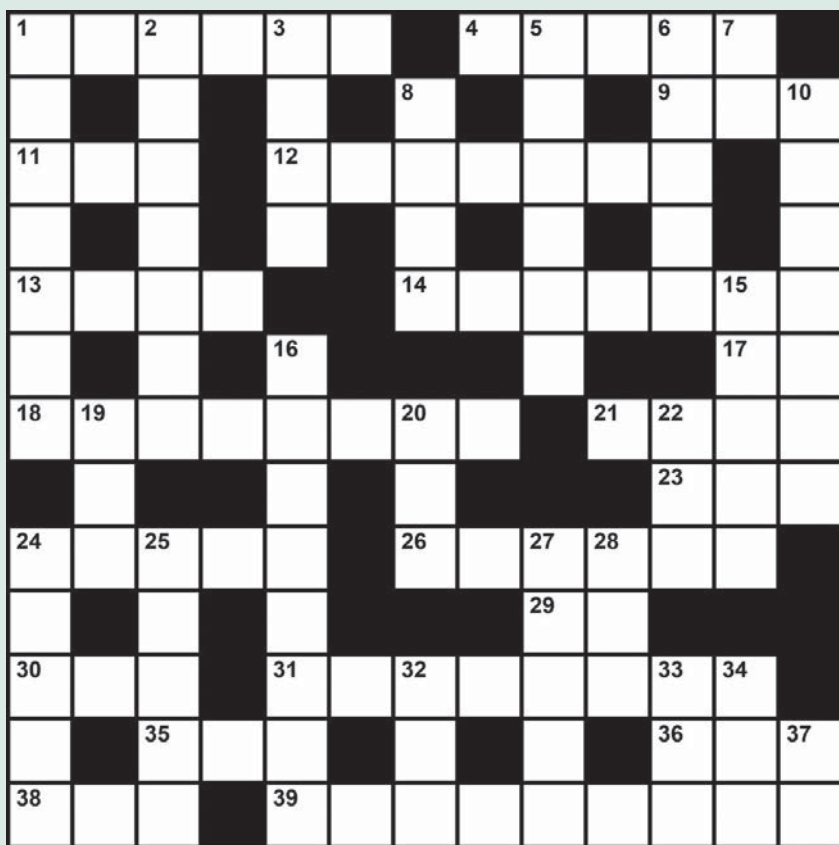
July's Short-Term Energy Outlook said that demand spikes will drive natural gas prices 36% higher in the second half of 2024 compared to the first half — a trend that will likely lead utilities to lean on less expensive fuel sources, including coal and solar.

EIA expects 42% more electricity generation from solar, 6% more from wind, 4% more from hydropower and 3% more from coal for the second half of 2024 compared to the same period last year.

During the first half of 2024, electricity generation grew 5% as more Americans cranked up their air conditioners to cope with hotter-than-normal temperatures, the report said.

"The increase in electricity demand paired with a decrease in natural gas generation creates a gap between the power we need, and the power being produced," EIA Administrator Joe DeCarolis said in a press release.

Victoria A. Rocha, NRECA



**Across**

- 1 Subjects
- 4 Absorb information to be able to apply it
- 9 “The Big Bang Theory” character
- 11 Breathing need
- 12 Graduate’s document
- 13 “Give her a \_\_\_\_” (applause)
- 14 Places to learn
- 17 Sci-fi writer, \_\_\_\_ Doc Smith
- 18 Gather information
- 21 Approve
- 23 Editors, for short
- 24 Time off school for a while
- 26 Written papers
- 29 Circle ratio
- 30 Out \_\_\_\_ limb, 2 words
- 31 Associated with school and learning
- 35 MC tool
- 36 Doze (off)
- 38 Bro’s partner
- 39 Fruits of education
- 7 You, in slang
- 8 Chooses, with “for”
- 10 Sweaters
- 15 Takes the initiative
- 16 Student’s carryall
- 19 Listening organ
- 20 Signal
- 22 Essential
- 24 Reading materials
- 25 Tests
- 27 Compete in a bee
- 28 Goal
- 32 Earlier
- 33 The Colts, on an NFL scoreboard
- 34 Piece of a machine
- 37 Of in French

**Down**

- 1 One who guides a student to understanding
- 2 PTA figures
- 3 What a programmer develops
- 5 Sports award
- 6 Harry Potter’s enemy, first name

*Solution on page 33.*



**NRECA awarded grant to reduce EV charging station installation costs**

NRECA Research has been awarded more than \$2 million from the Department of Energy to help electric cooperatives speed up the development of accessible, dependable electric vehicle charging stations in rural areas.

NRECA Research – the research and development arm of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association – and DOE’s Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy have entered into an agreement to collaborate on a project called REWIRED, or Rural Electric Workflow Improvements for Rapid Electric Vehicle Supply Equipment Deployment.

The DOE funding, which continues for a three-year period ending in May 2027, will help pay for two major tools that co-ops can use to streamline the way they work with local developers to create EV charging infrastructure, said Jennah Denney, NRECA’s EV strategy and solutions manager.

The first tool will be a comprehensive guidebook designed to help co-ops establish a consistent process across their territories. This guidebook will simplify paperwork and application procedures for developers looking to create EV charging networks, making it easier and more efficient to deploy.

“Some of the biggest issues the guidebook will address are reducing lengthy timelines, speeding up slow approval processes and making the interconnection process more transparent,” Denney said. “The ultimate goals are improved grid stability, reducing costs to our members and increasing member satisfaction.”

The second tool will be an online dashboard that co-ops can use to assess the impact of future EV growth on their distribution transformer loads. It also will help co-ops determine – through growth and load modeling – whether they can accommodate EV growth with their existing infrastructure or if improvements need to be made to their systems.

Co-ops will be able to input local data, such as EV penetration rates and feeder data, to better assess their specific needs. “This tool can expedite the approval process for selecting charging station sites by significantly reducing the time required by a co-op planning engineer,” Denney added. 💡

Erin Kelly, NRECA

# SEPTEMBER **Datebook**

## LET'S GO!

7

### Stargazing GALENA

Explore the wonders of the night sky and learn about the constellations and stars

8

### Pickers Market LITCHFIELD

An open-air market filled with antique and vintage collectibles, live music and food

14

### McLean Co. Barn Tour

ARROWSMITH  
Travel at your own leisure during this self-guided tour of barns in McLean County

21

### Belden School Open House

GALENA  
Step into a bygone era at the historic 1859 limestone one-room schoolhouse and learn about its history

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



## WWII Pacific Theater Veteran Display

SEPTEMBER

1

View a static display of 100 veteran uniforms from the Pacific Theater of World War II. This display will contain uniforms, gear, pictures, weaponry and bringbacks from and used by those veterans who saw action in the Pacific Theater of operations during WWII.

Sept. 1, 2024: noon-6 p.m.

● VFW Post 4226, 205 N. Walnut St., Olney

Admission: free

618-869-2500

## Artesia Brewing Annual Oktoberfest Celebration

SEPTEMBER

20-21

Celebrate Oktoberfest at Artesia Brewing. At the German folk festival, enjoy special-release, German-style beers and live polka music. Horsch Radish German Restaurant will serve food. Dirndls, lederhosen and other traditional German clothing are welcome. Bring the whole family for a wonderful opportunity to experience the fall season on the farm surrounding the brewery.

