

SEPTEMBER 2025

Illinois Country Living

WINGS OF A BYGONE ERA

Stearmans are still flying strong



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FEATURE
Back to the wild

PRAIRIE TABLE
Dockside dining

FINEST COOKING
Just peachy



Eye Doctor Helps Illinois Legally Blind To See

High Technology For Low Vision Patients Allows Many To Drive Again



For many patients with macular degeneration and other vision-related conditions, the loss of central visual detail also signals the end to one of the last bastions of independence: driving. A Mascoutah optometrist, Dr. Marianne McDaniel, is using miniaturized telescopes that are mounted in glasses to help people who have lost vision from macular degeneration and other eye conditions.

"Some of my patients consider me the last stop for people who have vision loss," said Dr. McDaniel, one of only a few doctors in the world who specialize in fitting bioptic telescopes to help those who have lost vision due to macular degeneration, diabetic retinopathy, and other debilitating eye diseases.

Imagine a pair of glasses that can improve your vision enough to change your life. If you're a low vision patient, you've probably not only imagined them, but have been searching for

them. Bioptic telescopes may be the breakthrough in optical technology that will give you the independence you've been looking for. Patients with vision in the 20/200 range can many times be improved to 20/50 or better.

Macular degeneration is the leading cause of blindness and vision loss in people over 50. Despite this, most adults are not familiar with the



A scene as it might be viewed by a person with age-related macular degeneration.

condition. As many as 25% of those over the age of 50 have some degree of macular degeneration. The macula is only one small part of the retina; however, it is the most sensitive and gives us sharp central vision. When it degenerates, macular degeneration leaves a blind spot right in the center of vision, making it difficult or impossible to recognize faces, read a book, or pass the driver's vision test.

Nine out of 10 people who have macular degeneration have the dry form. New research suggests vitamins can help. The British medical journal *BMC Ophthalmology* recently reported that 56% of patients treated with a high-dose combination of vitamins experienced improved vision after six months.

While age is the most significant risk factor for developing the disease, heredity, smoking, cardiovascular disease, and high blood pressure have also been identified as risk factors.

Macular degeneration accounts for 90% of new legal blindness in the U.S. While there is currently no cure, promising research is being done on many fronts. "My job is to figure out everything and anything possible to keep a person functioning, especially driving," says Dr. McDaniel.

"Bioptic telescopes can cost over \$2,000," said Dr. McDaniel, "especially if we build them with an automatic sunglass."

"The major benefit of the bioptic telescope is that the lens automatically focuses on whatever you're looking at," said Dr. McDaniel. "It's like a self-focusing camera, but much more precise."

To learn more about bioptic telescopes or to schedule a consultation, give Dr. McDaniel a call. You can also visit our websites.

www.mascoutaheyecare.com

1-618-566-8899

Office located in Mascoutah, Illinois

Marianne McDaniel, O.D.



PHOTO COURTESY OF NATIONAL STEARMAN FLY-IN



PHOTO COURTESY OF FREE AGAIN WILDLIFE REHABILITATION



Illinois Country Living

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AMPLIFY

MEMBERSHIP INVOLVEMENT COOPERATION SAFETY EDUCATION COMMUNITY YOUR VOICE

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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Co-op voices amplified

Fighting for the future of rural electrification

EACH YEAR BRINGS ITS own set of challenges, but I'm proud to say that our team, our members and our cooperative family continue to rise above them — together.

We faced proposed legislation this year that would have significantly increased costs for our members and stripped away local control. But, thanks to your advocacy, we made sure that the voices of cooperative members were heard loud and clear. More than 4,300 letters were sent to legislators through Voices for Cooperative Power.



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

Legislative accomplishments

One major success involved Senate Bill 40. The bill originally would have forced expensive, over-the-top integrated resource planning requiring irrelevant information. We didn't just oppose the bill; we educated lawmakers about the unique cooperative model — and how we already balance affordability, reliability and sustainability.

Safety achievements

Our statewide training programs reach more lineworkers and cooperative staff than ever before.

The safety and training staff at the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives (AIEC) has worked tirelessly to reduce incidents and improve training.

The last time an Illinois co-op employee was killed on the job was in 2015. Electricity is unforgiving and can be deadly in an instant. Every time we invest in safety, we invest in someone's life. That's worth every effort.

Vision for the future

The challenges are real, but so are our opportunities. It's an amazing, cutting-edge time to work in electric utilities, addressing questions like how can we serve huge AI loads and at what risk? Will EVs eventually dominate? What generation resources are the future and when? How can we do all of this and keep energy affordable?

Looking ahead, the AIEC will continue to be a trusted advocate, innovator and resource hub for Illinois electric cooperatives. We will continue to provide resources, training and leadership development to help every cooperative thrive. We will continue to deliver on our mission to provide support, expertise and unity of purpose for our member cooperatives.

Closing thoughts

The AIEC was formed back in 1942 to amplify the cooperative voice, and that still holds true today. It enables the 25 distribution electric cooperatives and the five generation and transmission cooperatives in Illinois to have a unified voice that is louder than the sum of its parts.

As I reflect on this past year, I'm proud of the work we do behind the scenes, in boardrooms, at the Capitol and out in the field so rural Illinoisans can have reliable, affordable power every single day. We'll keep doing it, because that's who we are.

Thank you for your dedication, your passion and your belief in the cooperative way. Together, we've accomplished a lot. Together, we'll take on the challenges ahead — and win. 💡

This is an excerpt of Craig Sondgeroth's CEO report presented during the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives' annual meeting on July 31, 2025.



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SEPTEMBER CHECKLIST

National Preparedness Month is a great reminder to take a few simple steps to keep you and your loved ones safe in an emergency.



Make a plan.

Talk with your family about where you will go and how you will stay in touch during an emergency.

Build an emergency supply kit.

Gather supplies like water, nonperishable food, flashlights, batteries, medications and first-aid supplies.



Stay informed.

Sign up for local weather alerts and other important updates.

Know your alerts.

A “warning” is a threat to life/property, an “advisory” is for less serious conditions and a “watch” means hazardous weather is possible.



AIEC's President/CEO Craig Sondgeroth, Legal and Government Relations Coordinator Baylee Flowers and VP of Government Relations Nick Reitz present State Representative Sharon Chung with a 2025 Public Service Award.

Illinois electric co-ops honor three state legislators

During the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives (AIEC) Annual Meeting, held July 31-Aug. 1, three elected officials were named recipients of Illinois Electric Cooperatives' Public Service Award, which recognizes dedicated public service to Illinois citizens and outstanding contributions to the rural electrification program. This year's recipients include State Representatives Sharon Chung and Adam Niernerg and State Senator Mike Halpin.

State Representative Sharon Chung

“Representative Chung has been a great friend and supporter of electric cooperatives,” said Nick Reitz, AIEC vice president of government relations. “She always has an open door. She’s eager to hear thoughts on energy legislation being debated and how it would impact the industry and electric cooperatives throughout the state.”

Chung is a Democrat and represents the 91st House District, which includes the service territory of Corn Belt Energy Corporation. She serves on the agriculture and conservation committee, as well as the economic opportunity & equity, healthcare licenses, veterans affairs and appropriations higher education committees. Chung is vice chair of the higher education committee.

“This award is a really great honor,” Chung said. “In my short time in the legislature ... to be recognized for my service, and the sort of outreach I’ve been able to do for Illinois electric cooperatives is really, truly, a very huge honor. I’m just here to learn more and be able to advocate for the people in my district and people throughout Illinois. That’s behind everything that I do.”

