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Illinois Country Living

NOVEMBER 2024
VOLUME 82, NO. 7



DEPARTMENTS

4 FIRST THOUGHTS

It's time to get serious

Intermittent power alone can't meet demand.

7 CURRENTS

This month's highlights

News/Legislation/Trends/Tips

14 SAFETY CHECK

Ice, ice baby

Prepare now to survive winter's greatest hits.

16 ENERGY SOLUTIONS

Smart tech made simple

Automate tasks and save energy.

18 POWERED UP

The power behind your power

G&T co-ops operate behind the scenes.

19 SUPPORT LOCAL

A passion for pecans

Southern Illinois farm is a family affair.

30 FINEST COOKING

Throwback bites

Appetizer recipes from the 1970s will delight.

32 GARDENWISE

Grow, cook, savor, repeat

Essential herbs for Thanksgiving cooking.

34 SNAPSHOT

Everyday geometry

Readers photograph shapes in their natural environment.



On the cover: SouthEastern Illinois Electric Cooperative's Kyler Bosaw competes in the 2024 Lineworker's Safety Rodeo.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CHRIS REYNOLDS



It's time to get serious

Intermittent power alone can't meet demand

I SAW A CLIP recently of the 2016 movie "Sully," where Tom Hanks plays Captain Sullenberger, who miraculously landed an airplane on the Hudson River after birds struck both engines. In the movie, the National Transportation Safety Board suspected pilot error. Tom Hanks explained how computer simulations were unrealistic and pointedly responded, saying, "Can we get serious now?"

I believe Tom Hanks' response is spot on for those that continue to advocate for the unrealistic closure of baseload, dispatchable electric generation and replace it with intermittent generation. Can we get serious now?

It's called intermittent generation for a reason. Wind turbines and solar panels are intermittent sources of power. Renewable generation has a lot of benefits and that is why cooperatives are a leader in renewable energy. Electric co-ops own renewable generation, have contracted for the purchase of power from other renewable generation, and have a lot of members who have installed renewable generation. As I write this in my office at the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives, there are solar panels above me on our roof and mounted in our yard.

But there are a lot of times when the wind does not blow and the sun does not shine. During those times, we need dispatchable, baseload generation (nuclear, natural gas and coal) to power our lives. For example, peak demand for electric cooperatives is typically between 5 and 8 p.m. Tonight, when our family is making dinner, bathing our three children (hopefully) and doing laundry it will be well after sunset, so there will be no solar generation. Batteries are not large enough or

affordable yet. Tonight, dispatchable generation will be critical to keep the power on at our house.

Last year, our country's electric reliability watchdog, the North America Electric Reliability Corporation, said the No. 1 risk to the reliable operation of our nation's electric system is energy policy (i.e., legislation that provides incentives and targets for changes in our electricity resources).

On Sept. 18, the Chicago Tribune's editorial board wrote that an electricity crisis is looming for Illinois and asked if policymakers in Springfield are paying attention. The editorial discussed legislation that became law in 2021 that set closure dates for coal and natural gas-fired power plants, which the industry and others warned will lead to increased costs and jeopardize electric reliability. The editorial board wrote that the industry was right and mentioned that capacity payments for power generators in northern Illinois to produce when demand is highest will surge more than 800% beginning in June 2025.

Your electric cooperative understands that it is currently unrealistic to replace dispatchable generation with intermittent generation. Your cooperative is striving to provide safe, affordable and reliable electricity, and is also a not-for-profit entity. The next time someone advocates for your cooperative to use a certain source of electricity, ask if they have an incentive, financial or otherwise, for doing so. The cooperative is ultimately controlled by you, the member. Members vote for who among them should serve on the board of directors to provide that safe, affordable and reliable electricity.

As the saying goes, when you find yourself in a hole, the first thing to do is stop digging. Electric reliability is a serious matter. We must act now, because baseload, dispatchable generation cannot be built overnight. The next time someone advocates to replace it with intermittent resources, ask them, "Can we get serious now?" ☺



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

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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NOVEMBER CHECKLIST

November is National Child Safety and Protection Month.

Cover those outlets.



If your home isn't equipped with tamper-resistant outlets (TROs), either

hire a licensed electrician to install them or purchase outlet plate covers, outlet plugs or outlet caps.

Consider a toddler's viewpoint.

Get on your hands and knees to see your home from a toddler's perspective.



Look for unprotected outlets and hanging or dangling cords. Anything can be a toy, right?

Teach safety.



Take every opportunity to talk to your children about electrical safety. Early education can save lives.

Make emergency plans.

Talk with your children about emergency plans, such as for house fires or during tornadoes, and then practice them.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF CORN BELT ENERGY CORPORATION, EASTERN ILLINI ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, RURAL ELECTRIC CONVENIENCE COOPERATIVE AND SOUTHEASTERN ILLINOIS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

Illinois line crews go where needed

Lineworkers assist with recovery efforts following Hurricane Helene

In the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Helene, which made landfall in Florida on Thursday, Sept. 26, 104 skilled lineworkers from 21 electric cooperatives across Illinois traveled to the affected areas to assist with recovery efforts.

Helene knocked out electric service to an estimated 1.25 million co-op members as it passed from the Florida coast to southwest Virginia late Thursday and into Friday. The Category 4 hurricane destroyed high-voltage transmission structures and turned highways into impassable mounds of uprooted trees and tangled messes of downed wires and power poles.

On Friday, co-ops in Florida were dealing with more than 200,000 outages. Georgia co-ops totaled over 404,000 outages, with more than 316,000 in South Carolina and 230,000 in

North Carolina. As the storm passed northwest, more than 100,000 co-op members in Kentucky, Tennessee and Virginia also were without power.

In addition to Illinois, lineworkers from more than a dozen other states deployed mutual aid crews to help with power restoration. Illinois crews assisted electric cooperatives in Georgia, Kentucky and North Carolina.

Electric co-ops operate according to seven principles, and principles six and seven, "cooperation among cooperatives" and "concern for community," are directly connected to mutual aid — utilized during times of major outages and disasters. Mutual aid allows electric co-ops to help each other during times of need.

It's essentially about neighbors helping neighbors, even when those neighbors are fellow co-ops located hundreds of miles away.

Continued on page 8

CURRENTS

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.

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

IL ENTERTAINMENT CORNER

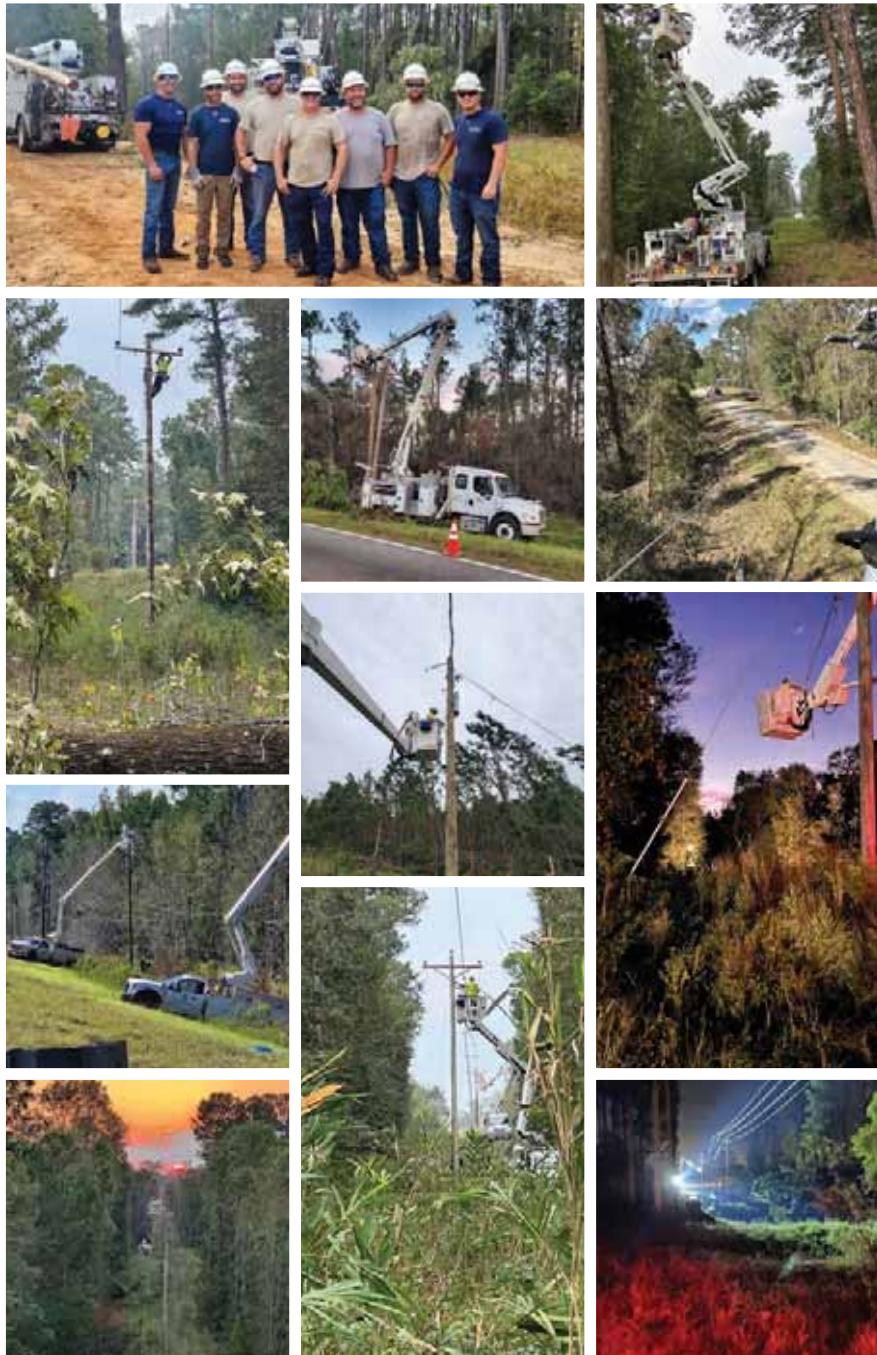
In honor of Election Day, let's remember former actor and 40th President of the United States Ronald Reagan, who was born in the Illinois town of Tampico on Feb. 6, 1911. President Reagan attended high school in Dixon and studied economics and sociology at Eureka College, which honors his legacy through The Ronald Reagan Museum, The Ronald W. Reagan Society and the Ronald W. Reagan Leadership Program.



