

# HI-LINES

A newsletter for members of JCE Co-op

AUGUST 2025

 Elizabeth, IL

 800-858-5522

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

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### AUGUST TOPIC—SENIOR PLANET

Getting Started with Canva (workshop)

#### AUGUST 5

Senior Planet—Savanna Museum & Cultural Center 10:00–11:00 a.m.

#### AUGUST 7

Senior Planet—Mount Carroll District Library 1:00–2:00 p.m.

#### AUGUST 12

Senior Planet—Schmaling Memorial Public Library Fulton 11:00 a.m.–Noon

#### AUGUST 14

Senior Planet—Apple Canyon Lake Clubhouse 1:00–2:00 p.m.

#### AUGUST 19

Senior Planet—Odell Public Library Morrison 11:00 a.m.–Noon

#### AUGUST 21

Senior Planet—Menominee Township Building 1:00–2:00 p.m.

#### AUGUST 26

Senior Planet—JCE Co-op Elizabeth West Campus 10:00–11:00 a.m.

#### AUGUST 28

Senior Planet—Geneseo Public Library 10:00 a.m.–11:00 a.m.



### CEO'S REPORT

by Mike Casper

## A new dawn for rural northwest Illinois

Rural northwest Illinois is not just gaining fiber—it's claiming a future. With strategic investments, regional leadership, and community-centered partnerships, JCE Co-op's fiber internet build-out is a powerful blueprint for bridging the digital divide—empowering small towns to thrive in a connected world.

Fiber build-out in northwest Illinois is accelerating, and its ripple effects will be profound. Most of the buildout will be completed by the end of 2026. The network will knit together farms, small towns, schools, clinics, emergency services, and businesses—and empower them with modern connectivity. When completed, the network will enhance safety, strengthen economic growth, modernize agriculture, support telehealth services and broaden lifelong opportunities.

This is more than just internet service. It's an investment in quality of life: families can work, learn, and stream; farms and businesses can modernize; entrepreneurs can innovate; and communities can thrive. What once felt like distant dreams—remote surgery, smart irrigation, global ecommerce—are now within reach because fiber is being laid in road and utility right-of-ways across the region.

In the coming years, northwest Illinois will stand as a model of what rural broadband can achieve. With the right mix of infrastructure investment, workforce training, and forward-thinking local leadership, the region is not just getting connected, it's preparing for a brighter, more resilient future.

### Transformational benefits

#### 1. Economic development

Fiber broadband dramatically lifts local economies. In counties with high broadband utilization, fiber-connected regions show a remarkable 213% higher business growth rate, 10% higher self-employment growth, 18% higher per capita income, and 44% higher gross domestic product (GDP) growth. Available fiber makes rural communities more attractive to startups, remote workers, and innovation-oriented firms.

#### 2. Precision agriculture

Faster and more reliable connectivity enables precision agriculture—using real-time telemetry and smart tech to optimize planting, fertilization, and harvesting. A study from the Benton Institute for Broadband & Society across 15 Illinois ag counties estimates that enhanced broadband could boost corn and soybean revenues by over \$100 million annually—a big win for farm-based families.

#### 3. Education and telehealth

Fiber broadband ensures seamless access to remote learning and virtual health care. Robust connectivity bridges these gaps, supporting everything from telemedicine diagnostics to online student resources.

#### 4. Workforce development

Northwest Illinois is not just building fiber—it's building skills. Morrison Tech recently launched an apprenticeship program to train hundreds of fiber technicians over the next four years, linking the infrastructure build-out with local job growth and career readiness.

# Youth Tour opens minds and builds leaders

## Local students represent JCE Co-op in D.C.

Every June, a select group of high school students from across Illinois leave their rural communities to spend a week taking in the historic sights and bustling energy of the nation's capital.

This year, 48 students sponsored by 25 Illinois electric and telephone cooperatives took part in the 2025 Youth Tour to visit Washington, D.C., held June 16 to 23, for an immersive weeklong experience designed to educate and inspire the next generation of cooperative and civic leaders.

JCE Co-op sponsored two students within its service territory. These students included Lex Abt and Hazel Harris. They joined more than 2,000 students representing 44 states for the annual event.