Sept. 20-21, 2024: all day

● Artesia Brewing, 384 E. 1200 N. Road, Thawville

Admission: free

217-249-2509 or [artesiabrewing.com](http://artesiabrewing.com)



PHOTO COURTESY OF BOS BROTHERS HISTORICAL FARM

## Bos Brothers Fall Harvest Show

SEPTEMBER

20-22

Join the Bos Brothers for their annual fall farm show, where they will harvest corn and soybeans. Demonstrations will include plowing stalks and stubble, corn shelling, cornmeal milling and cornbread baking using the harvested corn. There will also be woodworking, rug weaving, pottery throwing, quilting and much more. Learn about honeybees and maple syrup, too. There will be plenty to do for the whole family. Food and modern restrooms are available on site. Live music by Rusty Strings will be on Friday and Saturday, and a church service will be held on Sunday.

Sept. 20-21, 2024: 8 a.m.-5 p.m. and Sept. 22: 8 a.m.-3 p.m.

● Bos Brothers Historical Farm, 8105 Springhill Road, Erie

Admission: free

309-781-6394 or [bosbroshistoricalfarm.com](http://bosbroshistoricalfarm.com)

## Cave-In-Rock Frontier Days Festival

SEPTEMBER

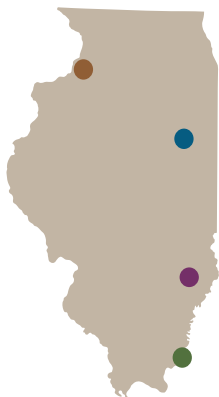
21

Enjoy a day filled with fun activities for the entire family at the Historic Cave-In-Rock Riverfront. Festivities include music, the Traveling Science Center from the University of Illinois, Smokey the Bear, an enchanting playtime event featuring giant bubbles, a professional clown, a magic show, a balloon artist, games for kids, food and arts/crafts vendors. The parade starts at 4 p.m., and the local country cover band, the Blunt Briars, will entertain from 5-7 p.m. On Sunday morning, there will be a nondenominational worship service.

Sept. 21, 2024: all day

● Historic Cave-In-Rock Riverfront, Illinois Route 1 / Canal Street, Cave-In-Rock

Admission: free







## Farm smart, harvest safe

Essential tips for the season

**FARMERS ARE THE BACKBONE** of America, supplying essential food and resources that sustain our daily lives. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics lists agriculture as one of the most dangerous U.S. sectors, with harvest season being particularly hazardous. National Farm Safety and Health Week (Sept. 15-21) reminds farmers to prioritize safety.

Safety starts with preparation. Be prepared for potential emergencies before the season begins. Have a safety plan, and make sure that farm workers and family members are aware of it.

### Look out for power lines

The increasing size of farm equipment allow operators to come perilously close to overhead power lines. It's vital to keep equipment away from them — 10 feet away, at minimum.

Injuries and fatalities are more likely to occur during harvest. Combines and equipment loaded onto trailers can hit power lines and cause electrocution, as can raising the bed of a truck to unload. The most common equipment involved in power line accidents are portable grain augers, oversized wagons and large combines.

The leading cause of electrocution on the farm is an auger hitting a power line when moved. Portable augers being maneuvered by hand

around bins have caused the death of many workers who became the path to ground for electricity when the top of the auger came into contact with an overhead line.

Farmers should always use a spotter when moving tall loads and set extensions to the lowest setting to further prevent contact with overhead lines. Inspect equipment for transport height and determine clearance for any power lines under which the equipment must pass. Never attempt to move a power line out of the way or raise it for clearance.

### Have an emergency plan

Make sure everyone knows what to do if accidental contact is made with an overhead power line. It's almost always best to stay in the cab, call 911 for help, and wait until the utility arrives to make sure the power is cut off.

If the power line is energized and you step outside, your body becomes the path to ground, resulting in electrocution. If a power line is on the ground, there is potential for the area nearby to be energized. Stay inside the vehicle unless there's a fire.

In that case, the proper action is to jump clear of the equipment with both feet together and land without touching the equipment and ground at the same time. Continue to shuffle or hop to safety, keeping both feet together.

Overhead wires are not the only electrical contact that can result in a serious incident. Pole guy wires are grounded, but when one is broken, it can cause an electric current disruption. This can make those neutral wires dangerous. If you hit a guy wire and break it, call the utility to fix it. Do not do it yourself. When dealing with electrical poles and wires, always call the electric utility.

### Other tips

- Do not use metal poles when breaking up bridged grain inside and around bins.
- Always hire qualified electricians for any electrical issues.
- Do not use equipment with frayed cables.
- Make sure outdoor outlets are equipped with ground fault circuit interrupters.
- Wear proper safety gear such as head protection, work gloves, protective footwear (to help prevent slips and falls) and eye protection.

Harvest season often means putting in long hours, which can make it difficult to stay alert and on the lookout for potential hazards. Take regular breaks, stay hydrated and be mindful of your own limits to ensure a safe and plentiful harvest. For more information, visit [SafeElectricity.org](http://SafeElectricity.org).💡



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

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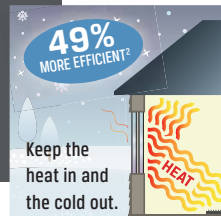
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## Don't leave money on the table

Consider federal tax credits, incentives and rebates for efficiency upgrades

**TAX CREDITS AND REBATES** can help bridge the affordability gap to higher efficiency equipment for your home, allowing you to complete energy efficiency upgrades that can lower your energy use and save you money for years to come.

First, knowing the difference between a tax credit and rebate is

apply for a tax credit when you file your tax documents, so it typically takes longer to reap the benefits than it does with a rebate.

According to ENERGY STAR, homeowners can qualify for up to \$3,200 annually in federal tax credits for energy efficiency upgrades. Federal tax credits are available

These federal tax credits are available through 2032. You must own the home you're upgrading, and it must be your primary residence. Federal tax credits only apply to existing homes in the U.S., not new construction.

The Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 expanded available funding for many home upgrades. The act allocated \$8.8 million for home rebate programs to be implemented at the state level, and this funding is offered in two different programs. The HOMES program allows up to \$8,000 per home for standard-income households. Higher rebates are available for low- to moderate-income households. The HEAR program offers rebates of up to \$14,000 per home for qualified, efficient electric equipment for low- to moderate-income households.

These programs are designed to bolster existing programs and should be available in late 2024 or early 2025. Check with your electric cooperative or state office to find out if they are being offered in your state.

Additional energy efficiency rebates might also be available. More than half of U.S. states require energy efficiency programs for residents, according to the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy. These programs can help people save money on their electric bills and help states meet climate goals, reduce system costs and improve the electric grid.

I have had the privilege of working in energy efficiency rebate programs for many years and have seen the benefits of these programs firsthand. Tax credit and rebate programs can make upgrades more affordable — helping people save money and improve the overall comfort of their homes. 💡



PHOTO COURTESY OF MARK GILLILAND

When shopping for appliances, look for the ENERGY STAR logo on the energy guide to identify which products are the most efficient options.



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

important. A rebate is a payment for purchasing or installing a qualified product or home improvement. Depending on how the rebate program is set up, it may be provided at the time of purchase or applied for and received after installation. Check with your electric cooperative to see if they offer rebates. Typically, these rebates are applied as a credit on your electric bill. In some cases, the rebate is provided as a cash payment to those who complete eligible projects.