After graduating college, he became a radio sports announcer; later a screen test led him to an acting career and roles in 53 films, including "Dark Victory," "Kings Row" and "The Killers." He served as president of the Screen Actors Guild, where his stance against communism in Hollywood led the actor to shift from a liberal to a conservative point of view. After serving two terms as the Governor of California, Reagan won the Republican presidential nomination in 1980. He took office the following year and served two terms as Commander in Chief. ☺

Source: whitehouse.gov

"Illinois line crews" continued from page 7



The concept of mutual aid originated with rural electrification efforts in the 1930s. From the beginning, electric co-ops relied on each other to assist in times of need, and mutual aid provides an essential safety net in times of crisis.

Overall, more than 6,400 personnel — including lineworkers, support staff, right-of-way contractors, warehouse staff, safety employees and command center staff — were part of the mutual aid effort.

Throughout recovery, Illinois co-ops deployed a total of 178 lineworkers.

As of the publication date of this magazine three weeks after Hurricane Helene, line crews were still helping with storm recovery — with crews rotating in and out during that time. We are proud of our dedicated lineworkers, who represent the power of cooperation and community. Together, we are co-op strong. ☺

Source: NRECA

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/s/Colten Bradford

GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP

FOR FARMERS AND FARM FAMILIES



Upcoming Dates:
Oct 28 | Nov 25 | Dec 9

7-8 pm | Virtual

Link to join will be sent upon registration



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To register or for more information, contact Rachel Brown at
217.718.6315 or email rachelbrown.lpc24@gmail.com.



There is no charge to participate thanks to the generous financial support provided by the Illinois Department of Human Services, the Division of Mental Health.

Visit siumed.org/farm to learn more about the Farm Family Resource Initiative.

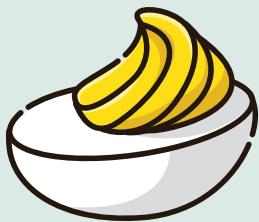
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Where is it?

The winners of the September hidden object contest were Carole Moore of Coles-Moultrie Electric Cooperative and Kris Gahm of Corn Belt Energy Corporation. Congratulations! Your ICL campfire mugs have been sent.

October's ghost was hidden in the attic on page 16. Winners' names will be drawn, and they will be notified. Visit Illinois Country Living on Facebook after each month's deadline for a closeup of the object's location and winners' names.

It's time for a new hidden object search. Nov. 2 marks National Deviled Egg Day for some reason. So, be on the lookout for the delicious hors d'oeuvre. 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 received by the 15th. Only one entry is allowed per household every month. If multiple entries per household are submitted, only the first will be considered. Winners' names and the symbol's location will be published in each month's issue of Illinois Country Living.



Not their first rodeo

Line personnel across Illinois gathered in Springfield on Sept. 19 for the annual Lineworker's Safety Rodeo, coordinated by the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives. Fifteen teams representing 12 electric cooperatives and one municipal electric utility participated in the friendly competition, which focuses on safe work practices and skills lineworkers use every day to keep the lights on.

Upon completion of events and after scores were tabulated, Shelby Electric Cooperative (SEC) lineworkers Jamie Sharp, Dalton Brown and Brian Chevalier (pictured) won Best Overall Team for the third year in a row. For more coverage of the Lineworker's Safety Rodeo, go to page 20. ☺



\$42,500 up for grabs in scholarship funds

Seventeen academic scholarships are available to high school seniors through the Thomas H. Moore Illinois Electric Cooperatives Memorial Scholarship program. The \$2,500 scholarships will be awarded in 2025 to financially assist students in the electric co-op family.

Ten scholarships will be awarded to high school seniors whose parents are Illinois electric co-op members. Five scholarships are reserved for high school seniors enrolling full-time at a two-year Illinois community college whose parents are Illinois electric cooperative members or co-op employees.

Additionally, the Earl W. Struck Memorial Scholarship will be awarded to a student who

is the child of an Illinois electric cooperative employee or director. The deadline to apply for these 16 scholarships is Dec. 31, 2024. Go to aiec.coop/iec-scholarship to apply.

The final scholarship, the LaVern and Nola McEntire Memorial Lineworker's Scholarship, helps pay for costs to attend lineworker school conducted by the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives in conjunction with Lincoln Land Community College, Springfield. The deadline to apply for this scholarship is April 30, 2024. To apply, go to aiec.coop/lavern-and-nola-lineworkers-scholarship.

Applicants are judged based on their academic achievements, work and volunteer experience, and community involvement. Creative, thoughtful responses in the required written essay are key to standing out. If you are an eligible applicant, don't miss your chance.

The scholarship program has grown from initially awarding two \$1,000 scholarships in 1996 to now offering 17 \$2,500 scholarships. The Illinois Community College System Foundation (ICCSF) administers the IEC Memorial Scholarship Fund. For more information regarding the scholarships, contact your local electric cooperative. ☺

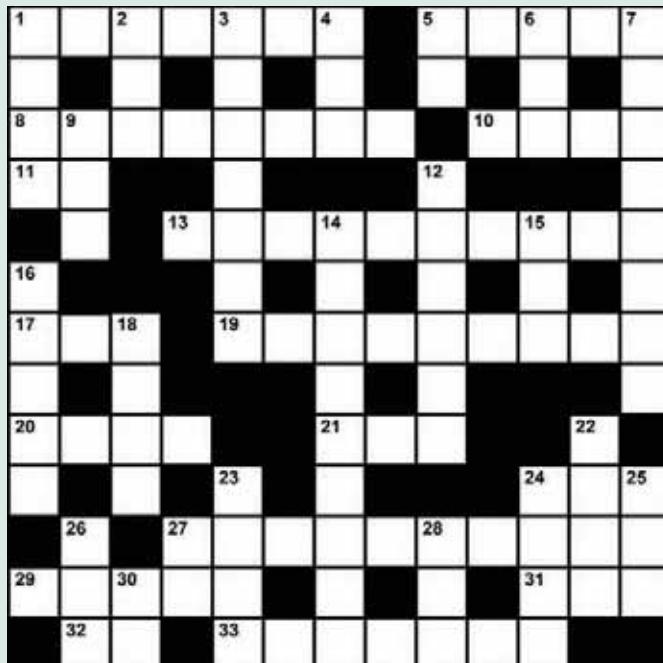
An advertisement for Voices for Cooperative Power (VCP) and Co-ops Vote. The top half features the VCP logo and the text "VOTE FOR RELIABLE ENERGY". Below this, a green banner says "Learn more at Vote.coop/Become-A-Coop-Voter". The bottom half is a collage of images related to energy and infrastructure, including a utility pole with wires, a blue ballot box labeled "VOTE", a construction worker in a hard hat, a hydroelectric dam, and a power plant.