"This trip is so much more than sightseeing," said Taylor Smith, member and youth engagement coordinator at JCE Co-op. "It's about building relationships, learning leadership and showing that they have the power to shape their communities and futures."

## Learning by doing

Central to the Youth Tour experience is the formation of a mock student-run cooperative called Chip 'n' Pop Co-op. Students began their journey at the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives (AIEC) headquartered in Springfield, where the students selected a co-op board. The board later interviewed and selected a co-op manager.

Throughout the week, the co-op handled snack sales, decision-making and budgeting — giving participants a hands-on look at how cooperatives operate. Both Abt and Harris served on the board of directors.

"Being on the board of directors taught me what a co-op is all about through first-hand experience," Harris said. "I've become so much more appreciative of everything that JCE Co-op is doing for me."

"Being part of a co-op helps students understand what makes a co-op different," said Smith. "It's all about working together and making decisions that serve everyone — not just one person or company."

## A full week of history

Over the course of the week, students visited historic landmarks including Gettysburg, Arlington National

Cemetery and, for the first time in many years, had the opportunity to tour the White House, where the students caught a glimpse of President Donald Trump. They also toured the U.S. Capitol, strolled the National Mall, stood at the steps of the Supreme Court and explored the Smithsonian museums.

Midweek, students took part in the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's Youth Day, where they joined hundreds of other teens from across the country to hear from national leaders and learn how to use their voices back home.

From sobering visits to the Holocaust Memorial Museum and the 9/11 Pentagon Memorial to moments of laughter at the Museum of Illusions and team-building at Beat the Bomb, the Youth Tour experience was unforgettable.

"I'd say my favorite part of the trip was going to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum," Abt said. "I liked really educating myself on everything that happened there, because I didn't know the in-depth history of it."



## A trip that lasts a lifetime

An important component to the trip — the students voted for one of their peers to represent Illinois on the Youth Leadership Council (YLC). Those interested in becoming Illinois' YLC representative filled out an application, and five were selected to give a speech in front of their peers.

Adams Telephone Co-Operative's Micah Anderson was selected as the 2025-2026 YLC representative for Illinois. He will represent the state at national and state meetings and events in the year ahead.

The week concluded with a farewell dinner and dance, and by the time students returned home on June 23, many said they felt changed by the experience.

"I would like to give the hugest thank you to my co-op for sending me to D.C.," Harris said. "They gave me the opportunity to look into the past of our country, and now I can't wait to help build the future."

High school students who live within the service area of JCE Co-op are eligible to participate in the annual program. To learn more about Youth Tour, go to [youthtour.coop](http://youthtour.coop) or [facebook.com/ILYouthTour](https://facebook.com/ILYouthTour).



## Back-to-school season brings youth learning opportunities from JCE Co-op

As students prepare to head back to school, JCE Co-op is excited to reconnect with educators and school communities across our service territory. We're proud to offer a wide range of youth engagement and educational programs designed to inspire, educate and empower students of all ages.

From hands-on safety demonstrations and classroom activities to real-world learning experiences like our Washington, D.C. Youth Tour and college scholarship opportunities, we're committed to investing in the future of our local youth. These programs are part of our cooperative's mission to support education and foster the leaders of tomorrow.

Schools and educators are encouraged to reach out and learn more about how we can support their students' learning. Whether you're looking for electric or natural gas safety resources, energy education materials, or interactive presentations, we're here to help.

If you're interested in learning more, contact our Member and Youth Engagement Coordinator Taylor Smith at 815-591-0091 or by email at [tsmith@jcecoop.com](mailto:tsmith@jcecoop.com). You can also explore our educational tools and activity pages by visiting [jcecoop.com/educational-resources](http://jcecoop.com/educational-resources).

Let's work together to make this school year one full of learning, safety and opportunity!



# IMPORTANT REMINDER



## Billing cycle changes begin this month

Beginning this month, JCE Co-op is launching the first phase of changes to billing cycles for electric and natural gas members. As part of this update, our service territory is now divided into three billing cycles. While some accounts will remain on their current schedule, many will see new billing and due dates starting this month.

**Important Note: This will not affect fiber and phone services, which will remain on the same cycle they are on currently.**

### What does this mean for you?



#### New billing cycles

Your billing and due dates may now fall on different days. This change officially begins this month—August 2025.