A tax credit is a dollar-for-dollar amount that taxpayers can report on their tax documents to reduce the amount of taxes owed. You

for heating and cooling system upgrades, including heat pumps, furnaces, central air conditioners, boilers and geothermal heat pumps.

Tax credits for ENERGY STAR-rated heat pump water heaters cover 30% of the project cost, up to \$2,000. You can also improve your home's envelope — the portion of the home that separates the inside from the outside — with tax credits for insulation, windows and skylights.

If an energy efficiency upgrade requires improving the electrical panel in your home, there's a tax credit for that, too. You can receive 30% of the cost of the panel upgrade, up to \$600.

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PHOTO COURTESY OF GERD ALTMANN, PIXABAY

As EVs continue to become more common, electric cooperatives will face new challenges in managing the increased demand for electricity.

## Charging ahead

### Ensuring grid stability in an EV-driven future

**ELECTRIC VEHICLES (EVs) ARE** more than just a trend; they're a shift toward a new era of transportation and energy use.

According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, data indicates a steady increase in EV adoption, with EVs and hybrid vehicles surpassing 16% of total 2023 U.S. light-duty vehicle sales. Additionally, as of March 2024, 17 states have exceeded 10% of the EV market share, highlighting the regional variations and potential hotspots for EV market penetration. As EVs continue to become more common, electric cooperatives will face new challenges and opportunities to continue providing reliable, affordable energy to consumer-members.

Imagine traffic during rush hour — it's crowded and slow. Our nation's electric grid can become just as crowded when everyone charges their EVs at the same time. This major spike in energy use can lead to power outages or expensive updates

to our system. But as we prepare for increased electricity demand from EV use, we remain dedicated to solving these challenges and keeping the lights on for everyone.

Smart charging is like a traffic light for electricity — it helps manage the demand for power. Here's how you can help if you own an EV.

#### Charge during off-peak hours

Charge your EV when electricity demand is low, such as late at night or early in the morning. This helps to prevent grid overload and saves on your energy bills.

#### Use delayed charging

Modern EV chargers can wait to charge your car until there's less demand for power. This helps keep the grid stable and ensures you have power when you need it.

#### Adopt grid-friendly charging

Some EV chargers can adjust how fast they charge your vehicle based on how much power is available. This

helps avoid grid congestion and the need for expensive upgrades.

Managing the EV transition on our electric grid brings many challenges as well as many opportunities for growth and working together. One goal is to help co-op consumer-members understand how EVs and the grid affect each other.

It's crucial for co-ops to identify and track the EVs within their local networks. Knowing how many EVs are charging on their systems allows for better planning and helps ensure a more stable supply of electricity. When EV charging patterns can be predicted, co-ops can maintain a more efficient and reliable power grid.

Additionally, when local, detailed data is available, the co-op can design EV programs that fit its community's specific needs, encourage responsible energy use and offer additional cost savings to members. If you're considering an EV and have questions about home charging, contact your local electric cooperative for guidance. 💡



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

# Family, farm and food

Regenerative efforts, grass-finished beef have many benefits

By Lisa Cherry

**IN THE LATE 1980S**, Amos Brubaker began experimenting with cover crops on the family farm on Tri-County Electric Cooperative lines in Ina. He learned that if he planted cereal rye before soybeans, for example, he could reduce the amount of herbicide needed. That realization became a foundation for the family's future practices.

His son Nathan took over operations in the mid-2000s, and he continues to work with cover crops to eliminate the need for chemicals. Another crucial change came later.

Eventually, the Brubakers also decided to switch to 100% grass-fed and finished beef. There is a distinction between the two — grass-fed beef can still be grain-finished, while grass-finished graze on grass their entire lives.

"We're not [using] any grain. We're doing antibiotic-free, hormone-free, and our goal is to connect people with their food — food that's quality," he adds. "You can go to the grocery store and buy a lot of stuff, but there's no telling how that animal was raised. We felt we had an opportunity to connect people with quality food."

Today, the farm is nearly 100% no-till, which also reduces erosion. The Brubakers use cover crops as often as possible and have nearly eliminated the use of pesticides. David says these changes have had a profound impact on their land.

"We're seeing looser soil [and] more wildlife come back," he says. "[We're] starting to see a return, a regeneration on the landscape of our soil, our microbiology."

About 100 head of cattle graze their pastures. The herd consists of Black and Red Angus and Red Devon, a British breed known for being able to finish on grass and for its quality meat.

"We like to select a small animal, because smaller animals require less energy maintenance," he says. "If you're going to feed [them] corn, you can easily put weight on a cow. It's not hard to do that, but we're only feeding [them] grass, so we try to select for genetics that will finish a lot faster on grass."

He says the process takes about two years, while grain-fed only takes 14-16 months. There are drawbacks to the speedier timeframe, however. "They've got to use antibiotics to keep them alive, where we slow it down [and] make sure we get a good fat finish. We want plenty of marbling in our meat, and it takes 24-26 months to get that done."

They began selling their meats at farmers markets, and later opened a little store on their farm. Their meat can also be ordered online. The Brubakers also sell pastured pork, chicken and eggs.

"It really started with us trying to heal our land," explains David. "We start to see more biology. ... That was a big driving force. Then there's just learning from other farmers who have done this before." 💡



The Brubaker family

## 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](http://icl.coop/local).

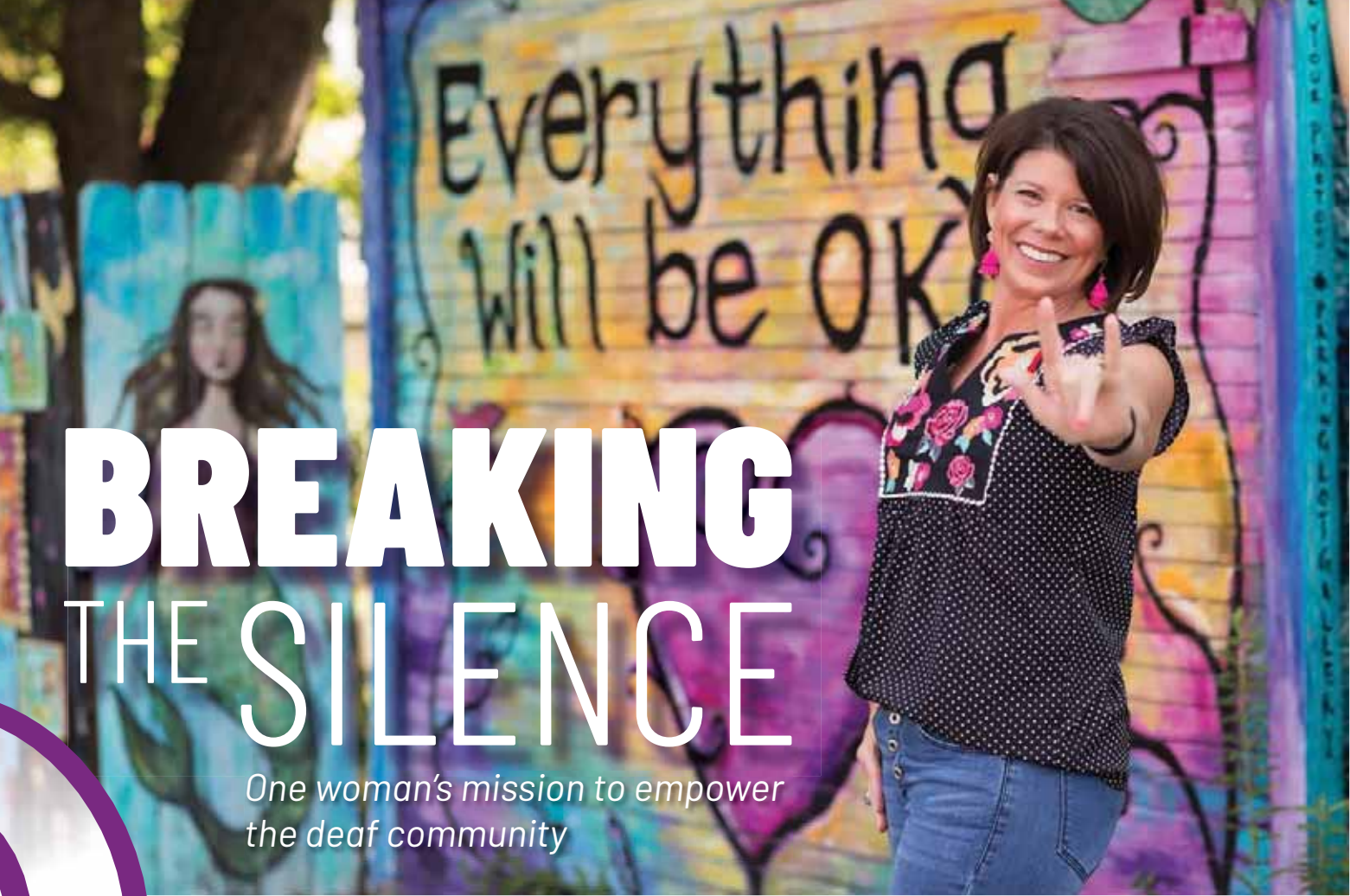
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PHOTOS COURTESY OF DAVID BRUBAKER