Across

1 Land of the brave and free
 5 Present with a medal, for example
 8 Structure to commemorate significant events
 10 "The Soldier" by Rupert Brooke, for example
 11 Time period, for short
 13 Love of country
 17 Color in Old Glory
 19 Endure the loss of, for the greater good
 20 Responsibility
 21 1,000 megabytes, abbr.
 24 Adversary
 27 Wholehearted fidelity
 29 The "N" of U.S.N.A.
 31 Nurses, for short
 32 Soldier, abbr.
 33 Liberty Roman times

Down

1 Ground forces
 2 Large tree
 3 Forays
 4 Cookbook phrase
 5 50th state, abbr.
 6 Cpl. or sgt., e.g.
 7 Keep alive the memory of someone or something
 9 Historic time period
 12 Promising
 14 Express obligation and gratitude to
 15 Third in the family
 16 A feeling of self respect and personal worth earned by accomplishments
 18 Fourth of July, e.g.
 22 Sometime today, say
 23 "To thine own ___ be true"
 24 Solid and steadfast
 25 Navy rank, abbr.
 26 Military TV show
 27 Prosecutor, abbr.
 28 Assist
 30 6 in Roman times



Solution on page 33.

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NOVEMBER Datebook

LET'S GO!

1

Potterfest

DANVILLE

Downtown Danville transforms into the Wizarding World of Harry Potter for this spellbinding festival

8-9

Hobnob Market

SPRINGFIELD

Check out more than 150 vendors of vintage and handmade items at the Illinois State Fairgrounds Expo Building

15

Book Signing

EVANSTON

Norris Center Bookstore hosts a book signing event with renowned author Michele Weldon

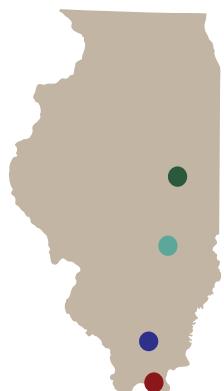
30

Holiday Kickoff

GALENA

Santa's arrival begins this magical season and raises money for families affected by domestic violence

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



Christmas Barn Sale Trail

NOVEMBER

7-9

Hosted by The 606 Market, this festive event promises to be a memorable road trip through Massac County, where more than 10 participating barns will open their doors to shoppers and Christmas enthusiasts alike. The barns, decorated and located within 7 miles of each other, offer a diverse selection, from antiques, furniture and vintage Christmas decorations to unique holiday gifts.

Nov. 7-9, 2024: 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

- Maps available online, at each barn and at The 606 Market, 606 Market St., Metropolis
- Admission: VIP passes (\$15, plus fee) required Nov. 7, free Nov. 8-9
- 618-940-0743 or thechristmasbarnsaletrail.com

Magpie Market Days – Vintage Christmas Market

NOVEMBER

8-10

A boutique lover's dream with 100-plus vendors from across the country, including 10 food trucks. Visit Santa and Mrs. Claus 11 a.m.-2 p.m. Saturday and live reindeer, also on Saturday, from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. The indoor event takes place rain or shine. Free parking and shuttles available.

Nov. 8-10, 2024: 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Friday-Saturday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Sunday

- The Pavilion, 1602 Sioux Drive, Marion
- Admission: \$10 Friday-Saturday (good for all weekend), \$5 Sunday.
- Kids 12 and under free
- 618-997-3690 or thepavilionevents.com



Walking Through Wonderland

NOVEMBER

27

View larger-than-life light displays at your own leisure, listen and sing along to your favorite Christmas music presented by the Effingham Performance Center, and wave hello to Santa Claus when you reach the end of the walk. Enjoy complimentary hot cocoa and cookies, as well as food trucks and vendors. Stop by the Visit Effingham tent to pick up your free holiday souvenir (while supplies last).

Nov. 27, 2024: 5-8:30 p.m.

- East Temple Avenue, Effingham (shuttles available at Courthouse Museum)
- Admission: free; donations welcome
- 217-342-5310 or visiteffinghamil.com/walking-through-wonderland

24th Annual Champaign Center Parade of Lights

NOVEMBER

30

Presented by Christie Clinic, this event, themed "Candy Cane Lane," marks the start of the holiday season. In addition to the parade, enjoy an indoor market, horse and carriage rides, visits with Santa Claus and more.

Nov. 30, 2024: Pre-parade activities start at 1 p.m.; parade begins at 6 p.m.

- 301 N. Neil St., Champaign
- Admission: free
- 217-352-2400 or champaigncenter.com/parade-of-lights



Better than cannabis, better than CBD

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

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

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

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

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

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

Your Body’s Hidden “Soothing System”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

All the Benefits of CBD – Without Cannabis

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

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

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

Additional research linked regular use to lasting comfort.

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

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

Get Moving Again with **Mobilify**

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

One user even reported getting results the

same day it was used.

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

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

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

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

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

How to Get **Mobilify**

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

To secure your bottle of this breakthrough natural joint discomfort reliever, buyers should call with Sears Health Hotline at **1-800-213-0419**. “The Hotline allows us to ship the product directly to customers.”

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

The Hotline will be taking orders for the next 48 hours. After that, the phone number may be shut down to allow them to restock. Call **1-800-213-0419** to secure your limited supply of **Mobilify**. If you are not able to get through due to extremely high call volume, please try again! Call NOW to qualify for a significant discount on this limited time offer. To take advantage of this exclusive offer use Promo Code: **ICLMB1124** when you call.

Ice, ice baby

Prepare now to survive winter's greatest hits

WINTER MONTHS ARE JUST around the corner. From freezing temperatures and heavy snowfall to icy roads and power outages, winter weather events can disrupt daily life and pose safety risks. That's why it is important to prepare now to stay safe and warm despite challenges from Old Man Winter.

case of power outages, having a safe alternative heating source and sufficient fuel is essential.

Keep generators, grills and camp stoves outside — at least 20 feet away from the house — to prevent carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning. Install CO detectors to alert you to the presence of this deadly, odorless

cell phone charger and first-aid supplies. Booster cables, a tire pump and cat litter (for traction) can also come in handy if you get stuck.

In a winter weather event, avoid traveling unless necessary. If you must drive, avoid driving over downed lines, and if you get into a car accident involving power lines, remain inside the car and call 911.

Baby, it's cold outside

Winter storms often lead to power outages, so it's vital to be prepared. It is important to understand winter storm warnings. A Winter Storm Watch means severe conditions are possible in the next few days, while a Winter Storm Warning indicates dangerous weather will begin within 24 hours. A Blizzard Warning signals imminent conditions that may cause near-zero visibility.

If bad weather is predicted, fully charge your cell phone and power banks. In the case of an outage, know how to report it to your electric cooperative. Understand that when power is restored, there may be a power surge. So, unplug electronics to avoid damage, leaving one light on as an indicator that power has returned.

Restock your emergency kit.

These kits should include non-perishable food, bottled water, a NOAA weather radio, medications and basic supplies such as flashlights and extra batteries.

Avoid going outdoors in the aftermath of a winter emergency event. If you must go outside, stay away from downed power lines and treat all lines as if they are energized. For more information on preparing for winter storms and staying safe, visit the CDC at cdc.gov, the Red Cross at redcross.org or Safe Electricity at SafeElectricity.org. ☀



Homeward bound

Winterizing your home is the first step to ensuring safety during winter. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends installing weather stripping, insulation and storm windows, which can help keep your home warmer and more energy efficient.

It's also important to insulate water lines that run along exterior walls to prevent freezing and bursting. Regular home maintenance, such as cleaning gutters and repairing roof leaks, can prevent damage from snow and ice accumulation.

Have your heating system serviced professionally to ensure it works properly. Additionally, inspect and clean fireplaces and chimneys, and install smoke detectors — and test them monthly. In

gas. These devices should also be tested to ensure they are in working order. Also, be familiar with CO poisoning symptoms, which include headache, dizziness and chest pain.