Continued on page 8

Sudoku

by Myles Mellor and Susan Flanagan

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

Solution on page 33.

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

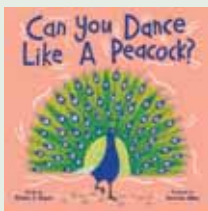
"PSA winners" continued from page 7



State Representative Adam Niernerg thanks Illinois electric cooperatives for the recognition as he accepts a 2025 Public Service Award.

IL ENTERTAINMENT CORNER

Illinois Reads is an initiative of the Illinois Reading Council that aims to promote literacy throughout the state. Each year, the program selects 36 books – six books for each of six age groups. Works by Illinois authors are often included. Below are books chosen for 2025.



Ages 4 and under

- "Can You Dance Like a Peacock?" by Rekha S. Rajan
- "Hide-and-Seek" by Molly Cranch
- "Moms Can Do It All!" by Ted Maass
- "Sleep: Surprising Ways Animals Snooze" by Jennifer Ward
- "Painting the Sky with Love: A Celebration of Love and Community" by Mary E. Haque
- "Play Outside with Me" by Kat Chen

Grades K-2

- "Bats Beneath the Bridge" by Janet Nolan
- "Love Grows" by Ruth Spiro
- "Somebody Needs to Do Something About That Monster!" by Doug Cenko
- "The Ghost Who Was Afraid of Everything" by Nadia Ahmed
- "The Heartbeat Drum: The Story of Carol Powder, Cree Drummer and Activist" by Deidre Havrelock
- "Umami" by Jacob Grant

... TO BE CONTINUED IN THE OCTOBER 2025 ENTERTAINMENT CORNER.

State Representative Adam Niernerg

"Representative Niernerg is a strong advocate and voice on the issues impacting downstate and rural Illinois," Reitz said. "As a member of the House Energy and Environment Committee, he is always eager to hear our thoughts on energy legislation being debated and how it would impact the industry and the electric cooperatives in his district. He [also] never misses a chance to visit and interact with students representing his co-ops."

Niernerg is a Republican who represents the 102nd House District, which includes the service territories of Coles-Moultrie Electric Cooperative, Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative, EnerStar Electric Cooperative and Norris Electric Cooperative. He serves on the energy and environment committee, as well as the appropriations general service, education policy, insurance, gun violence prevention, restorative justice and public safety committees. He is the Republican spokesperson on the immigration and human rights committee.

"This is amazing, and I'm so grateful for the recognition," Niernerg said. "I want to thank everybody [who] is part of a co-op. ... You do an outstanding job. You keep me informed on the issues. ... When there's an issue, you guys are on top of it. You're here for your

communities. You're invested in your communities. ... So, thank you very much. It is an honor."

State Senator Mike Halpin

"Senator Halpin has been a great friend and supporter of electric cooperatives since taking office," said Reitz. "He is a strong advocate and one of the leading voices on the issues impacting rural Illinois. We appreciate that his door is always open to discuss our thoughts on energy legislation being debated and how it would impact McDonough Power Cooperative and co-ops throughout Illinois."

Halpin represents the 36th Senate District, which includes the service territory of McDonough Power Cooperative. He is a Democrat and served in the House from 2017 to 2023, prior to his election to the Senate in 2023. Halpin was unable to attend and will be presented with the award at a later date.

"Senator Mike Halpin has done a great job representing the 36th district," said McDonough Power President/CEO Mike Smith. "He's come by our cooperative, he's talked to our employees, and he's listened to those issues that are important to them. His ability to reach across the aisle and work with the other party has made a big difference. It's important to have a friend like Mike Halpin in the State Senate." 🗣️

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Where is it?

The winners of the July hidden objects contest were Dennis Fager of Egyptian Electric Cooperative Association and David Fletcher of Norris Electric Cooperative. Congratulations! Your ICL campfire mugs have been sent.

The backpack hidden in the August 2025 issue was on page 14 in the Safety Check section. Winners' names will be drawn, and they will be notified. Visit Illinois Country Living on Facebook after each month's deadline for a closeup of the object's location and winners' names.

It's time for a new hidden object search. As we transition into fall, be on the lookout for an acorn, pictured above. The symbol can vary in size and will not be hidden 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 25th. 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. 💡



FEMA Act of 2025 would bring disaster aid to co-ops much faster

Across the U.S., electric cooperatives are supporting a new bipartisan bill that would streamline the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and speed up delivery of crucial disaster relief funds to electric co-ops hit hard by hurricanes, wildfires, tornadoes and other natural disasters.

The Fixing Emergency Management for Americans Act of 2025 would keep in place FEMA's essential Public Assistance program, which provides money to co-ops to restore power and rebuild their systems after natural disasters. Without those funds, rebuilding would take much longer and costs would increase sharply for rural communities.

The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), the national trade association representing more than 900 co-ops, and its member co-ops have been strong advocates for improving FEMA while keeping the agency intact. The FEMA Act would greatly reduce the amount of time it takes for co-ops to receive reimbursements from the agency.

Specifically, it would direct the FEMA administrator to reimburse co-ops for emergency work no later than 120 days after a request is submitted. The president would first need to determine that at least 90% of estimated costs are eligible for reimbursement, said Will Mitchell, an NRECA legislative affairs director who lobbies Congress on FEMA issues.

For longer-term projects to rebuild or replace infrastructure, the bill would require FEMA to review within 90 days a co-op's cost estimate of the work that needs to be done, Mitchell said. After that, the agency would have 30 days to disburse the funds for the project.

"That would be a huge change in the timeline," Mitchell said. "Right now, most co-ops are waiting years for reimbursement."

Another major improvement is that co-ops would be allowed to build stronger, more resilient systems in the aftermath of disasters rather than being forced by the agency to build everything back exactly as it was before.

The legislation would remove FEMA from the Department of Homeland Security and return it to its former status as an independent agency that reports directly to the president. The bill would also make FEMA a stronger, more responsive agency and help strengthen rural resilience, protect taxpayer dollars and ensure essential services are restored as quickly as possible after a natural disaster.

Sponsors from the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee introduced the legislation on July 23 — the day the House adjourned for its summer recess. The committee is expected to have hearings on the bill after Congress returns to the nation's capital in September.

The panel will then vote on whether to send it to the full House for consideration. If passed by the House, the legislation would still need to be approved by the Senate and signed into law by President Donald Trump.

FEMA is a crucial partner for electric co-ops in efforts to restore power after disaster strikes. As the FEMA Act of 2025 moves through the legislative process, NRECA and electric cooperative leaders will keep working to improve upon it for co-ops and the local communities they serve. 💡

Erin Kelly, NRECA



Golconda Shrimp Festival

SEPTEMBER
20

One day of incredible food choices, kids' activities, live music, craft vendors and more. The Golconda Shrimp Festival was named the No. 1 Food Festival in Illinois by National Geographic Traveler magazine and has become the premiere event showcasing the natural beauty of rural Pope County and the vibrant history of one of Illinois' first river towns.

Sept. 20, 2025: all day
● Main Street, Golconda
Admission: free
618-926-4924, mainstreetgolconda.org

Paws at the Pavilion

SEPTEMBER
20

Join an unforgettable evening of food, music and fun at this annual fundraiser benefiting Safe Haven, a local no-kill animal shelter.