# BREAKING THE SILENCE

*One woman's mission to empower the deaf community*

*By Valerie Cheatham*

**PHILANTHROPIST, HUMANITARIAN, HIGH-ENERGY SMALL** business owner, dedicated wife and mother of two daughters, Michelle Tjelmeland of Springfield deftly juggles multiple roles aimed at bringing beauty and healing to the lives of others, all while dealing with the twists and turns in her own life.

As a 7th and 8th grade language arts teacher in 1998, Michelle became profoundly deaf while pregnant with her daughter, Ellie. And, after giving birth, mother's intuition told her something also wasn't right with her newborn.

"Back then, Illinois hospitals didn't do newborn hearing screenings," Michelle says. "We went to nine different doctors, and they all said Ellie passed her hearing test. I wasn't satisfied."

Michelle and her husband Joel scheduled an appointment with hearing specialist Dr. Charles Berlin in New Orleans, La. He pronounced Ellie profoundly deaf.

They then turned to Carle Clinic's ECHO (Expanding Children's Hearing Opportunities) program in Champaign. Ellie was prescribed hearing aids as a required insurance precursor to other options. She was fitted with the aids to determine if they could help.

After 8 long months, Ellie's doctors, audiologist and speech therapist agreed the hearing aids were not beneficial. However, they believed she would be a good candidate for a cochlear implant. The Tjelmelands had been doing research about implants and read numerous books and materials. They were both excited and scared. Their hope was that Ellie would

receive enough sound to be able to learn to speak, but they knew it would be a long road ahead.

"Acutely aware of the importance of language skills in day-to-day life, I didn't want Ellie to struggle," Michelle says.

Approved for an implant in August 1999, Ellie underwent surgery to place the device. At 18 months old, she was one of the youngest patients to ever receive one. After a month of recovery, the Tjelmelands returned to have the implant hooked up. The implant was successful, and over time, Ellie was enrolled in preschool to learn to listen, speak and socialize with her peers. She received extra help during her school day and attended speech, language, listening, lip reading and sign language therapy five days a week.

Michelle stresses that cochlear implants are not for everyone, and she respects all opinions regarding them. It made sense for her family because everyone used speech to communicate. However, if the procedure wasn't successful, they were prepared to learn sign language, lip reading, etc.

At the same time, Michelle was struggling with her own loss of hearing and identity as a teacher. Always a social person, she began to isolate herself. "I was dealing with the loss of my child's hearing and my career, and I couldn't communicate," she explains. She was so focused on Ellie that she felt selfish trying to help herself.

Michelle learned that the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign offered an online computer technology course

Philanthropist and small business owner Michelle Tjelmeland signs "I love you" in American Sign Language.

and enrolled. She went on to receive her master's degree in education and computer technology and launched her own web design business. She has since worked with hundreds of businesses and organizations to develop new and professional marketing materials.

After a long battle with her insurance company, Michelle underwent cochlear implant surgery herself. "Insurance providers considered cochlear implants an elective procedure," says Michelle. "I had to appeal multiple times before they eventually paid."

In 2005, Michelle and Ellie became the first mother-daughter pair to receive bilateral implants. "My decision to be implanted may have been easier, because I saw the benefits Ellie is receiving," says Michelle. "It was the greatest gift — the implant gave me back my life. I can hear, speak and listen, but even with implants, they are not perfect."

According to Michelle, a cochlear implant is revolutionary for people who cannot hear, but it doesn't work for everyone. It is a small, complex electronic device that can help to provide a sense of sound to a person who is profoundly deaf or hearing impaired. It does not restore normal hearing. Instead, it can give a deaf person a useful representation of sounds in the environment and help him or her understand speech.

Her life experience with cochlear implants motivated Michelle in 2005 to found the Cochlear Implant Awareness Foundation (CIAF), a nonprofit organization that provides information and resources for individuals who can overcome deafness through cochlear-implant technology. CIAF has nationwide name recognition because of Michelle's intuitive marketing skills and sheer determination.

"CIAF is the only foundation like it in the world," says Michelle. As manufacturers of cochlear implants create new variations, users often find themselves unable to obtain parts



for the implants they have, and that is one place where the foundation comes into play. In addition, upgrading or replacing parts is often not economically feasible.

Through its "Hear Again" campaign, CIAF accepts gently used cochlear implant equipment from individuals who are upgrading. Gently used cables, processors, batteries, etc., are cleaned, processed and catalogued into a database. When a request for equipment is received, a search quickly finds the correct item. CIAF does not charge for the equipment, but there is a fee to help cover administrative costs. The foundation is 100% self-funded with no state or federal dollars received. It has helped provide millions of dollars' worth of cochlear implant equipment to thousands of individuals across the U.S. and internationally.

Joan Carnduff, CIAF coordinator, handles equipment donations and requests, phone calls, inventory and shipping. "I couldn't do this without her," says Michelle. "I started CIAF, but Joan has taken it to the next level."

Gratitude for the transformative power of the cochlear implant turned Michelle into a philanthropist and

## EARLY INTERVENTION IS KEY

According to the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), since Dec. 31, 2002, progress has been made to screen every newborn in Illinois with 98% of infants born in Illinois hospitals receiving a hearing screen shortly after birth. If a newborn does not pass the screening, further testing by a pediatric audiologist is necessary to determine if the baby may have hearing loss.