Drive my car

Winter weather can make driving hazardous, so preparing your car for cold weather is essential. Make sure to service the radiator, maintain antifreeze levels and check the tire tread. You may need to switch to all-weather or snow tires for better traction on icy roads. Always keep your gas tank full to prevent ice from forming in the fuel lines.

In addition, assemble a winter emergency kit for your vehicle. This should include blankets, a flashlight, extra batteries, food and water, a



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.

SACRED STONE OF THE SOUTHWEST IS ON THE BRINK OF EXTINCTION



Centuries ago, Persians, Tibetans and Mayans considered turquoise a gemstone of the heavens, believing the striking blue stones were sacred pieces of sky. Today, the rarest and most valuable turquoise is found in the American Southwest—but the future of the blue beauty is unclear.

On a recent trip to Tucson, we spoke with fourth generation turquoise traders who explained that less than five percent of turquoise mined worldwide can be set into jewelry and only about twenty mines in the Southwest supply gem-quality turquoise. Once a thriving industry, many Southwest mines have run dry and are now closed.

We found a limited supply of turquoise from Arizona and purchased it for our **Sedona Turquoise Collection**. Inspired by the work of those ancient craftsmen and designed to showcase the exceptional blue stone, each stabilized vibrant cabochon features a unique, one-of-a-kind matrix surrounded in Bali metalwork. You could drop over \$1,200 on a turquoise pendant, or you

could secure 26 carats of genuine Arizona turquoise for **just \$99**.

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Smart tech made simple

Automate tasks and save energy

SMART TECHNOLOGY CAN MAKE IT easier to save energy by simplifying or automating tasks. It can also optimize energy use to reduce waste and improve efficiency. When upgrading to smart technology at home, consider the purchase cost as well as long-term savings. You may pay more up front, but it

patterns and preferences. Prices range from \$80 to \$250, depending on features. Smart thermostats do not work with all heating and cooling systems, so check compatibility before you buy.

Your water heater can also be controlled for energy savings. Installing a timer on your electric

Depending on the manufacturer and size of the unit, a smart heat pump water heater may only cost a few hundred dollars more than a standard heat pump water heater.

Smart lighting gives you the power to control lights in your home remotely or set a lighting schedule that fits your lifestyle. This is beneficial for energy savings and home security. If you or other members of your household are notorious for leaving lights on, smart lighting can help.

Smart light switches are another budget-friendly way to control lighting. They're priced from about \$10 to \$50. Smart switches with dimmable options are available and can also control ceiling fans. Some have occupancy sensors that turn lights off when no movement is detected.

A smart plug fits into any outlet to control whatever is plugged into it. Set them to automatically turn off and on or control them using a smartphone app. Prices range from \$8 to \$25.

A variety of smart shades, curtains and blinds are available, including styles with integrated controls. You can also add smart controls to your existing blinds or curtains. Both options allow you to adjust the tilt of blinds and open or close curtains. Set a schedule, control them remotely or use a voice command paired with a voice assistant. This allows you to reduce cooling needs in the summer and heating needs in the winter. Smart controls start at around \$70. To save the most energy, prioritize windows with the most incoming light.

Upgrading to smart home technologies can make it easy to use less energy at home. Choose options that make the most sense for your lifestyle to optimize savings. ☀



could result in significant savings over the lifetime of the appliance.

Smart thermostats save energy by automatically adjusting your heating or cooling system. For example, you can save as much as 10% a year on heating and cooling costs by adjusting your thermostat 7 to 10 degrees from its normal setting for eight hours a day, according to the Department of Energy (DOE).

You can program a smart thermostat to change the temperature when you are asleep or away or use a smartphone app to adjust your thermostat settings. Some models use artificial intelligence to maximize efficiency by learning your

water heater can save 5% to 12% of the energy it uses by turning it off at night and when you don't need to use hot water, according to the DOE.

If you plan to replace your electric storage water heater with a heat pump water heater, consider a model equipped with smart technology features, including Wi-Fi capabilities for controlling it remotely or during peak demand times, viewing the amount of hot water available and tracking energy use.

There are a variety of modes, including vacation, efficiency and high demand, which produces more hot water. Some models can detect leaks and will turn off automatically.



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

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Peace Silver Dollar: Memorializing peace following the end of World War I, the 90% silver Peace Dollar was intended as a one-year only release struck in 1921—but it proved so popular with the American people, it was struck until 1928, then again in 1934-35. Extremely Fine (XF) condition coin included in set.

Eisenhower Dollar: The last circulating U.S. dollar coin, the Eisenhower Dollar, aka the “Ike Dollar,” with its design featuring war hero President Dwight D. Eisenhower, backed by an image symbolizing the Apollo II moon landing. Struck in silver from 1971-1976, the Eisenhower Dollar in this set was struck in 40% silver for collectors, and you will receive a coin in Brilliant Uncirculated (BU) condition.

Silver Eagle Type 1: The first-ever U.S. Silver Dollar minted in 99.9% silver, these coins were first minted in 1986 following President Ronald Reagan's signing of the Liberty Coin Act into law on July 9, 1985, which authorized the U.S.

Mint to strike America's new silver bullion coin. This gorgeous Silver Dollar features the original, revered Type 1 “Heraldic Eagle,” and a Brilliant Uncirculated (BU) condition coin is included in set.

Silver Eagle Type 2: In honor of the popular 99.9% silver coin's 35th anniversary in 2021, the Silver Eagle received a new, esteemed Type 2 “Eagle Landing” reverse design. This is the current issued coin by the U.S. Mint. Brilliant Uncirculated (BU) condition coin included in set.



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The power behind your power

G&T cooperatives operate behind the scenes

YOU MIGHT BE SURPRISED to learn that your local electric co-op doesn't generate the electricity used in your home. In most cases, your co-op does not own a power plant but instead purchases electricity from an outside source, then routes the power to your community.

G&Ts go beyond the delivery of power to provide sophisticated business resources that would normally be out of reach for local co-ops.

Like your co-op, G&Ts are not-for-profit organizations that exist to serve the needs of their members. G&Ts generally serve all the

distribution power lines and transformers to then deliver that electricity to your home.

Most G&Ts maintain their own power plants, while others purchase power for their members on the wholesale market. Some G&Ts manage a combination of native power generation and purchases. Because a G&T buys enough power to supply all of its member co-ops, it has the bargaining power to secure significantly lower prices than those co-ops could negotiate by themselves. Regardless of how they're structured, G&Ts help keep your electric bill lower.

Just as important is the work G&Ts perform in planning. The nation's energy landscape is changing rapidly. G&Ts constantly study and forecast power needs. They consider how growing communities might affect the demand for electricity in the future and work closely with local co-ops when power reliability is challenged, such as times when electricity demand outpaces supply or after a major weather event.

In addition to obtaining the electricity local co-ops need, G&Ts improve and maintain the reliability of the infrastructure co-ops and their communities depend upon. By working with local co-op staff to upgrade transmission lines and deploy substations, they make sure the power will be there for members like you when you need it.

While your co-op may not own the power plant that generates the electricity you use every day, it's part of an even bigger not-for-profit cooperative that aims to make your service even more reliable and affordable. As the power behind your power, just like your electric co-op, G&T co-ops exist to serve you. ☺



PHOTO COURTESY OF DENNIS GAINER, NRECA

For more than 800 electric cooperatives across the U.S., the source for electricity is a different kind of cooperative. Referred to as "G&Ts," these Generation & Transmission cooperatives exist to help electric co-ops serve their members as reliably and affordably as possible. Their only members are local electric co-ops, so G&Ts are cooperatives that serve cooperatives.

Across the nation, 64 G&T cooperatives provide access to wholesale (at-cost) power at a better price than their member co-ops could obtain on their own. Most

co-ops in a specific geographic area and employ a team of experts in data, finance, engineering, economic development, environmental management and other essential specialties that electric co-ops need. The G&T operates behind the scenes to support their co-ops, and although G&Ts may be largely unseen, they operate with complete transparency.

G&Ts are the source for at-cost electricity that is generated elsewhere, then delivered to your local co-op over high-voltage transmission lines. Your co-op uses



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.



A passion for pecans

Southern Illinois farm is a family affair

By Lisa Cherry

FOUR GENERATIONS OF THE Voss family put the rubber to the road each fall to harvest the 160 acres of pecan trees that will yield a yearlong inventory for them to sell. Ralph and Karen Voss began their pecan journey when a simple notion struck while taking a walk on their Carlyle property.

"We always had the pecan trees," says Ralph. "It was in 1985 ... we had so many [pecans], we thought we could try to sell them. And everything just started to blossom from there."