Sept. 20, 2025: 5-8 p.m.
● Galena Territory Marina, 100 Marina Drive, Galena
Admission: \$80
815-858-2265, safehavenforpets.org



Spoon River Drive

OCTOBER
4-5

OCTOBER
11-12

The Spoon River Valley Scenic Drive is an annual fall event held on the first two weekends of October in Fulton County. This self-guided tour winds through small towns and countryside, offering visitors craft fairs, flea markets, antiques, homemade food and historical attractions.

Oct. 4-5, 11-12, 2025: 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
● Various locations in Fulton County
Admission: free
spoonriverdrive.org

Gym Bob's Jamboree Show

OCTOBER
5

This monthly Opry-style live music show with Gym Bob's Jamboree Band and singers is hosted by Mike Porter and Marsha Banning, a brother and sister duo who have opened for Loretta Lynn, Joe Diffie and Confederate Railroad, just to name a few. Featured this month is the best of classic and '90s country, as well as favorite oldies rock 'n' roll.

Oct. 5, 2025: 1-3:30 p.m.
● Gym Bob's, 44 Apostle Lane, Bible Grove
Admission: \$7
615-481-7418, GymBobs.com



LET'S GO!

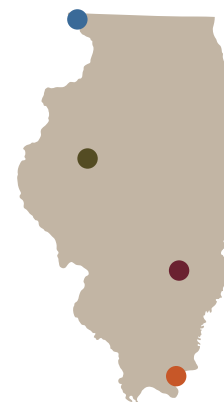
Sept. 6
Day of the Dozer
BLOOMINGTON
Kids become construction heroes for a day

Sept. 20
Pumpkin Decorating
GALENA
Get a head start on Halloween and decorate jack-o'-lanterns at the Belden School

Oct. 3-5, 10-12, 17-19
New Salem Candlelight Walk
PETERSBURG
The historic village is aglow with candle lanterns in the evenings

Oct. 11
Market Days
MT. VERNON
Final 2025 date for the flea market and vendor fair held at The Commons

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





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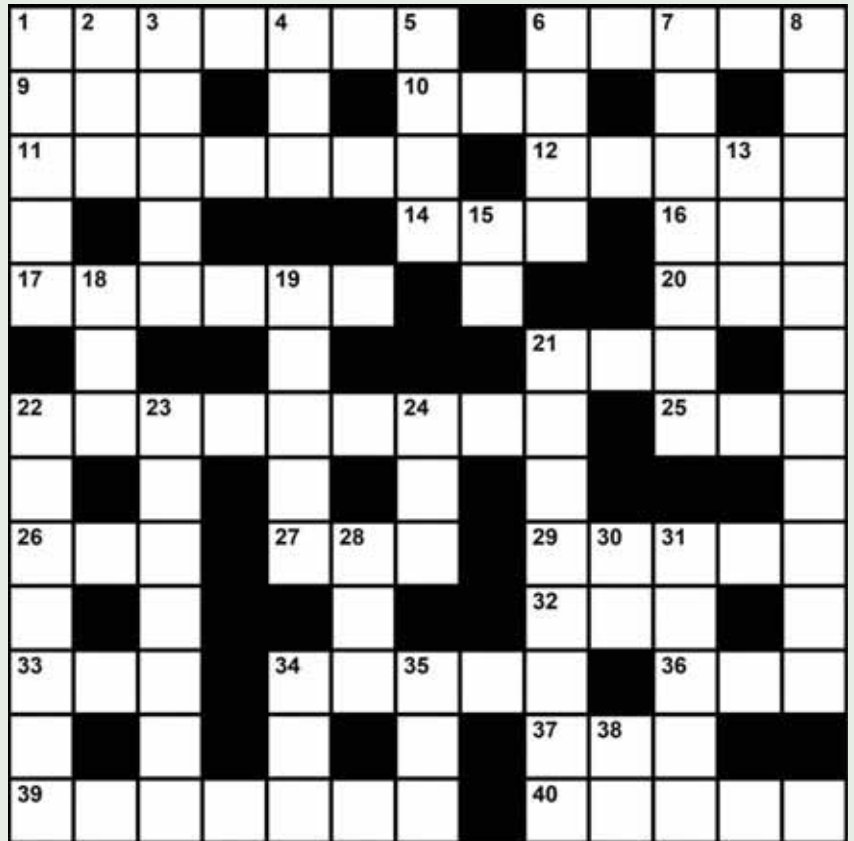
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Across

- 1 Gather ripened grains and fruits
- 6 Farmer's planted bounty
- 9 Australian slang for pickup truck
- 10 In the past
- 11 Summer and fall, for example
- 12 Gathers mature grains
- 14 Family relations
- 16 Fishing equipment
- 17 Small seed used in tahini
- 20 Academic performance metric, abbr.
- 21 Buzzing pollinator
- 22 Tall plant with yellow petals and valuable seeds
- 25 Largest source of heat and light
- 26 Orange-fleshed tuber
- 27 Just out
- 29 Landscaper's planting
- 32 Swell place
- 33 Lady sheep
- 34 Fuji or Envy fruit
- 36 Frozen water
- 37 The "L" of L.A.
- 39 Small flower bouquet
- 40 Like dessert wines

Down

- 1 Protective outer coverings of seeds
- 2 Had a snack, e.g.
- 3 Brings in the harvest
- 4 Environmental prefix
- 5 Chore
- 6 Cereal grain with kernels
- 7 Citrus fruits with thick peels
- 8 Environmentally balanced
- 13 Energy
- 15 Popular
- 18 Part of some email addresses
- 19 Cantaloupe, e.g.
- 21 _____ sprouts
- 22 Legume used for oil and protein
- 23 Statistics
- 24 Amazing!
- 28 Purported psychic ability, abbr.
- 30 Inert gas symbol
- 31 Bring up
- 34 Month marking the end of meteorological summer, abbr.
- 35 Hand over cash for
- 38 Expression of sudden pain

Solution on page 33.



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Electrical safety is always in season

Have a bountiful and safe harvest

HARVEST MEANS LONG HOURS, increased stress and tight schedules. Because of that, Safe Electricity reminds farmers that it only takes a split second for someone to come into contact with electricity. Your most seasoned worker to your least

pole. Indirect contact (coming too close to a power line) could cause electricity to arc or jump.

- Both direct and indirect contact can change electricity's path to ground. Once that path changes,

- Encourage drivers and operators to position grain augers in their lowest position or to lower truck bed boxes before moving. Be especially cautious of overhead lines when using augers in the field to load trucks on the road.

- Create loading and unloading zones away from overhead power lines.

- Post 10-foot clearance rule and "look up and look out" reminders.

Unfortunately, accidents do happen. It is also a best practice to teach workers what to do if farming equipment makes contact with electrical equipment.

If you see a hydraulic truck bed, extensions or other equipment contact a power line, utility pole or guy wire, instruct the driver to stay in the cab. Call 911 to have your electric cooperative dispatched to deenergize the power. Give instructions from 50 feet away and inform everyone else to stay back.

Know how to instruct someone to properly exit a cab if necessary due to fire. Keeping a 50-foot distance, instruct them to cross their arms close to their chest and make a solid jump out of the cab, landing on both feet. Then, the person should make deliberate hops, with feet together, hopping away as far as they can.

When people walk in an area with stray voltage, they could be exposed to two different voltages at the same time and become electricity's path to ground. This is known as step potential and is deadly.

Contact your electric cooperative about damaged or downed power lines or poles. Utility crews would much rather check out an issue than risk a potentially dangerous situation. Learn more at SafeElectricity.org.



are all at risk of becoming injured or killed due to electrical contact.