#### Review the changes

Please review the billing cycle map or chart provided to see which cycle your location now falls under.



#### Update your payment method

If you're enrolled in automatic payments, be sure to adjust your settings to reflect your new due date starting in August.

Check the table below to see your updated billing cycle. If you have any questions or need help updating your payment information, please contact our member care team at 800-858-5522

	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
<b>Billing Date</b>	7th of the month	14th of the month	24th of the month
<b>Due Date</b>	28th of the month	5th of the month	15th of the month
<b>Territory</b>	Apple River, Hanover, Stockton, Albany, Chadwick, Erie, Fenton, Mount Carroll, Lanark, Morrison, Geneseo, Atkinson, Prophetstown, Annawan, Colona	Fulton Savanna Thomson	East Dubuque Elizabeth, Galena Scales Mound

Ray W Andrews

**BLOOD DRIVE**  
BLOODCENTER.ORG

**JCE Co-op Main Headquarters**  
**Elizabeth, IL**  
**Thursday, August 21**  
**2:30-5:30 p.m.**



Scan the QR code to make an appointment, call (800) 747-5401 or visit [bloodcenter.org](http://bloodcenter.org).  
Appts preferred.

  
**ImpactLife**  
*Please eat before donating and bring a photo ID.*

# THE LARGEST OUTDOOR AG SHOW IN THE NATION RETURNS TO DECATUR!

The Farm Progress Show is back in Illinois this year, and we want to invite you there! The nation's largest outdoor farm event will once again be held at Progress City in Decatur Aug. 26 – 28. Look for the Illinois Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives' exhibit located at "Lot 217" on Second Street, between Central Progress and East Progress Avenue, near Gates 7 and 8. Look for the big American Flag hanging between two 60-foot electric poles.

Representatives from JCE Co-op and several other Illinois electric cooperatives will be on hand to share information about cooperatives, safety, energy efficiency and much more. Be sure to catch the Southwestern Electric Cooperative's Live Line Safety Demo and learn how electricity gets to your home, farm or business, and how to stay safe around electrical equipment. There will also be linemen on hand doing pole-climbing demonstrations on a 60-foot pole.

Stop by the booth and register for a chance to win a Lectric electric bike and climb in a bucket for a photo-op. Cooperative members who present their Co-op Connections Card or show the Co-op Connections app on their device will receive a special gift.

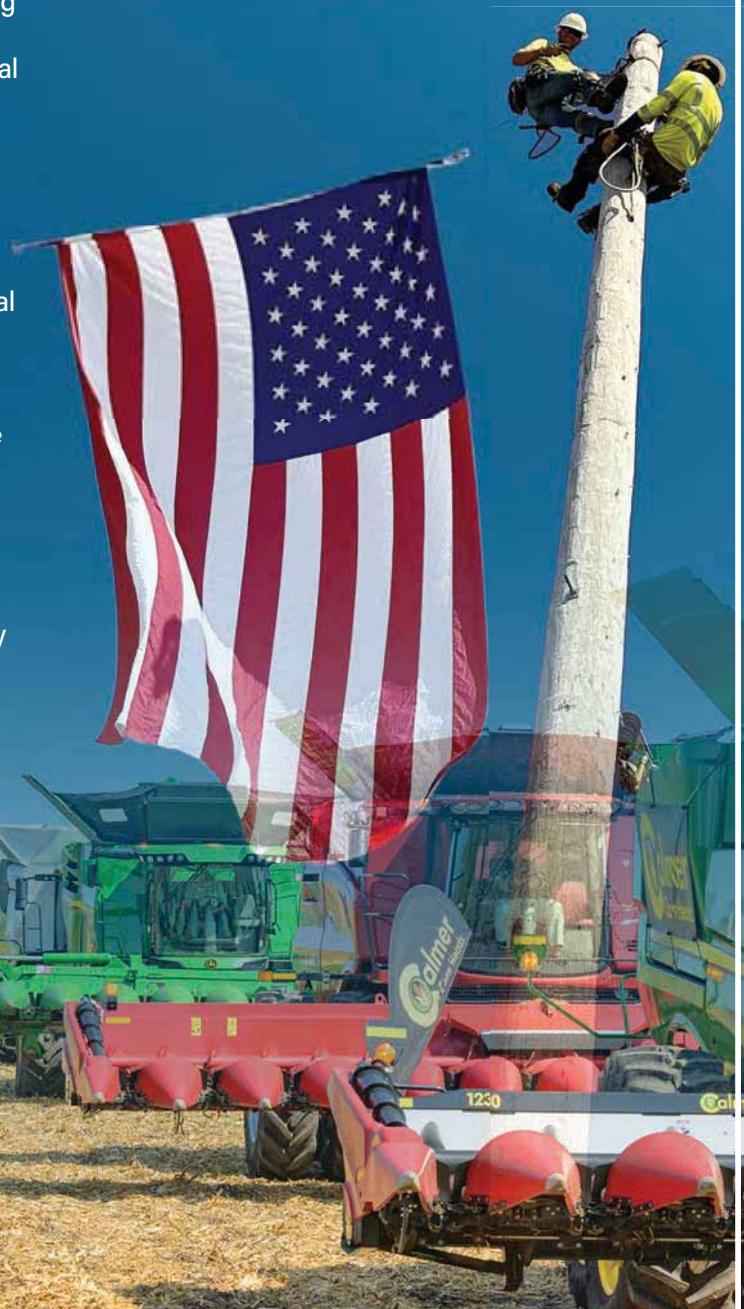
Weather permitting, the Touchstone Energy Hot Air Balloon will be flying the American flag the first two mornings of the show.