The longtime Clinton County Electric Cooperative members say that in southern Illinois, native pecan trees can be found everywhere. "Everyone's got one in their yard," he says. "We cleaned up property that we had that we weren't doing anything with — it was just timber and brush ... we left the pecan trees and just started harvesting."

Although growing pecans requires specific equipment, the family was fortunate to already have the basics, like a tractor, mower and bush hog, to maintain the groves. However, they also needed a shaker and a harvester.

"Our shaker mounts in the back of the tractor ... it's just an arm that extends out," says Ralph. "You back up to the tree [and] clamp that arm to the tree. It's got great big, thick rubber pads on it. And you clamp that thing tight, and you turn it on." A mechanism inside makes the shaker vibrate. "[It] takes about one second, and all the nuts are on the ground," he adds.

Harvesting the trees also requires a lot of labor. "Through the year, I can pretty well take care of most stuff myself," says Ralph. "But when you start shaking the trees and you get sticks on the ground, all this stuff has got to get picked up. You can't find enough volunteers."

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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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Harvest usually begins early November and lasts to mid-December, depending on the weather. "The whole family's here every night, every weekend, whoever can make it," says Karen. "They all have day jobs, so they're here every night. We work in the shed, cleaning, sorting, sizing [on] a moving conveyor table. It's definitely a bonding time."

"Whatever we keep here and crack ... has to be washed and dried, and we can crack it, but we do not do the finished product [for stores and restaurants]," Ralph explains. "If we want to have them ready to use, we truck them into Oklahoma to a custom shelling plant." The finished pecans come back to the farm, where the family freezes them.

Their product can be purchased from a storefront on their farm (seasonally), online and at farmers markets. Voss Pecans can also be found in stores, restaurants, bakeries and fundraisers. "We try to educate people ... to look at the color of pecans," Karen says. "The nice golden color is the freshest. [If] you look at them in the store, a lot of times they're real dark because they've been sitting on the shelves forever."

The crop's yield is measured in pounds per acre. They expect somewhere between 800 and 1,100 pounds per acre from the native trees. The goal for select grafted trees is higher — about 1,500 pounds.

Ralph says the operation is now big enough to stand on its own and make money. "All of our kids and grandkids are interested in the business, which is good, because with trees, you kind of need the next generation interested," Karen laughs. 

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PHOTO COURTESY OF KAREN VOSS

The POWER of COMPETITION

The Lineworker's Safety Rodeo in focus

Photography by Chris Reynolds

TEAMWORK, PRECISION AND DEDICATION to safety were all showcased during the annual Lineworker's Safety Rodeo — an event that celebrates the grit and determination of those on the front lines who keep the power on.

This year's rodeo, coordinated by the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives, was held Sept. 19 at Lincoln Land Community College's line yard in Springfield. Fifteen teams representing 12 electric co-ops and one municipal utility participated in the friendly competition, along with seven others who competed individually.

The rodeo highlights the skills lineworkers use every day to work safely and efficiently. Participants competed in a series of events using skills requiring agility, speed and accuracy. Scores for each event were based on completion time and proper execution of the task, but above all, participants were judged on safe work practices. Deductions were made due to mistakes such as slipping when climbing poles, dropping tools or executing inappropriate procedures or methods.

Results: Shelby Electric Cooperative's team of Dalton Brown, Brian Chevalier and Jamie Sharp won Best Overall Team. Tyler Atchison of Egyptian Electric Cooperative earned Best Overall Individual. ☺





Opposite page: The head-to-head Climbing Challenge is a competitive event where line-workers race each other up and down a 40-foot utility pole to showcase their speed, agility and climbing technique while adjusting for obstacles.

Participants had to maintain strict safety standards, including the proper use of climbing hooks, belts and fall protection gear — all while moving quickly. Any slip in safety protocols results in disqualification. The challenge not only highlights physical endurance but also reinforces the critical safety skills needed for the job.

Results: Coles-Moultrie Electric Cooperative's Grant Cooper (pictured in the lead) was named the victor of the Climbing Challenge.

Top: Jaxon Coplea of Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative placing a crossarm during the Crossarm Change event. This is a timed competition that tests a lineworker's ability to safely and efficiently replace a crossarm on a utility pole. Crossarms are horizontal supports that hold power lines, so this event mimics a real-life repair task.

While this is also an individual event, the crossarm change is performed in teams, requiring lineworkers to work together, communicating effectively to remove and replace the crossarm in the safest and fastest way possible.

Results: Adams Electric Cooperative's team of Austin Aschemann, Brennan Caspermeyer and Garrett Kestner won the team event, and Tyler Atchison of Egyptian Electric Cooperative Association won individually.



Bottom: Tyler Atchison of Egyptian Electric Cooperative Association competes in the 40-foot Transition Climb event. This challenge requires lineworkers to navigate obstacles while climbing a utility pole. This mimics real-life situations where lineworkers must adjust their position on a pole to perform tasks like installing or repairing equipment.

Transitioning from one position to another requires precise foot and hand placement, as well as careful use of tools. Judges score based on technique, efficiency and adherence to safety rules.

Results: Egyptian Electric Cooperative Association's team of Andy Ahner, Atchison and Mike Smith won the team event, and Ricky Rickerman of Southwestern Electric Cooperative won individually.



Above: Adams Electric Cooperatives' Brennan Caspermeyer competes in the Hurt Man Rescue event. This critical scenario is a staple at every rodeo as it simulates a real-life emergency where a lineworker must rescue a fellow worker who has been injured or incapacitated at the top of a utility pole. Effective rescue operations require clear communication and collaboration with a team.

It is a skill that every lineworker must know and hopes to never have to use. In a rodeo setting, this event serves as a reminder of the hazardous nature of the job and the importance of being prepared for emergencies. The participant must climb the pole safely, secure the "injured lineworker" and safely lower them to the ground.



Results: Egyptian Electric Cooperative Association's Andy Ahner, Tyler Atchison and Mike Smith won the Hurt Man Rescue competition as a team, and Kyler Bosaw of SouthEastern Illinois Electric Cooperative won the event individually.

Left: Ryan Little, operations manager at Illinois Electric Cooperative, discusses results with a fellow judge during the Lineworker's Safety Rodeo. More than two dozen judges were present at this year's rodeo, playing a crucial role. Judges are essential in maintaining the integrity of the rodeo, enforcing safety, assessing skills and applying uniform rules and scoring criteria. They help ensure that safety is not compromised for the sake of speed.

Above: M.J.M. Electric Cooperative's Riley Marsh competes in the Cutout Change event, which tests a lineworker's ability to safely and efficiently replace a cutout, an important component in electrical distribution systems used to protect electrical equipment. The cutout contains a fuse, and the event mimics the real-life scenario where a lineworker must replace a malfunctioning or blown fuse.

Competitors were judged as a team on how well they followed safety protocols in addition to speed and accuracy. The event is timed, so speed is critical, but mistakes or shortcuts that violate safety rules lead to penalties.

Results: The Coles-Moultrie Electric Cooperative team of Gavin Bennett, Grant Cooper and Mitchell Huddleston won the event.

late bloomers

How a couple became farmers in their golden years

By Colten Bradford

IN THE HEART OF a suburban neighborhood in South Beloit, urban life and farm life meet on Ken and Sandy Brewer's 10-acre farm. One might think the couple has farmed for decades, but it's been just six years. Their homesteading lifestyle began when they retired after successful careers in the corporate world.

"If you would have told me I would be farming in retirement, I would have laughed at you," Ken says. In fact, as the couple neared retirement, they renovated their home, planning to stay there for good.

However, their daughter had a different idea for them when she discovered a "for sale" sign that popped up in the front yard of the farm home her parents would ultimately come to own. She talked her parents into becoming farmers.

"I wanted to retire big, not small," Sandy explains. "When you retire, you can do the things you always wanted to do, and you can learn whatever you want. So, to me, it's been exciting. ... It's never too late to start learning something new."



"It's never too late to start learning something new."

The property itself, which is on Rock Energy Cooperative lines and just a few miles away from the Wisconsin border, tells a story of resilience and connection to the land about its previous owner. Originally built in 1963, the home and land were meticulously maintained. While the area surrounding the farm became swallowed up by the growing community, the owner refused to sell to land developers.

"He didn't want to sell to just anyone. We were lucky," Sandy recalls. "He considered donating the land for a park, but when he saw how we wanted to use it for our kids and grandkids, he chose us."