Before heading out to the fields, review overhead power line locations and height clearance with everyone working on the farm. Although harvest is filled with tight deadlines and heightened work stress, making time for safety, including electrical safety, can save lives.

To help keep those who work on your farm safe year-round, follow these electrical safety tips:

- Educate everyone that potential electrical hazards include both direct and indirect contact with an overhead power line or utility

the stray voltage can energize anything in its path, such as a truck, a tractor, an extension, the ground or a person.

- Start every workday with a safety meeting. Discuss all operations for the day and go over power line and pole locations. Emphasize safety above speed to everyone on the farm.
- Never assume years of experience on a farm means the worker understands the potential of stray voltage or other electrical hazards. No matter the level, all farm workers should be reminded of safe practices.



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.



64TH ANNUAL WORKING FARM SHOW SEPTEMBER 12, 13, 14, 2025



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Under the radar

Find hidden energy wasters in your home

OUT OF SIGHT, OUT of mind. It is easy to overlook the hidden energy users in our homes. Yet, every plugged-in device and ready-to-use

Exterior lighting

Exterior security lights, porch lights and barn lights can use more energy than needed. If they are on

can be programmed to match your pool's filtering needs, according to the Environmental Protection Agency. They can pay for themselves in two years, are quieter and can prolong the life of your pool's filtering system. You can also set your hot tub to a lower temperature when you're not using it to reduce energy use.

Appliances and electronics

Plug load is anything in your home that is plugged into an outlet. As we use more appliances and technology in our homes, plug-load energy use increases. Find what is plugged in around your home. If you aren't using it, unplug it. For computer stations and entertainment centers, consider using smart power strips. These devices sense when energy is being used and turn peripheral devices on or off as needed.

Gaming consoles

Gaming consoles are another hidden energy user. Gamers often put them in rest mode when not in use. This allows them to complete updates and reduces start-up time for the next session. It also means they are still consuming energy. Powering off between gaming sessions can save energy. Ask the gamers in your life to power off. It may require a bit more time for updates, but every kilowatt-hour counts when it comes to saving energy.

Habits

It's easy to make a habit of powering down and unplugging once you identify everything drawing power in your home. A quick check could help you save money and energy. Even small changes, like switching off unused electronics or unplugging chargers, can add up over time. 💡



PHOTO COURTESY OF MARK GILLILAND

Powering off between gaming sessions can save energy.

appliance can lead to higher electric bills. Let's see if we can find some hidden energy savings for you.

Water heaters

Your water heater could be using more energy than necessary. Storage water heaters heat water to a preset temperature. When hot water is used, cold water enters the tank, lowering the temperature, and the water is reheated to that preset level. If the water heater is set higher than needed, it wastes energy.

Most water heaters are set to 140 degrees F at the factory. The U.S. Department of Energy recommends setting the temperature to 120 F. This will save energy and reduce the risk of scalding. Do not set it to lower than 120 F to prevent bacteria development in the tank.

every night all year long, that adds up to 4,380 hours. If those lights use outdated, inefficient technology, they waste energy.

With that many hours, even a slight increase in efficiency can yield big energy savings. Switch to energy-efficient LED bulbs. If lights need to stay on, consider upgrading to motion sensor lights so you aren't drawing energy all night.

Pools and hot tubs

Pools and hot tubs can be big energy users. Since you don't see the pumps or heaters by design, it's difficult to know when they are operating and consuming energy. Pumps filter water to keep it clean and safe for swimming.

ENERGY STAR-certified pumps run at lower speeds and



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



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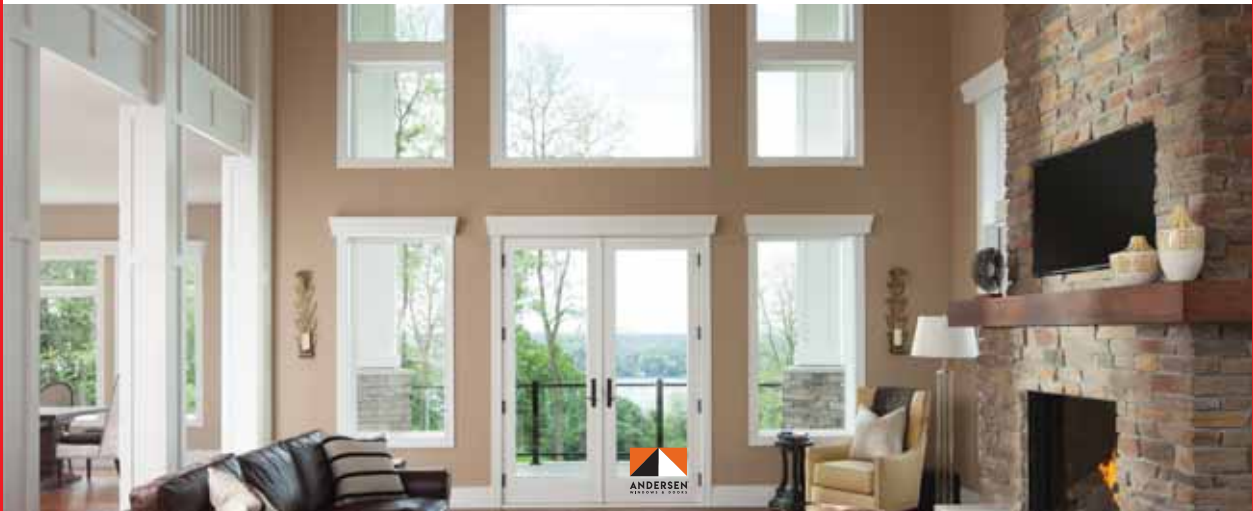
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Beware and be aware of energy scams

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES ACROSS THE country urge members to stay alert as utility-related scams continue to evolve. Fraudsters are becoming more aggressive and more convincing — using imper-

your service will be shut off within minutes. Others offer too-good-to-be-true incentives like rebates, energy audits or free equipment installations — if the member provides banking information or pays

real payment portals. Typically, the links redirect to fraudulent websites that steal sensitive data. The scammers may also encourage members to pay through untraceable methods like prepaid debit cards, mobile


apps or cryptocurrency — methods legitimate utilities never use.

One concerning trend involves scammers visiting homes unannounced, posing as utility workers conducting inspections. Without proper identification or appointment confirmation, these visits should always be treated with caution.

Education and awareness remain two of the most powerful tools in this fight. Talk with family, friends and neighbors about the warning signs of scams. Sharing information helps others stay safe and

contributes to a stronger, more connected community.

If something doesn't feel right, don't hesitate to hang up, close the message or refuse entry. Call your cooperative directly using the number listed on your monthly bill or on the official website. Member service professionals are available to assist.

Electric cooperatives were built on trust, service and community. By working together and looking out for one another, consumer-members and cooperatives alike can help expose fraud for what it is — and ensure that scammers are left in the dark. 

sonation, false urgency and digital deception to extract payments or personal information from unsuspecting individuals.

Reports of scam calls, fake energy rebate offers and phony disconnection threats have increased in recent months. These schemes often begin with a phone call, text or visit from someone claiming to represent the local electric provider. The tactics vary, but the goal is always the same: to pressure the consumer-member into acting quickly before they have time to verify the request.

Some scammers demand immediate payment, threatening that

an upfront fee. In many cases, scammers can even manipulate caller ID to appear as though the call is coming from a trusted utility number.