Some babies startle or turn their heads to a loud noise, but that doesn't mean they can hear the spoken language. With the right support and early intervention,

infants with hearing loss can experience healthy development. In Illinois, the Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) program helps assure that care and follow-up intervention services are offered to families. If not detected, hearing loss can affect the child's ability to communicate. Loss of hearing can impact academic achievement and social and emotional development.

Hearing loss is the most frequently occurring birth defect, affecting up to three in 1,000 infants at birth and nine in 1,000 children by school age.





humanitarian, but another discovery at this point in her life also shaped the direction of her career. Michelle's experience with hearing loss heightened her visual sensibilities. She became drawn to the visual appeal of her surroundings, from her home to her own wardrobe.

She says people would often comment on her eye for aesthetics, to which she would respond, "I guess I make up for my hearing loss with my sense of sight." Her visual epiphany led to a new career path for her.

Michelle applied her aesthetic to fashion and more, creating Springfield's District 23 Boutique in 2013. The boutique provides a consistent means to support the efforts of CIAF and serves the dual purposes of bringing beautiful apparel, accessories, home decor and gifts to the community, helping fund CIAF.

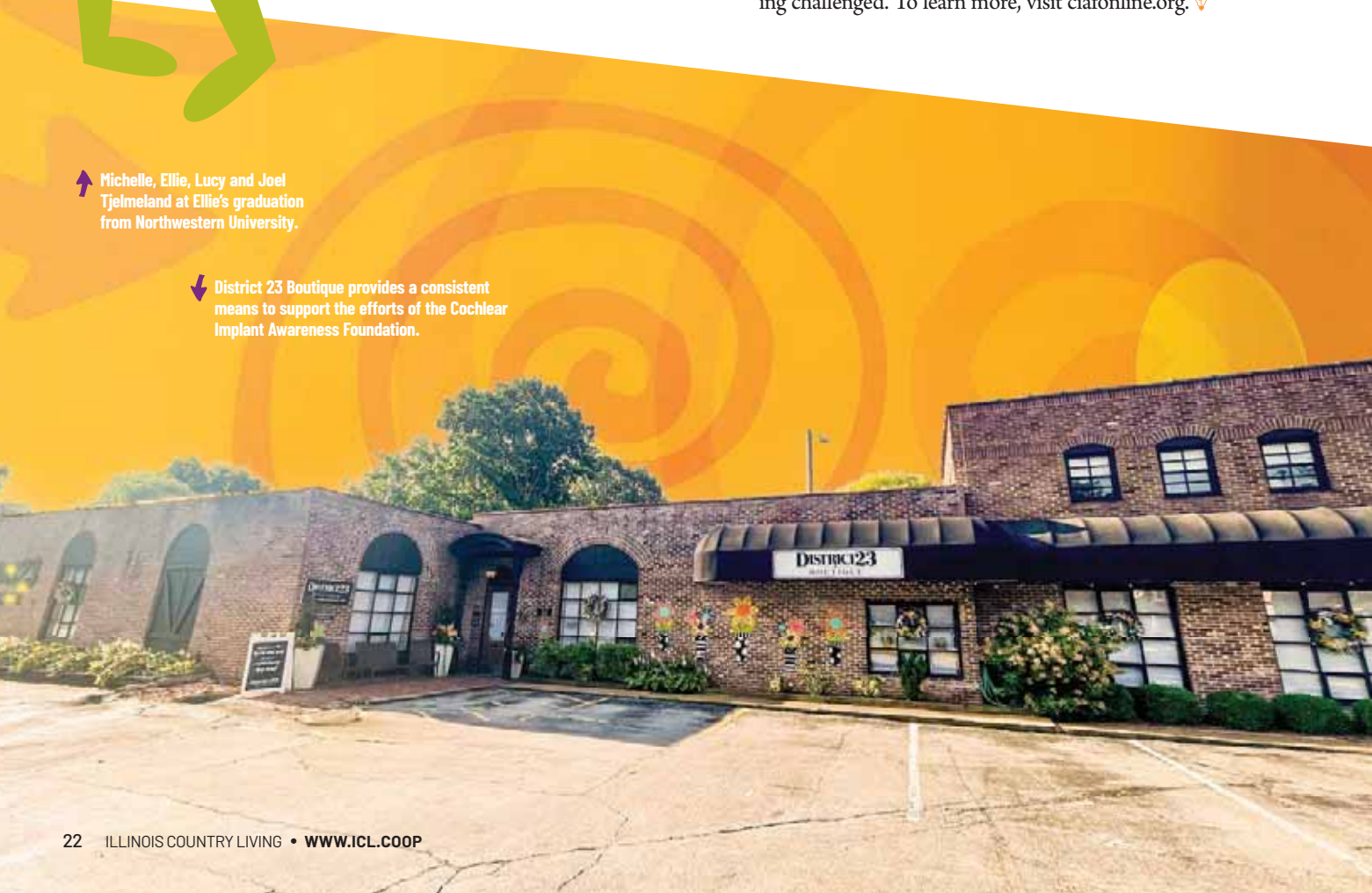
Through it all, Michelle remains a high-energy dynamo. She used the COVID-19 closure time to transform an unassuming bungalow into a highly sought-after rental property and has become a certified personal stylist, colorist and shape expert. She is also a certified social media specialist, community leader and public speaker.

Today, both of Michelle and Joel's daughters are young adults. Lucy lives and works in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., and Ellie lives and works in Chicago and is engaged in post-graduate studies related to otorhinolaryngology. As for CIAF, it continues to grow and supports numerous individuals who are hearing challenged. To learn more, visit [ciafonline.org](http://ciafonline.org).



↑ Michelle, Ellie, Lucy and Joel Tjelmeland at Ellie's graduation from Northwestern University.

↓ District 23 Boutique provides a consistent means to support the efforts of the Cochlear Implant Awareness Foundation.