Behind the house is a patchwork of farm structures, each previously used and purchased through Facebook Marketplace. The goat barn was once an abandoned building, bought for \$150. "It didn't have a roof or a floor, but we refurbished it," Sandy says. "We try to reuse what we can; everything has a story." When their garden shed was delivered, they paid the driver \$100 and four roosters for his service.

Moving to the small farm, the couple was initially overwhelmed by a lifestyle neither had much experience with. "We didn't even grow up on a farm," Sandy admits. The property has become a living classroom, not only for them but for their four grandchildren as well, ranging from ages 8 to 13. Together, they explore nature, develop responsibilities and work ethics, and learn about the self-sufficiency of farm life.

The family's foray into caring for farm animals started with chickens. They immersed themselves in research, getting tips online and watching YouTube videos to prepare for the realities of farming.

"Everybody's advice was to not just go get some chickens and think you're going to know [what you're doing], because there's more to it than that," Sandy says. "It's important to be mindful. They are animals, not things. So, we took that advice to heart and studied for a long time. [It was] about six months before we got any animals."

"When we got that first little egg, we were all just like, 'oh my gosh,'" Sandy recalls, relishing her grandchildren's excitement. Over time, their flock grew. "There's a thing called 'chicken math,'" she says with a laugh — meaning they ended up with many more chickens than initially intended. The few they had quickly multiplied to 40.

But "chicken math" went beyond poultry as the Brewers added animals over the next six years. "We now have two horses, five goats, 30 chickens, two barn cats, three ducks and two dogs," Sandy lists out. "And a partridge in a pear tree," Ken finishes with a laugh.

The couple learned the hard way about the realities of animal care, including the emotional weight of euthanizing chickens suffering from illness. "It's a terrible thing to do, but you have to do it," Ken says.

They encountered other unexpected mis-haps, as well. "We've lost 13 hens to foxes this summer," Sandy says. "Even in town, we deal with urban predators." Despite the setbacks, the couple has adapted, learning to navigate the complexities of farm life.

"It's a wonderful lifestyle, but it's not for the person [who] thinks they can just sit on their porch and look out at the pretty view," Sandy says. "It's a small hobby farm, but the chores are real."

Far left: Ken and Sandy Brewer became farmers when they retired.

Bottom left: One of the Brewers' goats

Bottom right: The Brewers sell homemade canned goods and fresh produce at a stand in their front yard.





“Farmers are the backbone of America. I have more respect than ever for real farmers.”

Their daily routine is a blend of hard work and rewarding experiences. Morning chores typically take about an hour, followed by coffee and planning for the day. The couple has adapted to the rigors of farm life, creating systems that make their tasks more manageable and using tools that ease the physical demands of the work. “You have to be able to do it,” Ken shares, noting how they’ve both become stronger through their daily efforts.

Gardening has also become a central focus for the family. “I was 64 when I planted my first tomato,” Sandy recalls, revealing that growing her own food has become a new passion. She started small, nurturing tomatoes and a few other vegetables. The garden has since flourished, prompting them to expand to fruit trees and a pumpkin patch. The Brewers sell some of what they harvest at a produce stand in their front yard.

“It’s so satisfying,” Sandy says. “A garden-grown tomato is a hundred times better than what you find in a grocery store. ... When I grew potatoes, I couldn’t believe how different they tasted. They’re like butter.”

The grandchildren have become active participants in the gardening process as well, often returning from school to help with planting and harvesting. As the crops began to flourish, so did the family’s interest in preserving their bounty through canning. The grandchildren

took a hands-on approach to this new endeavor, helping to process tomatoes and other fruits and vegetables.

“They love mushing those tomatoes down,” Sandy says with relief, emphasizing the labor-intensive process. “Canning is not an easy task.”

Their retirement has brought unexpected challenges, particularly for Ken, who has faced physical limitations due to health issues and is currently recovering from knee replacement surgery. However, their journey has allowed him to discover his love for animals, going from a reluctant pet owner to a proud caretaker of goats, chickens and cats.

As they look to the future, the couple contemplates adding more animals to their farm, like a miniature donkey for companionship and protection against predators. They plan to continue their farming lifestyle as long as they are able.

“We are not real farmers,” Sandy says, reflecting on how she feels they are “playing farm” when comparing herself to other farmers. “Farmers are the backbone of America. I have more respect than ever for real farmers. They work morning, noon and night, in all kinds of weather. I just have so much respect for them.”

To keep up with the Brewers and life on their farm, follow Sandy on Facebook by searching Sweet Tea Yankee Farm, or check out their blog at sweetteayankeefarm.com. ☺

Above: The Brewers own a variety of animals on their small hobby farm, including two horses, five goats, 30 chickens, two barn cats, three ducks and two dogs.

KURLY Q'S SWEET REVIVAL

A tasty tradition lives on

By Lisa Cherry

IN 1976, DICK AND Minnie Henson opened the now iconic Kurly Q restaurant, located near the eastern Illinois border in Paris. These days, EnerStar Electric Cooperative members Jim and Mandy Handlin own the beloved community establishment, and they are committed to preserving its traditional fan favorites while broadening their menu offerings.

Mandy says the idea to open the restaurant first came about back in the '70s, while Minnie was visiting family in Florida. "Her sister had a little ice cream store — when soft serve and the twist cone was kind of a new thing," she explains. "She wanted to bring that to our area."

Many years later, Dick and Minnie sold the business to their son and daughter-in-law, who later made the decision to close in the face of ever-increasing family obligations. Mandy, who was born and raised in Paris and knew the original owners, picked up the torch seven and a half years ago.



"My daughter turned 16, and I was a work-at-home mom. [I] got bored with that and wanted a new challenge," Mandy says. "The opportunity to buy Kurly Q came into my lap, and I always wanted a restaurant, so I went for it."

"It's been an honor to carry on the tradition in the community, because it was going to be lost," she adds. "It was crazy when we opened back up in March 2017. We didn't even tell anybody we were open, we just put 'open' on the little sign out front."

The positive response they received when the restaurant reopened made it clear the community had missed it and the food it was known for, like its footlong hot dogs, pulled pork barbecue, tenderloin sandwiches and twist cones.

"Back in 1976, one of the things they were [known for] was their cheese curds, but we've always called them cheese balls," Mandy explains. "[And] the little slider burgers, they called them 'specials.' To me, they're sliders, but that's what they called them back in 1976." A plethora of other popular sides include mini tacos, fried pickles, fried zucchini, mushrooms, onion petals [and] fried green tomatoes.

The Hensons' milkshakes were Mandy's personal favorite. "Kurly Q always had milkshakes, absolutely fabulous, just in a Styrofoam cup. My favorite [was] the hot fudge milkshake," she says. As it turned out, her daughter inspired her to take those milkshakes to the next level.

Their introduction of "those crazy milkshakes" coincided with the pandemic. "People would tailgate. We bought a big back parking lot, and they'd bring lawn chairs because of the social distancing," Mandy shares. "They'd all just camp out and have little picnics out there. It was something that people could do during COVID."

The popularity of the shakes didn't abate when life returned to normal. Currently, the restaurant offers five signature milkshakes year-round — the Strawberry Celebration, Cotton Candy Craze, Chocolate Supreme, Cookies and Cream, and the Peanut Butter Delight — as well as special monthly creations, all served in souvenir cups.

"It was four years in July that we've been doing the crazy milkshakes. It's getting harder

and harder to come up with new ideas [for the monthly specials], because we have been doing them so long," she laughs. However, milkshakes are not the only desserts that draw people.

"We've added a lot ... we have over 90 [ice cream] flavors, we have the ice cream nachos, the strawberry and pineapple Dole Whip," she continues. "We always try to introduce new items. We go to food shows and try to find a new product that fits our niche."

Mandy says their menu appeals to locals and visitors of all ages. "There's a man, 91 years old, [who] comes in two or three times a week, [and has been] for years ... and, with the signature shakes, that's helped to bring a lot of out-of-town people into our community," she explains. "I've heard a lot of people say they'll come to Paris for our shakes, and then they go to Casey to visit the big [things] ... That will be part of their road trip."

"We get motorcycle groups, we get bus trips ... busloads of kids coming for a school field trip," she adds. "We have a school a few blocks from us, and at the end of the year, a lot of times they'll bring all the kids down for a little kiddy cone."