For over 70 years, the Farm Progress Show has celebrated agriculture by bringing tradition and businesses together from all over. It is where people come to gather, meet, observe, and learn. Major manufacturers roll out their newest offerings, and it is the best place to see what's next for agriculture. The show rotates annually between Decatur, Illinois and Boone, Iowa.



**FARM  
PROGRESS  
SHOW 2025**

**August 26–28, 2025**





## Advancement in fiber internet buildout in Whiteside County

Whiteside County is making major strides in expanding broadband access, as JCE Co-op advances its fiber optic construction across the northern parts of the county. The co-op recently received its final installment of funding from Whiteside County for fiber buildout in northern portions of the county.

Gary Camarano, economic development director for Whiteside County, presented a \$1 million check to Mike Casper, JCE Co-op president & CEO, and Jesse Shekleton, director & general manager of broadband at JCE Co-op. This check represents the final payment of the \$3 million the county committed to use as local matching funds for a Connect Illinois Round 3 grant from the state of Illinois. The county's match comes from ARPA funds received.

The co-op is using the \$69.9 million Connect Illinois funds to deploy high-speed fiber internet to areas of Whiteside, Carroll and Jo Daviess counties. Jo Daviess County contributed another \$50,000 in local funds.

Camarano noted that Whiteside County's commitment of local funds was one of the keys to obtaining the grant. JCE Co-op is using the Connect Illinois grant to construct 1,200 miles of underground fiber to areas in the three counties, enabling the

connection of more than 5,100 households, farms, and businesses.

This summer, construction has started on the fiber optic buildout project in northern rural areas of Whiteside County, with an estimated completion by year-end. This advancement marks a significant step forward in bridging the digital divide and fostering economic growth in the region.



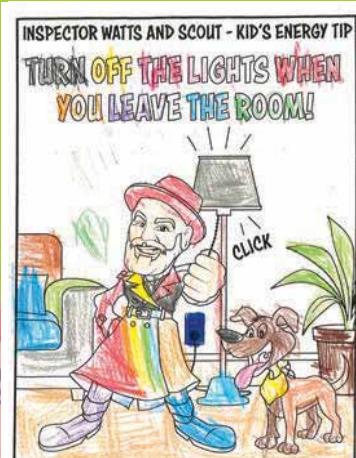
Pictured from left to right: Jesse Shekleton, Gary Camarano and Mike Casper

## Congratulations to our coloring contest winners!

*Thanks to all who participated, we have so many talented co-op kids! Each winner will receive their full list of school supplies for the fall school year.*