Electric cooperatives will never call and demand immediate payment. They will never ask for banking or account information over the phone, nor will they pressure a consumer-member to act without the opportunity to verify the situation. If someone claiming to be from your cooperative insists on urgency or payment through nontraditional means, that's a red flag.

These scams can arrive in the form of emails, text messages or QR codes designed to look like



If you suspect you've been targeted by a scammer, don't hesitate to hang up. Call your cooperative directly using the number listed on your monthly bill or on the official website.



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



Find a little peace on the prairie

By Kayla Adkins

PEOPLE IN SEARCH OF a peaceful getaway can find it on a little piece of native prairie near Murrayville, owned by Illinois Electric Cooperative Director Kevin Klein. He and his wife host two Airbnb rentals on their 23-acre property.

“It’s all native prairie restoration, except for 3 acres of native timber,” says Klein. “We have trails cut throughout for people to walk.”

The first rental, a “flat” about 50 yards from their home, was originally intended to be living quarters for their aging parents, though that did not come to fruition. Klein heard about Airbnb and decided to list it. His wife was hesitant at first.

“Why ... would anybody want to come out here? It’s out in the middle of nowhere,” he quotes her as saying. “I said that’s exactly why people would want to come here, because it’s out in the middle of nowhere. ... They want to reconnect with nature. They don’t want the typical hotel experience. We allow dogs, so dogs can run the trails with [them]. ... They get to see stars, [and] we have 100-plus species of birds that come to the property during the year.”

It turned out that Klein was right. The popularity of the venue inspired him to build a second rental, a two-story “tiny” house that has become a favorite of their guests. “It’s one unit,” he says. “You’re 15 feet up in the air on the second floor on the balcony, and you overlook the prairie. It’s really cool to see fireflies from an elevated position, rather than ground level.”

SHOW SUPPORT

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

For the past 12 years, people from all over the world have come to stay. Klein says that their Airbnb rentals are typically booked around 70% of the time, with several return guests. “We have maps of the world and of the United States, and people can put pins [marking] where they’re from,” he adds.

Reviews posted by guests list the reasons behind the location’s popularity, one of them being his wife’s complementary double chocolate chip cookies. “She makes these fantastic cookies,” says Klein. “Those are a rave ... a lot of people talk about the cookies.”

Guests also have the option to purchase honey that he harvests on the property. “It’s got a really nice flavor to it, because one of the native plants on this prairie is something called mountain mint ... the honey takes on a really light hint of mint. It’s a really good tasting honey,” Klein says.

He speaks fondly of the guests who come and stay. “People are considerate of the property and appreciative of being able to be out in the country, experience the ag environment, and [see] what native prairie looked like,” he says.

The prairie continues to inspire him as well. “I do a 60-second video every day [and] put it on a bunch of different social media platforms,” says Klein. “It’s a 60-second meditation video where people can just sit and relax and breathe.”

Peace on the prairie

airbnb.com/users/show/7261531

facebook.com/peaceontheprairiebees

Located east of Murrayville



PHOTO COURTESY OF NATIONAL STEARMAN FLY-IN

WINGS OF A BYGONE ERA

Stearmans are still flying strong

By Les O'Dell

THE MIGRATION IS AN annual event. As summer molts into autumn, these birds of flight fill the western Illinois skies just as they have for decades. While they may sport different colors, they are all the same breed. These are Stearmans, biplanes of a bygone era, arriving in Galesburg for their annual National Stearman Fly-In.

It all started in 1972 when two Stearman enthusiasts, Thomas Lowe and Jim Leahy, organized a gathering of 27 biplane pilots in the Knox County community. Over five decades, the National Stearman Fly-In has evolved into a

pilgrimage of sorts, for not only pilots of these classic airplanes, but also for other devotees of the mid-century aviation trainers.

Stearmans — officially known as the Boeing Model 75 — are dual-winged, open-cockpit aircraft developed initially to train U.S. Army Air Forces and U.S. Navy pilots before World War II. Adapted from a design by Lloyd Stearman in the early 1930s, the plane evolved into a primary trainer not only for the U.S. military but also for the Royal Canadian Air Force, as well as aviators from other nations. More than 10,000 Stearmans were built in the 1930s and 1940s.

The planes were the first trainers for military pilots, allowing them to “cut their teeth” before progressing to more advanced trainers, fighter planes and bombers. In fact, many historians attribute the biplanes’ role in enabling American wartime aviation to take off.

“They were the primary trainer to the very end of World War II and then were phased out of service very quickly,” explains enthusiast Michael Rutledge, a former military pilot and current president of the Stearman Restoration Association. “The reason so many of them exist right now is that after the war, many Stearmans were bought up by agricultural aerial applicators, and the plane formed the backbone of the American crop-dusting industry for the next 20 or 30 years, because they were so available and so rugged.”

Rutledge, a Galesburg native who now lives in Casa Grande, Ariz., says Stearmans are easy-to-fly airplanes, with a few exceptions. “Landings, takeoffs and ground handling can be challenging, but that design flaw taught aviators from all the services. It was a characteristic that had benefits.”

Another characteristic is the way the plane is flown. Stearmans feature two cockpits, one right behind the other. “Both cockpits are equipped the same way,” Rutledge explains. “With a passenger, you can fly from either the front or back cockpit, but, because of the center of gravity and to equal out the weight and balance with the fuel tank in the center section

of the top wing, if you are flying solo, you have to fly it from the rear cockpit.”

Flying one of the planes is enjoyable, says Dick Sisson, an American Airlines 737 pilot from Virden. “The open cockpit, the views, the sound of the engine and being one of the smoothest airplanes you’ll ever fly, makes it a fun,” he says.

Sisson also owns a Piper J-3 Cub vintage aircraft.

“It’s an incredible plane to fly, but if I have a choice, I almost always will pull the Stearman out.”

Rutledge agrees. “It just truly allows you to enjoy all of the sensory perceptions of flight,” he shares. “It’s slow, relatively speaking (a flying speed of about 80 knots or 100 miles per hour), so you get virtually unlimited visibility and the wind in your face.”

Fly-In board member and president of the National Stearman Foundation Philip Wolford of Abingdon remembers being introduced to Stearmans when a couple of pilots used the airstrip on his family’s farm, about 50 miles west of Peoria, as a base for aerobatic maneuver practice. He recalls being hooked on them immediately.

“It’s the colors, the noise, the smell, the look of them — it’s everything,” he says. “They’re just really, really neat airplanes.”

Thomas Hatley of Chesterfield has owned a Stearman for two decades. He calls it “a very honest airplane,” noting

“The Stearman is probably one of the most fun aircraft I’ve ever flown.”



PHOTO COURTESY OF NATIONAL STEARMAN FLY-IN



PHOTO COURTESY OF NATIONAL STEARMAN FLY-IN



the challenges of landing a tailwheel aircraft. Simultaneously, he says flying the bi-wing plane gives “a sense of pure aviation.”

A primary care and emergency medicine physician and a consumer-member of M.J.M. Electric Cooperative, he was also a naval aviator. He says of all the planes he’s flown, from trainers to jets, the Stearman ranks near the top.

“They all have their characteristics, and they’re all fun in their own way, but I think — and I think some of my pilot friends would back me up on this — the Stearman is probably one of the most fun aircraft I’ve ever flown.”

The fun swells for Hatley, Wolford and other fans of the mid-century aircraft during the annual National Stearman Fly-In held each Labor Day weekend in Galesburg. “It’s probably the largest gathering of Stearmans you’ll ever see,” Hatley says. “You see all of the different variations, the different models and the different color schemes.”