Mandy says it's an honor to be a part of a community that comes together and helps each other out, and they pitch in where they can, too, like hosting fundraising nights for their schools, donating gift cards and sponsoring ball teams. "Just whatever we can do to help out," she says. "We always try to support one another."

As far as the future of the restaurant is concerned, Mandy hopes to continue to serve the community and grow the business. Most importantly, she says, "I'm just glad we can carry it on for the community."

Far left: The Peanut Butter Delight signature milkshake
Top: The Strawberry Celebration signature milkshake
Bottom: Pulled pork barbecue sandwich and cheese balls



LET'S EAT!

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Throwback bites

APPETIZERS NEVER GO OUT of style. For this month's Finest Cooking, I went back into the Illinois Country Living archive for some retro recipes. While some dishes were timeless, others left me scratching my head. In the November 1974 edition of ICL — Illinois Rural Electric News at the time — I discovered a series of appetizers, several of which sounded intriguing. Many of these vintage appetizers had flavor combinations that may not be widely used today. If you're hosting a gathering, it may be fun to reintroduce these old-school appetizers to friends and family for a change of pace. ☺

WE NEED RECIPES!

Pasta

Spicy dishes

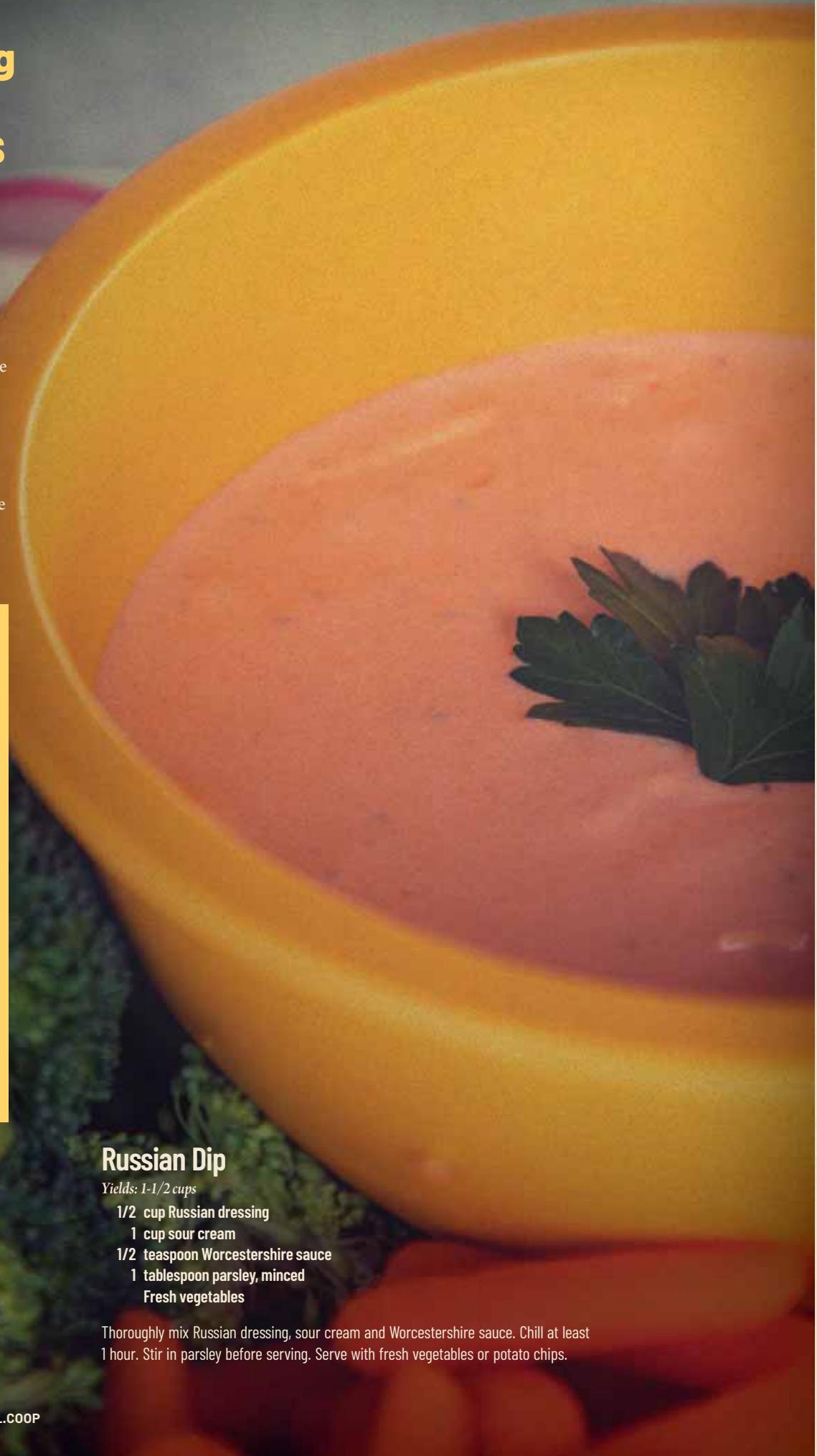
Stone fruit

Comfort food

Please email recipe submissions or questions to finestcooking@icloud.com 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.



Russian Dip

Yields: 1-1/2 cups

- 1/2 cup Russian dressing
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1/2 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tablespoon parsley, minced
- Fresh vegetables

Thoroughly mix Russian dressing, sour cream and Worcestershire sauce. Chill at least 1 hour. Stir in parsley before serving. Serve with fresh vegetables or potato chips.

Cucumber Beef Rolls

Yields: 3-4 dozen

18-20 thin slices roast beef
1 8-ounce package cream cheese, softened

1/2 cup grated cucumber
1/4 cup grated radishes
2 teaspoons onion salt

In a small bowl, mix softened cream cheese, cucumber, radish and onion salt. Spread on slices of roast beef, allowing about 2 teaspoons for each slice. Roll up slices, wrap and chill. To serve, cut rolls into thirds. Secure each piece with a small wooden pick and arrange on a platter.



Tiffany Chips

Yields: 16-20

2 medium-sized russet potatoes
1 cup corn flake crumbs
3 tablespoons Parmesan cheese, finely grated

1 tablespoon sesame seeds
1/2 cup butter, melted
Salt and pepper
Sour cream, optional

Preheat oven to 400 F. Scrub potatoes but do not pare. Cut in half lengthwise, then cut each half lengthwise into 4 or 5 wedges. Combine half of the cereal crumbs with Parmesan cheese and a pinch of salt and pepper in a shallow dish. Combine the other half of the crumbs with sesame seeds and a pinch of salt and pepper in another shallow dish. Dip potato wedges in melted butter. Coat one side with one crumb mixture, and the other side with the other crumb mixture. Place skin side down on a sheet pan and bake for 20-25 minutes. Serve with sour cream.



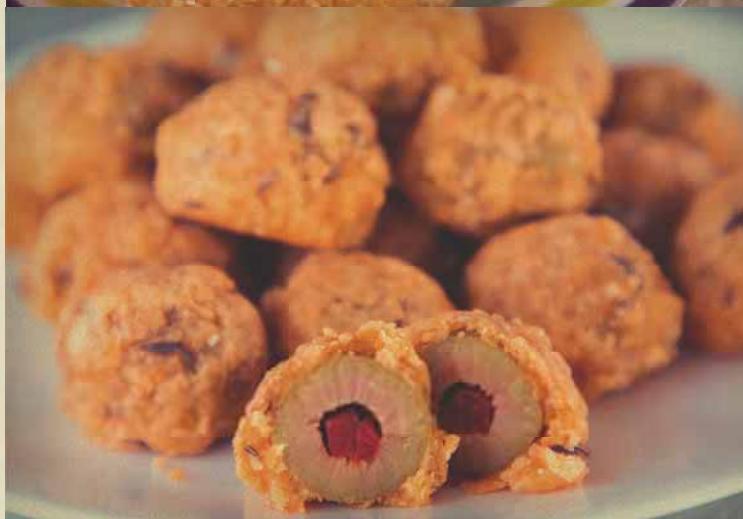
Hot Olives

Yields: 2 dozen

2 tablespoons butter, melted
1 cup grated sharp cheddar cheese
1/2 cup sifted flour

1 dash cayenne pepper
1/2 tablespoon caraway seeds
1 8-ounce jar stuffed jumbo olives

Preheat oven to 400 F. Mix together butter and cheese, add sifted flour, dash of cayenne and caraway seeds. Mix until thoroughly blended. Press the mixture onto each olive until fully coated. Refrigerate for 1 hour. Bake for 15 minutes or until browned. Serve warm.