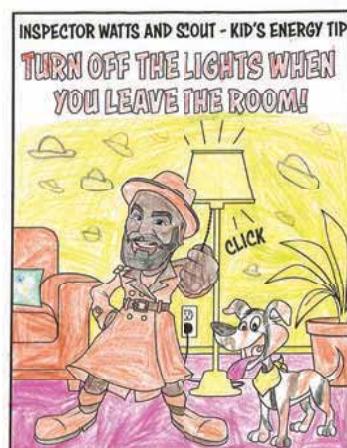
**Allison Thomas**

Savanna, ages 5-6 group



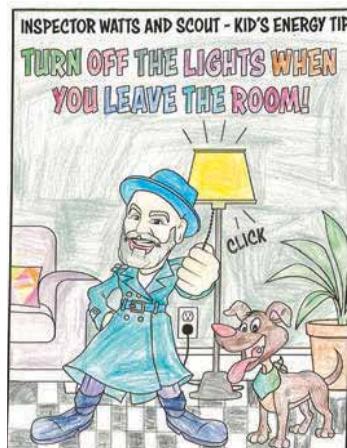
**Hayden Eckberg**

Erie, ages 7-9 group



**Levi Kershner**

Fulton, ages 9-10 group



## YOUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### David Senn

*Chairman*  
District 7

### Jerry Meyer

*Vice Chairman*  
District 1

### Robert Kuhns

*Treasurer*  
District 10

### Dan Tindell

*Secretary*  
District 4

### Joseph Mattingley

District 2

### Allen Hendren

District 3

### Vacant

District 5

### Thomas Lundy

District 6

### Ted James

District 8

### Larry Carroll

District 9

### Office Hours:

Monday-Friday

### Elizabeth

793 U.S. Route 20 West  
7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

### Savanna

103 Chicago Ave.  
7:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
1:30 to 4 p.m.

### Genesee

1004 S. Chicago St.  
7:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
1:30 to 4 p.m.

### Services and

**billing questions:**  
(800) 858-5522  
jcecoop.com

### For emergencies

**and outages call:**  
(800) 858-5522

# Resume of Minutes

**May 29, 2025**

## Board Meeting Minutes Summary

The regular board meeting of Jo-Carroll Energy, Inc. (NFP) was held on Thursday, May 29, 2025.

The regular board meeting of Jo-Carroll Energy, Inc. (NFP) was held on Thursday, May 29, 2025.

**Safety Moment** – Director James reminded us that safety starts at home and provided safety tips. It's not just about being safe at work, it's about carrying those habits into your daily life. Some examples of being safe at home are:

- When mowing the lawn, always wear closed-toed shoes to protect your feet.
- When picking up debris in your yard, use gloves to avoid cuts, splinters, or harmful substances.
- When working with electricity, always use a tester first to ensure the power is off before handling wires.

**Approval of Agenda** – A motion was made, seconded and carried unanimously to approve the meeting agenda.

**Consent Agenda** – A motion was made, seconded and carried unanimously to approve the consent agenda.

**Presentations** – None.

## Governance Topics and Board Policy Review

**a. Board Policy 104.1 Travel** – A motion was made by the Governance Committee to approve Board Policy 104.1|Travel, which was seconded by Director Hendren and carried unanimously.

**b. Board Policy 120| Harassment** – Was tabled for further discussion.

### c. Board Policy 134| Workplace

**Violence** – A motion was made by the Governance Committee to Approve Board Policy 134| Workplace Violence, which was seconded by Director Smith and carried unanimously.

d. Board Policy 137.1 | Identify Theft Protection was tabled for further discussion.

## CEO| Financial Operating Report

**CEO Report** – Mike Casper, President and CEO, shared with the board an

update on the special early retirement program.

**Financial Operating Report** – Chuck Woods, Chief Financial Officer noted that April revenue is approximately \$24.4 million. Total operations and maintenance expenses are approximately \$19.2 million, which is \$551,660 under the budget of \$19.8 million. Margins are approximately \$953,279 and are \$730,559 greater than budget of \$222,720, primarily due to non-operating activity over budget of \$446,274. By general consent, the board moved to file the financial operating report with the auditor.

## Operations and Regulatory/ Legislative Update

**Operations Update** – Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer Kyle Buros provided an update on current projects. He noted that substation upgrades are progressing and emphasized that the organization remains focused on meeting its budget goals.

**IT Technology Report** – Vice President and Chief Technology Officer Dan Marcure provided an update on technology initiatives; detailing projects aimed at increasing fiber bandwidth capacity.