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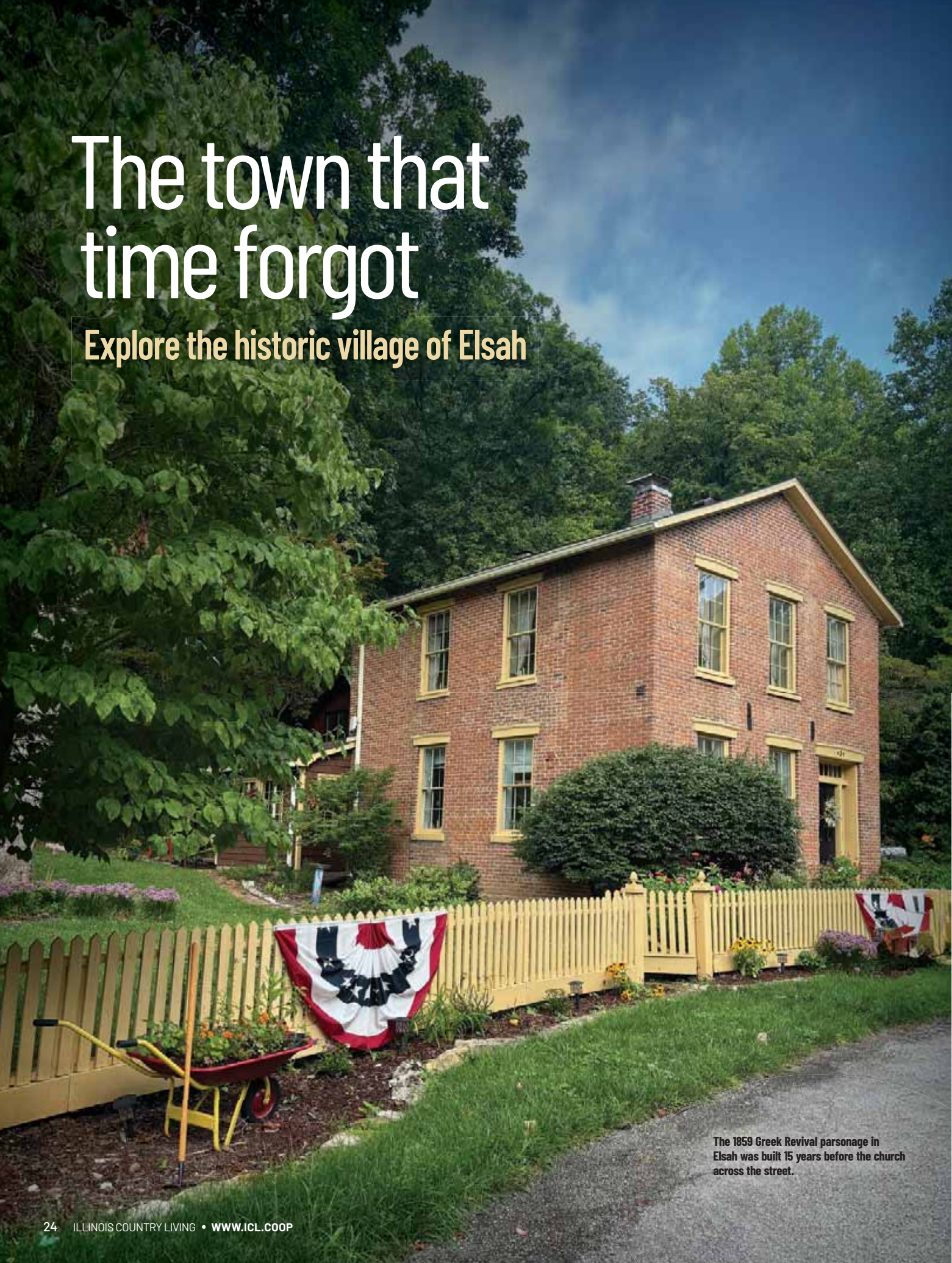


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# The town that time forgot

Explore the historic village of Elsau



The 1859 Greek Revival parsonage in Elsau was built 15 years before the church across the street.

By Jim Winnerman

**DRIVING ALONG THE GREAT** River Road north of Alton, with the Mississippi River flowing less than 50 feet from the highway, it is easy to miss the road leading into Elsay. Nestled in a narrow valley with imposing limestone cliffs on either side and hidden by a thick canopy of trees, the tiny community of 100 residents is often referred to as “the town that time forgot.”

But, for those who venture into the village, the storybook setting they discover makes an indelible impression that, in fact, is never forgotten.

Much of the reason for Elsay’s charming appearance is a multitude of stone homes and public buildings, which have outwardly changed little since the founding of the town by James Semple 171 years ago. Semple owned the land and offered free residential lots for anyone who would build a house out of stone he supplied from his quarry.

Elsah’s charm is easy to appreciate on a self-guided walk along the two short main streets. In addition to the mid-1800s stone homes, there is an eclectic mix of late-1800s architecture, including Greek Revival, Gothic Revival, Mansard, Italianate and Saltbox homes. The stories of each home, other historic buildings, town memorabilia and historic photographs are exhibited in the 1887 Elsay Village Hall, which is also home to the Historic Elsay Foundation.

Elsah residents Steve and Cindy Hall are examples of local homeowners who have lovingly directed their attention to maintaining the pristine condition of the community’s historic buildings. In fact, the Halls consider themselves as caretakers more than owners.

Originally, their 1857 home was built as the parsonage in anticipation of building a Methodist Church, which was finally constructed in 1874 across the street where it stands today and is used weekly for services. For the 17 years before the church opened, the Hall’s living room was used for weddings, funerals and other church business.

The Halls had been frequent visitors to Elsay, and in fall 2022, they were enjoying a picnic in the park in front of the church while admiring what would become their home. “We were day-dreaming what it would be like to live there, and Cindy decided there was nothing to lose by inquiring if the owners were interested in selling, [so] she ventured over to ask,” Steve recalls.

“They told us they would keep our number,” Cindy says. “We think they just wanted to be sure we would be the right owners and respect the home as they did. Six weeks later they sold it to us.”

Blair Smith and his wife are another couple who always admired the quaint village. Returning to their St. Louis home from a weekend drive in the Illinois countryside in 2003, they decided to take a route through the village and noticed a for sale sign on a residence.

**Top:** Blair Smith talks with customers inside his general store, originally built as a tavern in 1877.

**Middle:** The Green Tree Inn in Elsay offers overnight accommodations.

**Bottom:** The Gothic Methodist Church was constructed in 1874 and is still used today.





**Top left:** The 1887 Village Hall contains a town museum and is home to the Historic Elsay Foundation.

**Top right:** Proprietor Blair Smith puts up an "open" sign outside his general store.

**Middle:** The one-room Elsay General Store features historic sodas and candy.

**Bottom:** This 1853 home was one of the first built in Elsay.

"It had been built as a tavern in 1877, and a home had been added alongside," Blair says. "We thought it would make a great weekend retreat." Then, as the Smiths painted walls and refinished floors on weekends, they realized they enjoyed the village so much they eventually made it their permanent home.

Ten years later, in 2014, they decided to open a general store in the room that had been the tavern, which includes the original countertops, floor and ceiling. Today, while the one-room store supplies staples for residents, it also offers specialized goods that have a history of their own and adds an unexpected experience for visitors to the village.

"For example, we have 50 flavors of soda in glass bottles, several made by an Illinois bottler in business since 1936 that uses the original formulas, and fresh breads from a bakery doing business since 1902," Blair says, mentioning just some of the items for sale that make the one-room store so unique.

"When people visit historic Elsay, they remark they had always heard about [it] and wanted to visit, and that our general store is exactly what they hoped to find," Blair says.

Because of its history and pristine character, in 1973, Elsay was the first village in the U.S. to be recognized in its entirety as a Historic District when 48 buildings were added to the National Register of Historic Places.

In addition, a second National Historic Landmark awaits discovery inside Elsay's town limits, just a mile away. Perched several hundred feet on top of the bluff overlooking the village is the unique campus of Principia College, a private liberal arts institution founded in 1912.

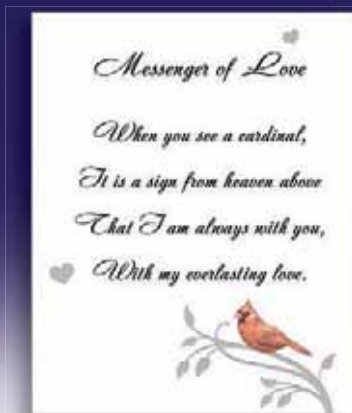
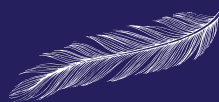
In 1923, architect Bernard Ralph Maybeck was tasked to develop a master plan for the institution's new campus. He did so, designing the first 11 buildings to appear as a Tudor village, as if in the English countryside. Featuring steeply pitched gable roofs, elegant masonry and stonework, and wooden beams set in a stucco or stone facade, construction was completed in 1935.