Pilots from all over the nation converge on western Illinois for what many refer to as a “family reunion.” Organizers expect as many as 100 biplanes for this year’s gathering. The 50th anniversary Fly-In in 2021 brought more than 150 Stearmans, including one from the United Kingdom. The pilot shipped his plane to Florida, reassembled it and then flew to Galesburg.

“We get them from everywhere,” Wolford comments. “We even get some from California. It takes them a week to get here, they stay for a week, and then it takes them another week to get home, because it’s not a very fast airplane.”

The Fly-In is a weeklong gathering with events ranging from seminars and aerobatic contests to mass fly-outs to nearby communities for breakfast and even a Stearman flyover as part of Galesburg’s annual Labor Day parade.

“The Fly-In is a unique event in aviation, not just in vintage aviation or for Galesburg,” Rutledge says. “Once a year, the sleepy little airport is transformed into the largest gathering of Stearman airplanes in the world, all in one spot. It’s comforting and simply a gathering of family.”

LEARN MORE

The 54th National Stearman Fly-In is set for Sept. 1-6, 2025 at the Galesburg Municipal Airport. Go to stearmanflyin.com for more information.

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It's no wonder collectors and history buffs alike clamor to get their hands on them. That is, if they can get their hands on them.

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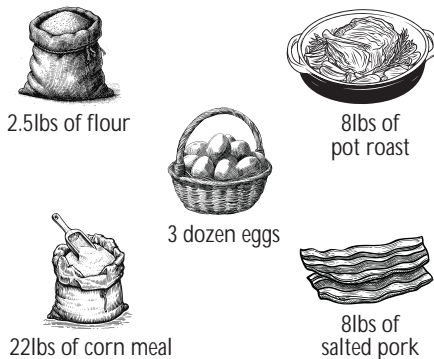
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PHOTO COURTESY OF JAMIE BIRCHFIELD PHOTOGRAPHY

Back to the **WILD**

*Rescuing, rehabilitating and releasing
wildlife in southern Illinois*

By Mary Blye Kramer

IN A SMALL OFFICE in the backyard of Bev Shofstall's Carterville home, a young woman walks in with a not-yet-weaned, orphaned raccoon. As Bev leans in to take a look, the raccoon appears more curious than frightened. Bev smiles, pronounces it healthy, and predicts it will be back in the wild in a few months.

Just outside the office, two injured box turtles are being nursed back to health, and beyond the turtles, scattered around nearly 3 acres of Bev's heavily wooded property, a couple of volunteers care for orphaned or injured animals brought in from as far as 90 miles away.

These animals include bobcats, bald eagles, young deer, raccoons, possums, red foxes, rabbits, six species of hawks, groundhogs and three species of owls. A large stock tank holds the occasional otter or weasel. At the height of the birthing season, she and her volunteers usually care for around 125 animals simultaneously.

Bev has always loved animals. "I was a farm girl in Minnesota," she says. "It wasn't unusual for us to have a baby pig or a lamb behind the stove, bringing them in from the cold weather." Years later, working as a technician in a veterinarian clinic, she helped treat injured wild animals that people brought in, but sometimes the clinic was too busy to care for them.



PHOTO COURTESY OF FREE AGAIN WILDLIFE REHABILITATION

Top: A volunteer feeds a baby deer.

Above: Free Again resident short-eared owl Amelia came to the animal rescue years ago with a broken wing, but it was soon discovered she had West Nile virus, which caused neurological damage that left her unable to fly.

Right: Coyotes play a vital part in ecosystems by controlling small rodents.

Far right: Sleeping baby raccoon

That broke Bev's heart and she began taking them home, starting with a hawk, then a litter of possums. By year five, she was taking care of around 150 animals in the back of her property. She decided to quit her job at the veterinarian clinic, where she'd worked for 20 years, to care for the animals full-time.

Free Again, Bev's nonprofit rehabilitation center located in Carterville on Egyptian Electric Cooperative Association lines, has helped wildlife since 1984. Approximately 600 animals are dropped off every year during spring and summer.

The center receives no financial help from any government agency. With the aid of donations from the public, Bev pays for X-rays, food, medical supplies and material for enclosures, while a couple of local veterinarians donate their facilities and time whenever they can.

Around 15 volunteers regularly help out — one or two per day — and her husband Jim pitches in by repairing structures and feeding the birds in the evening, but the bulk of the work falls on Bev.

With the aid of a cane and moving slowly, she works seven days a week and 12 to 14 hours a day during the spring and summer, when the bulk of injured and orphaned animals are brought in.

Bev cautions that many animals that appear to be orphaned are not. "The mother is simply away getting food," she says. Nor is it too late to return an animal if you've already captured it.

"People worry that once they've touched a baby animal, the mother will detect a human smell and abandon the babies," she explains, "but that isn't true. Deer pick up human odor all the time. They drink out of ponds that humans have swum in and eat grass we've walked on. Plus, the maternal instinct is extremely strong ... mothers almost never abandon their young."

Baby animals do get orphaned, though. Young squirrels may lose their mothers when people lob off branches or cut down trees during nesting season. Domestic animals chase and kill many types of wild animals. They can also be injured in traps or run over by cars.

By removing trees or limbs in autumn or early winter (rather than spring and summer's nesting season), training your pets to respond to your commands to heel and sit when another animal crosses its path, keeping your cats at home at night, and simply driving more slowly and attentively, people could help reduce the number of wild animals injured each day, softening the workload for Bev and other volunteers.

Bev says one of the most rewarding parts of her work is seeing an animal released back into the wild. It is, however, also one of the most challenging aspects. For one thing, it's illegal to release a wild animal on public property, so Bev must coordinate an animal's release with owners of private property.

Complicating the situation, only two or three animals can be released in a particular area at one time due to its "caring capacity" — a land's ability to support a certain number of animals — and an animal needs to be released near where it was originally found.

Staying alive is a challenge for any animal in the wild, but returning to its original territory gives it a better chance of survival as it knows the location of food sources and has established something of a truce with competitors.

About 30 miles from Free Again, in Thompsonville, Pam Sundeen runs another wildlife rehab center called Second Nature, which is located on SouthEastern Illinois Electric Cooperative lines.

"The maternal instinct is extremely strong ... mothers almost never abandon their young."





PHOTO COURTESY OF SECOND NATURE WILDLIFE REHABILITATION



PHOTO COURTESY OF FREE AGAIN WILDLIFE REHABILITATION

Left: A raccoon peeks out of a hole.

Above: A young red fox enjoys some down time in the shade on a warm sunny day.

Like Bev, Pam has always loved animals. She received her first horse when she was 2 years old, and she remembers always having bunnies around the house. In high school, she raised her first raccoon, and it's the animal she now loves best. "Raccoons are extremely smart and very affectionate," she says.

At any given time, Pam cares for about 50 animals with the help of some friends, so she has to assess over the phone whether she can accept additional animals. If not, she refers people to another wildlife center, often Free Again. In addition to the heavy workload of animal rehab, Pam focuses on education. She speaks at libraries, Boy and Girl Scout events, and she opens up her center for field trips, hoping children will connect with and develop compassion for wild animals.

During events, Pam walks the children around the premises and tells them how the animals were injured, what kind of food each animal eats, and how and when she expects to release them back into the wild.