Cheese Ball

Yields: 3-pound ball

1 8-ounce block sharp cheddar cheese, shredded
1 8-ounce package cream cheese, softened
1 4-ounce package blue cheese
2 tablespoons horseradish

1 clove garlic, minced
1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
1 dash cayenne pepper
1 cup parsley, chopped
1 cup pecans, chopped

Thoroughly mix all ingredients except parsley and pecans. Combine parsley and pecans and blend half of them into cheese mixture. Spread the remaining parsley mixture on sheet of waxed paper. Form cheese into ball and roll it in parsley mixture until well coated. Chill. Serve with crackers.





Grow, cook, savor, repeat

Essential herbs for Thanksgiving cooking

THE AROMAS OF THANKSGIVING dinner highlight a holiday centered around family, friends and giving thanks. Heartwarming and tempting, the smells of freshly baked dishes would not be the same without the addition of herbs like thyme, sage and rosemary. On Nov. 28, as the pot stews or the turkey roasts, consider herb additions you could grow in your garden or a small indoor container. This not only adds a touch of greenery to your space but also provides quick access to fresh flavors.

While fresh and dried herbs are both tasty, each is valuable to cooking in different ways. Fresh herbs are full of bright flavors and stand out in uncooked dishes. Dried herbs produce deep, rich flavors, perfect for hearty cooked dishes. Just remember the general guideline: Use three times the amount of fresh herbs to replace any dried herbs a recipe calls for.

Thyme, a low-growing herb, is a perennial plant in Illinois gardens. Small green leaves are attached to the woody stems, creating a 6- to 12-inch

fragrant mound. The leaves can be harvested all summer and added to recipes as fresh or dried seasoning.

Sage, a perennial herb, has velvety foliage, ranging from gold to purple to variegated, depending on the variety. Traditional stuffing would not be complete without sage, either fresh or dried. I still wonder how my Grandma Dee could always add the perfect amount of sage to the stuffing without picking up a measuring spoon.

Rosemary, grown as an annual plant by central Illinois gardeners, can be brought indoors for the winter. Its dark green needle-like foliage offers a powerful flavor to dishes. A little goes a long way with this herb.

Parsley, a biennial herb often grown as an annual, is the most widely used herb in the U.S. Curly parsley is often used to garnish a dish. Flat-leaf parsley, a common ingredient in pasta and meat dishes, has a more noticeable flavor.

Many herbs are easily grown indoors year-round. Most will need at least six hours of direct sunlight every day. High levels of light are

necessary to avoid leggy or spindly plant growth. Water requirements vary. Never allow the soil to dry out for herbs like rosemary. For herbs like sage, allow the soil to dry out, but water before leaves wilt. Fertilize every two weeks with a liquid fertilizer, following the directions on the manufacturer's label. Over-fertilizing will decrease aroma and taste. Just like in the garden, trim indoor herbs to maintain a compact shape and prevent flowering, which decreases flavor.

Herbs do not just have to be in your recipes this Thanksgiving. Fresh herbs also make great centerpieces. A rosemary topiary or a tray of potted herbs adds an uplifting scent to any room. Explore creative herb arrangements like a simple herb sprig added to napkins for a natural table setting. Whether grown indoors or dried from the garden, your herbal additions are certain to be a great holiday conversation piece.

Invite herbs to your table this season, and give thanks for the flavors they bring. 



Brittney 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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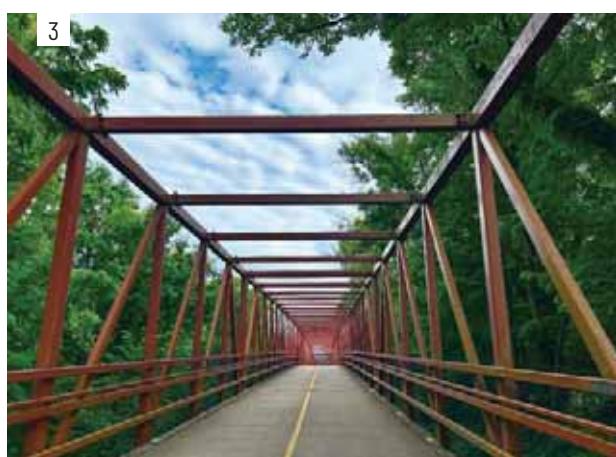
UPCOMING THEMES

January – Smiles

February – Farm animals

March – Fences/gates

April – Reflections



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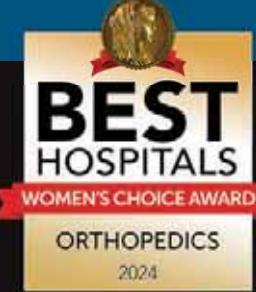
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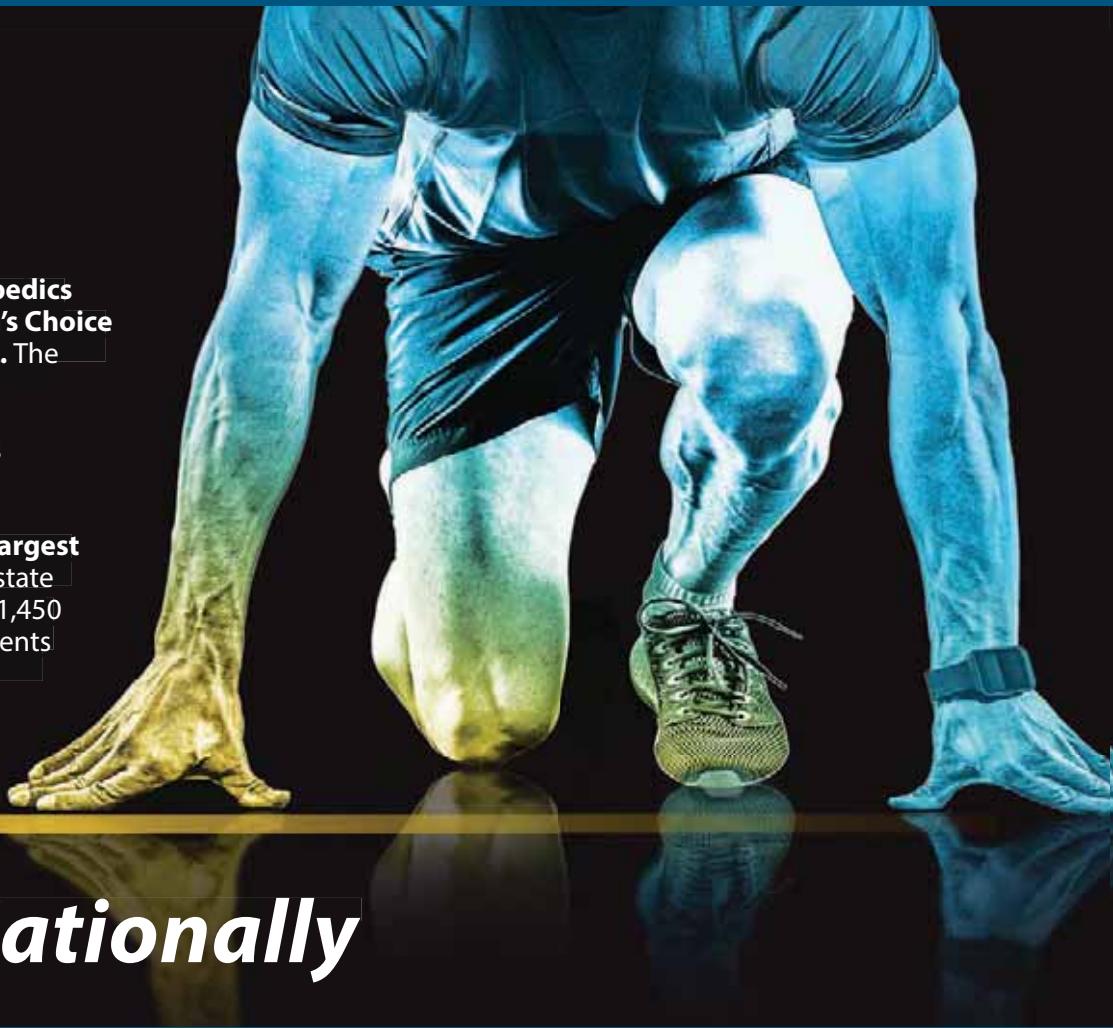
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