A self-directed driving tour through the village passes the "mistake house." Prior to building the campus, the cottage-like structure was designed by Maybeck to demonstrate the kinds of construction techniques to be used in the "village." Without a uniform architectural appearance, the tiny cottage indeed looks like a mistake, but was an invaluable three-dimensional blueprint for the construction workers.

As the new campus was being erected, the student body requested the campus chapel be American Colonial in style. After studying meeting houses and churches in Massachusetts, Maybeck designed a spectacular white limestone church erected on the high point on campus, which he described as the "climax of Colonial Church art."

For more information about the town that time forgot, visit [escapetoelsah.com](http://escapetoelsah.com). Discover nearby area attractions, places to stay and plan for the community's upcoming events. The Village of Elsay Fall Festival will be held Sept. 28 and will feature various activities, music, food and tours of the community. Later in the year, Elsay's annual Home for the Holidays House Tour will occur on Dec. 7 and will include eight historic homes and 12 public buildings that will be open and decorated for the holidays. 💡

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# More than just a cup of Joe

Community staple serves up both classics and the creative

By Lisa Cherry



**THIRTEEN YEARS AGO, THE** Old Dairy, a beloved coffeehouse in the heart of McDonough County, was set to close its doors unless someone stepped in to pick up the mantle. That person ended up being one of its young employees, a then 21-year-old Emily Gajda (now Gammage).

The Macomb establishment, named after the dairy located there in the 1960s and '70s, had been the dream of its previous owner, Peggy Mueller, who passed away after battling cancer. Her family had decided it was time to sell.

“Once we found out that they were going to close the doors for good, somebody said, ‘Well, someone’s got to do something,’” says Gammage, who had worked there in different capacities since age 19. “I said, ‘Well, [I’m] somebody, and I’m trying.’”

The venture was not without its challenges, she adds. “Not many places are going to give a bank loan to a 21-year-old who has zero experience. . . . I probably had my first car loan, and that was about it.” Gammage, then a student at Spoon River College, was in a relationship with her now husband Marc at the time. He decided to take the plunge with her.

“About a year later, we got engaged, and then we got married. We’ve got three little boys now, and we run a restaurant, and it’s wild and crazy,” she laughs. “Every day is different, and it keeps us on our toes.”

The couple, residential members of McDonough Power Cooperative, has kept The Old Dairy essentially the same, with good reason. “The menu was pretty solid. It was a popular place. So, we didn’t want to change anything drastically,” says Gammage. Small renovations have been made and a few dishes added, but that’s about all. The weekly specials, however, give her the opportunity to get creative. “That’s where I can have fun and throw in weird sandwiches. . . . And, lo and behold, people like something different once in a while. It’s kind of nice to have that niche.”

When asked what’s popular with its faithful patrons, she says it depends on if you’re coming for breakfast (which is served all day), lunch or dessert. The top contenders on the breakfast menu tend to be The Old Dairy Breakfast Sandwich, a two-egg omelet with American cheese and two toppings of your choice on a jumbo grilled croissant,



and The Hot Mess. “That one literally is a hot mess . . . It’s a biscuit, egg and cheese [with ham, bacon or sausage patty] smothered in homemade sausage gravy,” she says.

A crowd favorite for lunch is their classic chicken sandwich, though Gammage thinks the slow-cooked barbecue pork and Italian beef are underrated. “They’re amazing,” she says. “You wouldn’t think of us for that kind of thing, but it’s just good home-cooked food.”

Dessert options abound, though The Old Dairy is known for its cookie dough brownies and homemade pies. Of course, there is ice cream, in a fun selection of flavors, like strawberry rhubarb crumble, lemon bar and cotton candy.

The Gammages give back to the community when they can. “We try to support our Bombers (student athletes from the local high school) and our community schools as well. It’s important to have that after prom, and to have your band, and to have all the small programs that really make our schools go round,” she says. “I feel like you lose that a lot when you get to the bigger schools. Those small programs are gone.”

**“It’s just good home-cooked food.”**

Their contributions go beyond monetary support, what she calls labor-intensive love. “We also have done dessert donations for after prom; we made cookie dough brownies,” she adds. “Just something that not the average person can do from their household.”

That same sense of community is palpable upon walking through the restaurant’s front doors. “[It’s] kind of why I came here and never really left,” Gammage says, who grew up in the Chicago suburbs. “It’s different. . . . You walk down the street here, everybody’s waving. There’s always a friendly face, and we say hello. . . . Honestly, if not for the community, we wouldn’t be here.”💡

**Across top: The mural displayed on the side of The Old Dairy**  
**Top: The Old Dairy Breakfast Sandwich**  
**Bottom: Chicken salad sandwich and cookie dough brownie**  
**Far left: Restaurant owner Emily Gammage**

## LET’S EAT!

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## Sweet treats

I HAVE A BIT of a dessert problem. For one, if I see dessert, I eat dessert. Two, I have a backlog of dessert recipes submitted by readers. What do I do with all these recipes? I make them, of course. And then I eat them. It's a vicious, delicious cycle. 🍪

### WE NEED RECIPES!

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



### Pumpkin Pound Cake

Submitted by Rosemary Wiley, Southern Illinois Electric Cooperative  
Servings: 12-16

2-1/2 cups sugar	2 teaspoons baking soda	1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
1 cup vegetable oil	1 teaspoon ground cinnamon	1 15-ounce can pumpkin
3 eggs	1 teaspoon ground nutmeg	Confectioners' sugar
3 cups flour	1/2 teaspoon salt	

In a large mixing bowl, blend sugar and oil, and add eggs one at a time, beating well after each addition. In a separate bowl, combine flour, baking soda and spices together. Mix flour mixture into egg mixture alternating with the pumpkin. Transfer to a greased 12-cup tube pan. Bake at 350 F for 60-65 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Cool 10 minutes before inverting onto a wire cooling rack. Remove pan and cool completely. Dust with confectioners' sugar.

## Hawaiian Wedding Cake

Submitted by Carol McFadden, Shelby Electric Cooperative

Servings: 12

- |                                  |                                      |  |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| 2 cups sugar                     | 1 cup nuts, chopped                  | 1 8-ounce package cream cheese, softened |
| 2 cups flour                     | 1 cup coconut, shredded              | 1 teaspoon vanilla                       |
| 2 teaspoons baking soda          | <b>Topping:</b>                      | 1-1/2 cups powdered sugar                |
| 2 eggs                           | 1/2 cup coconut, shredded (optional) |  |
| 1 20-ounce can crushed pineapple | 1/2 cup butter, softened             |  |

Preheat oven to 350 F. In a large bowl, mix together sugar, flour, baking soda, eggs, pineapple, nuts and coconut until combined. Pour cake batter into a prepared 9X13-inch cake pan or divide between two 8-inch round cake pans and bake for 45 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Cool completely. If layering the cake, cool for 10 minutes before inverting onto a wire cooling rack. For the topping, spread the coconut on a baking sheet. Toast in the oven for 5-10 minutes, stirring every few minutes for even browning. In a bowl, mix butter, cream cheese, vanilla and powdered sugar until smooth. Frost the cooled cake and top with toasted coconut. **Editor's note:** Macadamia nuts were used when testing this recipe because they are grown in Hawaii; however, use your choice of nut.