Each enclosure contains a pool and den house, as well as a tire or swing for play. Because she can't risk a child being bitten, and because she wants to retain an animal's natural fear of humans, she doesn't allow children to touch any of the animals. To make up for that, she developed a petting area.

There, she keeps pygmy goats named Brownie, Grace and Mitzi, a 200-pound potbelly pig which lolls around in a big mudhole, and Merlin the donkey, who knows its name and sticks its head out of the lean-to when she calls him.

Pam feels passionate about caring for wild animals that have been injured or orphaned. While she would like a perfect world where animals never have to be brought in for rehab, she "would miss taking care of them."

She is also nearly fearless when it comes to the creatures. A baby possum hisses and bares its teeth when she pulls it

from its cage, but she's only been bitten once in nearly 20 years, and that was during a class demonstration.

Pam wants wild animals to maintain a healthy level of fear. She points out a couple of raccoons who stay huddled at the back of a wire cage when she flips open the door. "These two aren't social," she explains, "and that's good. They'll be returned to the wild in a couple of days — they need that fear."

With 43 acres, Pam can release animals on her own property, although that's still limited due not only to "caring capacity," but also out of consideration for her neighbors. She gets emotional when she talks about releasing animals.

"It's like sending your child off to college," she says. "They run off and climb a tree, return to touch you, then they're gone. I get in the car and cry all the way home."

Like Bev, Pam emphasizes the importance of returning animals close to the area where they were found, but she adds that it's also important to find a wooded area where hunting isn't allowed (some people allow hunting on private property) that offers nut trees and a water source.

She is also emphatic about making certain a baby animal is truly orphaned before capturing it. "If you aren't certain, then call one of us," she suggests, referring to the people who volunteer at rehab centers. "Don't rush to feed a baby bird. It needs to be hungry so it will call for its mother."

She believes it's usually best to let nature care for itself whenever possible. "If a bird falls out of a nest, leave it alone and leave the vicinity so the mother will come for it," she says. "Rehab centers can care for babies, but not as good as mom."

When asked why they do this work, both Bev and Pam give similar answers. They explain that humans cause a great deal of harm to wild animals, and they are trying to help balance the equation. ♡

LEARN MORE

Free Again: Free Again Wildlife Rehabilitation on Facebook or freeagainwildlife.org

Second Nature: Second Nature Wildlife Rehabilitation on Facebook

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Dockside dining on Lake Shelbyville

*NorthEnd Pub & Grill serves
up lakeside eats*

By Lisa Cherry

ACCESSIBLE BY LAND OR water, NorthEnd Pub & Grill, located in Sullivan on Coles-Moultrie Electric Cooperative lines, welcomes people to kick back in its low-key atmosphere and enjoy a meal with family or friends lakeside. The restaurant, owned by Will and Tasha Bates, even offers a dial-a-ride service to those coming by land that provides easy transport to the dock where the eatery is located.

Once at the dock, diners have the option of cooling off inside or taking in the fresh air and sunshine at one of the restaurant's outdoor tables. The menu offers a wide range of appetizers, pizza, tacos, salads, sides and desserts, and children have multiple options as well. Adult guests can also partake in NorthEnd's signature and frozen drinks, mimosas (and "bro-mosas"), or margarita and mojito flights.

Drew Gipson, who manages the business alongside his brother Kyle, says that appetizers, smashburgers and wraps are among the restaurant's big sellers. "The menu here is simple and basic," says Gipson. "We use high-quality ingredients and just try to serve good food that people in this area like."

He emphasizes that families are welcome. "If you look out on boats, you barely see [just] a single person. It's a group of people," he adds. "Hosting is important to us down here, [as well as] making sure people see this more as an experience and a destination."

In addition to food, NorthEnd partners with another of the Bates' businesses, 32 Marine, to offer boat rentals and fuel, ice, packaged beer, and "all that fun stuff," says Gipson. "Convenience is the goal."

When the Bates bought the business, previously known as Skeeters, they rebranded and brought on the brothers to oversee operations. Formerly, Drew had been general manager of Dirty's Bar & Grill in Charleston, and Kyle was front house manager at Stadium Grill in Mattoon. Drew said the move was a good one for him.





Opposite: Fish tacos, cheese curds and pulled pork sandwich
Top: Dockside seating
Left: Restaurant Manager Drew Gipson

“The tranquility of the place, coming down the dock before it gets busy is nice, just a breath of fresh air,” he explains. “The clientele is a lot more laidback. [They’re] here to have a good time and hang out. It’s not that 15-minute lunch crowd that [has] to get out of here. ... As a restaurant manager, what a great customer base.”

Gipson says that the restaurant serves 500 to 600 people on weekends. The pulled pork, rubbed and smoked in-house and slow-cooked for 16 hours, is a favorite. Fish tacos, with fried cod, boom boom sauce, pineapple pico and green chiles, are also popular.

“We offer three kinds of cheese curds, and all three of them sell very well,” he adds. “We have an original, a garlic and a jalapeno, so it kind of catches whatever your flavor is. And who doesn’t like cheese?”

He recommends the NorthEnd Nachos if people are looking for a big appetizer. “The nachos here are huge, and delicious,” says Gipson. Weekly food specials, like their recent chicken parmesan sandwich with caprese salad and blackened tilapia, and drink specials are also on tap.

On Sundays, guests can partake of a breakfast buffet from 9-11:30 a.m. “It’s got all the good vittles on it,” says Gipson, including bacon, sausage, eggs, biscuits and gravy, pancakes, mini waffles and French toast sticks. Separate breakfast plates are also available, like BLTs and the NorthEnd omelette, with smoked Gouda, pulled pork, red onion and potatoes.

Weekly entertainment helps make the dock a destination. “We have live music down here almost every weekend,” says Gipson. “We’ve [also] been doing some paint and sips this year. [We’re] trying to add more entertainment value to the area.”

The restaurant is a plus for campers at the nearby campground. “[We have] a lot of regulars with a campground being right up the hill. A lot of the campers, a lot of the boat slip owners are here multiple times a weekend, hanging out, keeping us on our toes,” Gipson laughs. “Regulars pay the bills, I always say. That comfort level with the guest is always pleasant.”

Like their regulars, most of the staff have been there for multiple seasons. “It’s a unique place to work, only being open Thursday through Sunday. It’s a pretty easy sell,” he says. “It’s a really friendly staff, a lot of high school and college-age kids with a few middle-aged people like me.”

In addition to NorthEnd, the Bates own Shore House Bar & Grill on Clinton Lake and are preparing to open a new restaurant in Mattoon called Tap 45, which will feature axe throwing.

NorthEnd is open seasonally from around Mother’s Day until the week after Labor Day, although some years management will opt to stay open longer. Though it’s regularly open four days a week, the restaurant also opens for big lake holidays, like the Fourth of July.

Gipson welcomes regulars and encourages newcomers to give the restaurant a try. “Watching the boats coming in and out, it’s always a cool thing to see, very different from anywhere else,” he says. 📍

LET’S EAT!

NorthEnd Pub & Grill

1158 IL-32, Sullivan

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HOURS

Thu-Sat: 11 a.m.-11 p.m.

Sun: 9 a.m.-9 p.m.