**Member Services Update** – Vice President of Member Services Jennifer Meyer discussed the implementation of new software designed to improve operational efficiency and enhance internal communication and technical processes. With the software upgrade a new member-facing platform will provide additional user-friendly applications enhancing value to our members. Meyer also provided an update on the rollout of the new Advanced Metering Infrastructure system and how we are communicating with our members.

## External Affairs/Legislative Update

– General Counsel Terry Kurt provided an update on Senate Bill 2493, which is



## Resume of minutes (Continued)

currently under legislative consideration. He shared key details and potential implications relevant to the cooperative.

**Executive Assistant Update** – Amy Johnston discussed upcoming meeting and training details for the board.

### Board Issues and Action Items

#### Select Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives

##### (AIEC) Director| Alternate Director to serve on the AIEC

**Board of Directors** – A motion was made, seconded and carried unanimously to select Dave Senn as the Director and Al Hendren as the Alternate Director to serve on the AIEC Board of Directors representing JCE Co-op.

**Select Voting Delegate| Alternate Voting Delegate for the CFC Annual Meeting** – A motion was made, seconded and carried unanimously to select Dan Tindell as the CFC Voting Delegate and Ted James as the Alternate Voting Delegate for the CFC Annual Meeting.

##### Select NRECA Voting Delegate| Alternate Voting

**Delegate for the AIEC Annual Meeting** – A motion was made, seconded and carried unanimously to select Ted James as the Voting Delegate and Al Hendren as the Alternate Voting Delegate for the AIEC Annual Meeting.

### Executive Session

**Into Executive Session** – A motion was made, seconded, and carried unanimously to go into Executive Session at 11:51 AM.

**Out of Executive Session** – A motion was made, seconded, and carried unanimously to come out of Executive Session at 12:03 PM.

**Action Resulting from Executive Session** – With regret the board accepted the resignation of Director Pat Smith, District 5. The board and staff thanked Pat for her years of service to the Cooperative.

### Reports/Updates

#### Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives (AIEC)

– Director Senn discussed legislation and budget issues affecting Illinois electric cooperatives.

**Dairyland Power Cooperative (DPC) Report** – Director Tindell provided a summary report of Dairyland Board Highlights in addition discussed rates, grants, EPA rules and shared that the DPC board expressed their appreciation of Director Mattingley's service on the DPC board.

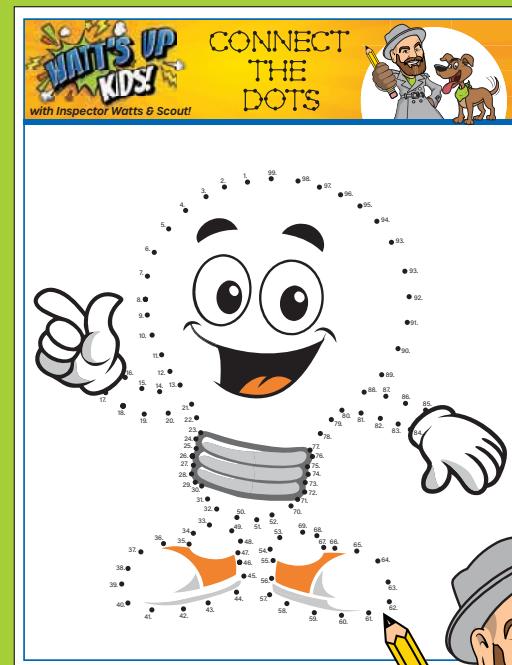
**Prairie Power Inc. (PPI) Report** – Director Kuhns shared highlights and generation statistics from the most recent Prairie Power Board Meeting, noting that the Alsey 5 generating unit will be down until August for repairs.

**Other Business** – None.

**Adjournment** – Chairman Senn adjourned the meeting at 12:10 PM.



## New activity page available!



 Stay plugged in—follow us on Facebook and join Watts & Scout on a mission to make this summer shockingly fun!

 Visit [jcecoop.com/educational-resources](http://jcecoop.com/educational-resources).



### Reader prize!

Each month we print the name of a JCE Co-op member who is eligible to win a monthly \$25 readership prize. If your name is printed in this month's edition, and not a part of any article, contact JCE Co-op.