## Raspberry Tapioca Fluff

Submitted by Becky Barlow, Adams Electric Cooperative

Servings: 10-12

- |                                    |   |                                     |
|------------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| 3 cups water                       | 2 3-ounce packages cook and serve tapioca pudding | 1 cup raspberries                   |
| 1 3-ounce package raspberry Jell-O | 1 8-ounce can pineapple tidbits, drained          | 1 8-ounce container whipped topping |

In a large saucepan, bring water to a boil. Add raspberry Jell-O and tapioca pudding mix and return to boil. Pour into a large bowl and cool. Fold in pineapple and raspberries, and then fold in whipped topping. Chill until ready to serve.



## Quick Fruit and Lemon Drops

Submitted by Kathy Lingle, Southern Illinois Electric Cooperative

Makes: 2 dozen

- |                      |                          |                                 |
|----------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1/2 cup sugar        | 1/4 cup butter, softened | 1 tablespoon lemon peel, grated |
| 1 box lemon cake mix | 1 egg                    | 1 cup mixed dried fruit bits    |
| 1/3 cup water        |                          |                                 |

Preheat oven to 350 F. Grease cookie sheets or use parchment paper. Place sugar in a shallow bowl. In a large bowl, beat cake mix, water, butter, egg and lemon with a mixer on low speed until well blended. Fold in fruit bits until evenly distributed. Shape dough by heaping tablespoons into balls and roll in sugar to coat. Place 2 inches apart on prepared cookie sheets. Bake 12-14 minutes or until set. Cool cookies on sheet pan for 2 minutes and remove to cool completely on a wire rack.



## Rhubarb Upside-Down Cake

Submitted by Cindy Sutton, Corn Belt Energy Corporation

Servings: 10-12

- |                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| 4 cups rhubarb, diced        | 1 box yellow cake mix                      |
| 1 cup miniature marshmallows | Any additional ingredients on cake mix box |
| 1 cup sugar                  |  |

Preheat oven to 350 F. Prepare a 9X13-inch cake pan with baking spray or butter. In a bowl, mix rhubarb, marshmallows and sugar. Pour into cake pan. In a large bowl, prepare cake mix according to package directions. Pour over rhubarb mixture. Bake until done, about 30-35 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Cool slightly, about 5-10 minutes, loosen edges with a knife and invert onto a serving plate. Carefully lift the pan off the cake. The fruit and topping should come out easily and stay intact on top of the cake.





Ginkgo trees have fan-shaped leaves that turn a vivid yellow color in the fall.

## Fall in full color

Trees and shrubs with vibrant autumnal foliage

**AS FALL SWEEPS ACROSS** Illinois, the landscape undergoes a breathtaking transformation. With hues of red, yellow, orange, bronze, brown and purple, the scenery becomes a vibrant and beautiful work of art.

Deciduous trees, those that lose their leaves every fall, create a stunning fall display as they prepare for winter temperatures. With daylight hours decreasing and the sun lower in the sky, the production of chlorophyll (green pigments) decreases in tree leaves, revealing other colorful pigments in a showcase of autumnal hues. However, large shade and ornamental trees are not the only ones on display this season. Many shrubs rival trees with their fall color.

Each year, the intensity of each specimen's fall color varies based on the season's weather, and the vibrancy of fall colors varies among trees and shrubs. Consider these standout selections if you are seeking a deciduous plant for your fall display.

### Black gum

Also known as black tupelo, black gum leaves turn from a glossy green to a brilliant scarlet in the fall. The fall

color is enhanced in full-sun locations. With unique, deeply ridged bark and horizontal branching habit, black gum makes a great medium-sized specimen that grows 30-50 feet tall.

### Bald cypress

The bald cypress often tricks people into thinking it is an evergreen tree with its needled foliage. However, come fall, this pyramidal-shaped, deciduous conifer (cone-bearing plant) develops russet red foliage before dropping its leaves for the winter.

### Ginkgo trees

These trees are unique and distinct specimens in a landscape. Its fan-shaped leaves densely covering the tree turn a vivid yellow color in the fall. All the leaves fall off the tree within a few days of the first hard frost as the leaf scars are all healed over for winter, creating a yellow blanket under the tree.

### Oakleaf hydrangea

This shrub offers a stunning and dramatic display in the garden year-round; large oak-like leaves

and panicle white blooms of summer transform into a rainbow of red, purple, yellow and orange leaves in fall alongside perfectly dried blooms which remain on the plant. Mature plants are 8 feet tall and exhibit reddish-brown exfoliating bark.

### Chokeberry

The deciduous shrub offers multi-season interest and many new cultivars for small spaces. Small, black berries are produced in late summer and persist on the plant into fall among the bright red to dark purple foliage.

### Virginia sweetspire

A great native alternative to the invasive burning bush, Virginia sweetspire is versatile, dependable and stunning in the fall with its red, orange and yellow colors. Its spreading habit and arching branches make it a great plant for mass plantings and borders.

As the days remain cool and plants prepare for winter dormancy, take a drive under the canopy of color — too soon it will be swept away with the arrival of winter's chill. 💡



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

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December - N/A

January - Smiles

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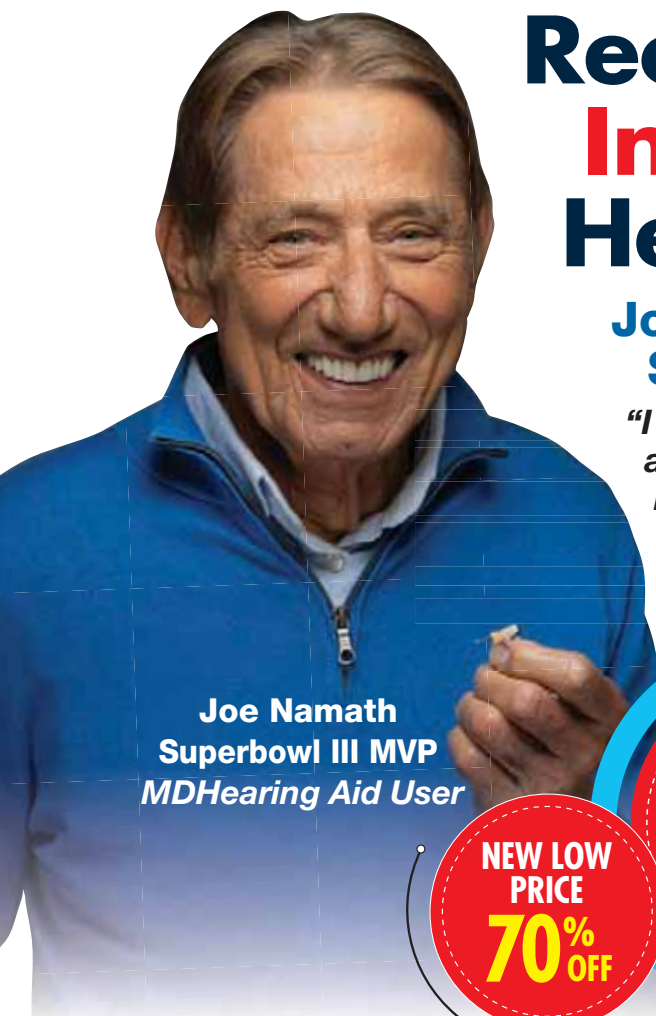
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