Open seasonally



Just peachy

TO ME, THERE'S NOTHING better than a fresh, locally grown peach in the summer months, and it is difficult for me to pass a peach stand along the road. While my favorite way to eat them is to peel the skin and cut them into slices, I cannot resist a peach dessert. So, if you are anything like me, pick up a peck of peaches, eat a few and enjoy these recipes. 💡

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



Mom's Peach Pie ▲

Submitted by Jill McLaughlin, Corn Belt Energy Corporation

Servings: 8

- | | |
|------------------------------|--|
| 3/4 cup sugar | 5 cups peaches, peeled and sliced |
| 3 tablespoons flour | 2 tablespoons butter |
| 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon | 2 prepared pie crusts |

Preheat oven to 375 F. Combine sugar, flour and cinnamon. Mix with peaches. Line a 9-inch pie pan with crust. Pour peaches into pan. Dot top with butter. Add top crust, crimp edges and cut vents into the top. Bake for 45-50 minutes.

Peach Bread Pudding

Submitted by Nancy K. Boone, Adams Electric Cooperative

Servings: 12-16

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| 8 cups dried bread cubes* | 1 cup vanilla yogurt |
| 3 eggs | 1 cup whole milk |
| 3 tablespoons butter, melted | 2 cups fresh peaches, peeled and diced |
| 2 cups sugar | 1/2 cup pecans, chopped |

Preheat oven to 350 F. Spray or butter a 13X9-inch baking pan. In a large bowl, beat eggs. Add melted butter, sugar, yogurt and milk and beat until well blended. Add the bread cubes and soak for 30 minutes. Fold in the peaches. Pour into the prepared baking pan. Cover with aluminum foil and bake for 20 minutes. Uncover and sprinkle the chopped pecans over the top. Return the pan to the oven uncovered for another 20-25 minutes or until golden brown. Cool and serve with vanilla ice cream. ***Note:** Try using a sweet bread like brioche or challah. If fresh, cut into cubes and let dry out on a rimmed baking sheet for a few hours.



Peach Custard Bars

Submitted by Jane Painter, Southern Illinois Electric Cooperative

Servings: 12-15

Crust:

- 1-1/2 cups flour
- 3/4 cup butter, softened
- 1/2 cup powdered sugar

Filling:

- 2 eggs, plus 1 egg yolk
- 1 cup sugar

- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/3 cup flour
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1/2 cup pecans, chopped
- 3 cups peaches, peeled and sliced

Preheat oven to 350 F. Mix together the flour and powdered sugar in the bottom of a 9X13-inch baking dish, then mix in the softened butter until well blended and a dough forms. Press dough in the bottom of the pan and 1 inch up the sides. Bake for 15 minutes. In a large mixing bowl, beat together the eggs, sugar, vanilla, salt, baking powder, flour and lemon juice. Fold in peaches and pecans. Pour filling over the baked crust and return to the oven for 35 minutes more. Top will be light golden brown and set in the center. **Note:** Replace the peaches with any fresh fruit in season.

Peaches "by Jiminy"

Submitted by Carol Baily, Macomb

Servings: 9

- 1-3/4 cup flour
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/2 cup butter
- 5 peaches, peeled and halved (9 halves needed)

- 1 cup sugar
- 1 short teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 large dash nutmeg
- 2 egg yolks or 1 whole egg, slightly beaten
- 1 cup cream or milk

Preheat oven to 400 F. Mix flour, 2 tablespoons sugar, salt and baking powder in a bowl. Cut in butter as for a pie crust. When thoroughly mixed, dump into a 9-inch cake pan and press on the bottom and up the sides about 1 inch. Cover the bottom of the crust with peaches, cut side down. Mix 1 cup sugar, cinnamon and nutmeg and sprinkle over the peaches. Bake for 15 minutes. Mix egg yolks with the cream/milk. When baking is done, remove from the oven and pour egg mixture over the top. Continue baking for 30 minutes. Serve warm with ice cream or half and half.



◀ Mom's Peach Cobbler

Submitted by Mary Kuhn, Norris Electric Cooperative

Servings: 12-15

- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1/4 cup brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- 1 cup water
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- 2 cups peaches, peeled and sliced
- 1 cup flour
- 1/2 cup sugar

- 1-1/2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup milk
- 1/4 cup butter, softened
- 1 teaspoon almond extract
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon nutmeg

Preheat oven to 375 F. Combine 1/4 cup sugar, brown sugar, cornstarch and water in a saucepan. Blend well and cook over medium heat, stirring constantly until thick. Add lemon juice and peaches into mixture. Stir and pour into a 9X13-inch baking dish. For the topping, sift together flour, 1/2 cup sugar, baking powder and salt. Add milk, butter and almond extract. Beat until smooth and spoon over fruit. Mix 2 tablespoons sugar and 1/2 teaspoon nutmeg and sprinkle over the top. Bake for 40 minutes. Enjoy with ice cream.

From fresh to forever

Drying flowers from your garden

YOUR GARDEN'S BLOOMS MAY fade with the cool fall temperatures, but their beauty doesn't have to disappear. Capture the essence of your flowers and extend it into the cooler months by preserving blossoms and foliage. Let your garden live on this fall.

Don't be afraid to be picky — select only vibrant blooms free from blemishes or damage. Avoid harvesting at times when dew or rain-drops are on the plants, as this is just added moisture that increases drying time. A little care during harvest means longer-lasting beauty when

beautifully and offer lasting charm in your arrangements.

Seed pods, sculptural twigs, pinecones, vibrant berries and the feathery tufts of ornamental grasses all bring unique shapes and earthy tones to your dried arrangements. These unexpected elements add depth and texture, making your creations truly one-of-a-kind.

There are several ways to preserve plants — air drying, pressing and using drying agents — but air drying is the easiest and most accessible method. Start by removing the leaves from the stems and bundling small groups with string or rubber bands. Hang them upside down in a warm, dark space with good air circulation to prevent mold growth.

The upside-down position helps keep stems straight and flowers looking as they did in full bloom. In about two weeks (depending on the plant's moisture level and the room's temperature), the flowers will be stiff and dry to the touch. At this stage, the preserved botanicals are ready to be used.

Pressing flowers preserves the color and form of flowers and leaves artistically. Flat or single flowers like pansies, daisies and petunias, as well as ferns and tree leaves, all retain their shape well when preserved this way. Place your plant materials between sheets of newspaper and apply consistent pressure with a heavy object, like a stack of books.

The leaves typically dry within a week, while flowers may take two to three weeks depending on their thickness and moisture. Once dried, these pressed pieces are perfect for creating botanical keepsakes such as handmade bookmarks, greeting cards or even artfully framed arrangements that bring a bit of nature indoors. 💡



Drying flowers has deep roots. Colonial Americans embraced the art to brighten their homes through winter. Today, you can continue this tradition by bringing nature indoors with lovely, long-lasting creations. Dried flowers and foliage from your garden can be used to create a rustic wreath, fragrant potpourri, a delicate vase display or handmade gifts.

Drying flowers is a simple and budget-friendly craft that's accessible to everyone. You can gather materials year-round during your time spent outdoors, turning everyday nature walks into mini treasure hunts. For best results, harvest flowers in the early afternoon when their moisture content is at its lowest.

those blossoms transition from garden to keepsake.

Everlasting flowers like strawflower, gomphrena, statice, celosia and yarrow have dry, paper-like blooms and are easily preserved. Lavender, liatris, marigolds and zinnias also make great dried flowers. Blooms from the shrubs of hydrangea, roses and peonies are showstoppers even when dried.

Nearly all types of foliage can be dried and preserved — just steer clear of leaves that are thick and succulent, as they tend to retain too much moisture and resist the drying process. For best results, select foliage that's more delicate or papery in texture. These hold up



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



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