

THE *Southwestern*

A SOUTHWESTERN ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE MEMBER MAGAZINE

APRIL 2025 • VOLUME 77 • ISSUE 4



Exploring the TreeHouse

WILDLIFE CENTER TOUTS
EDUCATION, REHABILITATION

BOARD
NOMINATIONS

GRAIN BIN
SAFETY

SMARTHUB

Cogeneration

CALL BEFORE YOU INSTALL

DIGGING SAFELY

CO-OP KITCHEN

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

04 News & Notes

April showers bring May flowers, but they also bring out the umbrellas. Find the one we've hidden in our pages, and you could win a \$25 bill credit.

06 Election 2025

Interested in running for a seat on Southwestern Electric's board of directors? Here's what you need to know.

08 Grain Bin Safety

Thinking about building a grain bin? A little bit of planning can prevent a lot of future health and safety concerns.

10 Cogeneration

If you're considering going solar, make sure you have the whole story. Call us first and we'll shine a light on your cogeneration questions.

14 Energy & Efficiency

More than simply a new account management portal, SmartHub offers tools and information that can help you save time and money. Read on to learn more.

16 Health & Safety

Eyeing that landscaping project now that the weather is warmer? Call JULIE before you dig.

18 Out & About

True to its name, the TreeHouse Wildlife Center is hidden among the trees. Like any hidden treasure, though, the reward is worth the trip.

20 Who-What-Where

What's better than sharing your solutions to one of our puzzles? Sharing your solutions to two of our puzzles!



525 U.S. Route 40, Greenville, IL 62246.
Phone: (800) 637-8667. Office Hours:
Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Visit us on the Web at www.sweci.com.

Board of Directors

Jerry Gaffner, President Greenville
Jared Stine, Vice President..... St. Elmo
Annette Hartlieb, Secretary Vandalia
Sandy Grapperhaus, Treasurer Collinsville
William "Bill" Jennings Alhambra
Brad Lurkins Greenville
Ann Schwarm Loogootee
Marvin Warner Pocahontas
Ted Willman Greenville

CEO

Bobby Williams Chief Executive Officer

The Southwestern

Joe Richardson Editor
e-mail: joe.richardson@sweci.com
Mike Barns Art Director
e-mail: mike.barns@sweci.com
Nathan Grimm Media Specialist
e-mail: nathan.grimm@sweci.com

Satellite Locations:

St. Jacob Office
10031 Ellis Road, St. Jacob, IL 62281

St. Elmo Distribution Center
2117 East 1850 Avenue, St. Elmo, IL 62458

Southwestern Electric Cooperative reserves the right to re-print member comments and correspondence in its cooperative educational and promotional materials.

The Southwestern (USPS 612-500) is published monthly by Southwestern Electric Cooperative, Inc. Periodical postage paid at Greenville, IL. Subscriptions cost \$10.67 per year. Comments or questions regarding material in this publication may be mailed to Joe Richardson, editor of The Southwestern, c/o Southwestern Electric Cooperative, Inc., 525 US Route 40, Greenville, IL 62246, or e-mailed to joe.richardson@sweci.com.

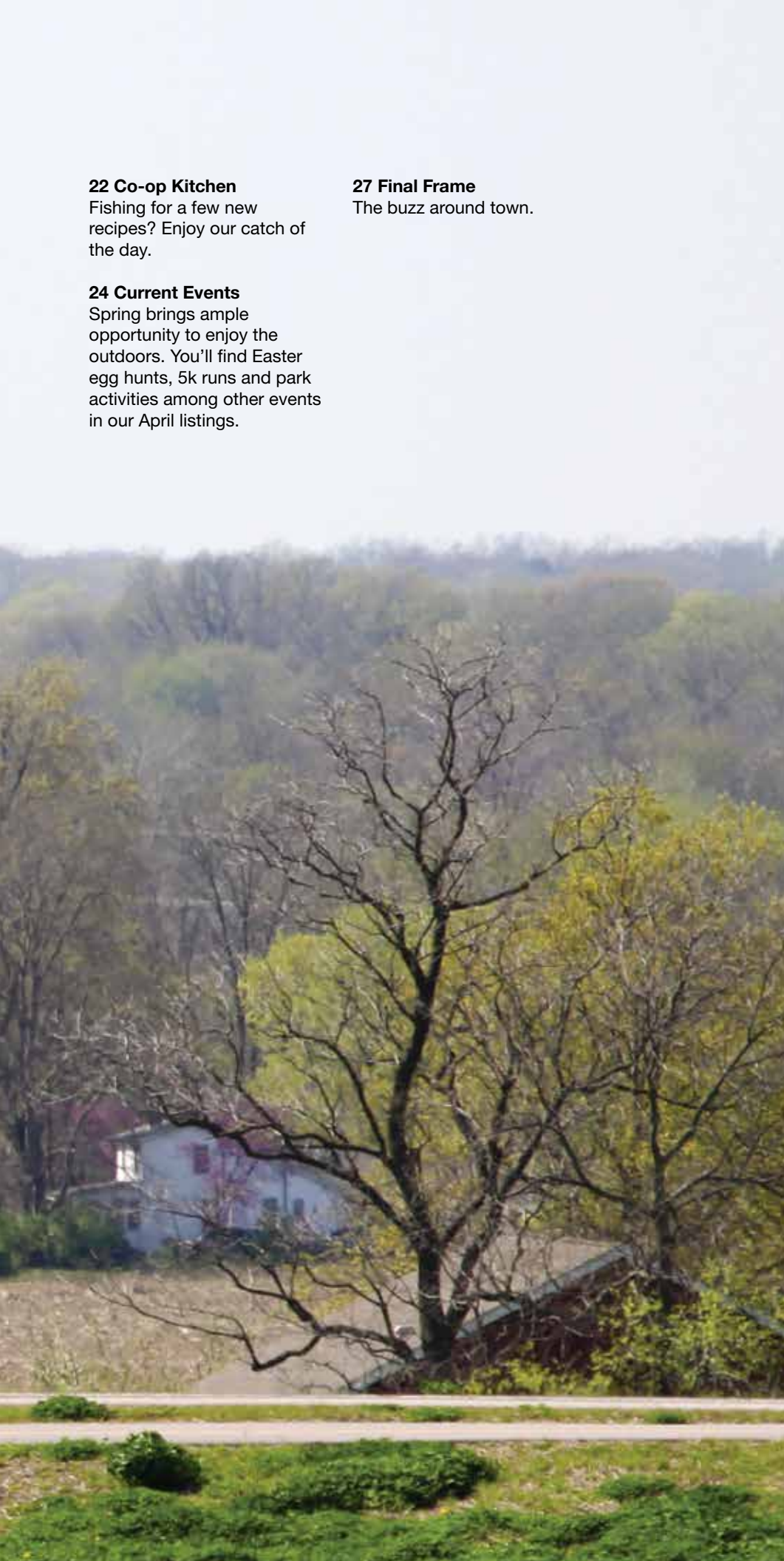
Postmaster: Send address corrections to The Southwestern, 525 U.S. Route 40, Greenville, IL 62246.

Apple and the Apple logo are trademarks of Apple Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries. App Store is a service mark of Apple Inc. Android, Google Play and the Google Play logo are trademarks of Google Inc.

22 Co-op Kitchen
Fishing for a few new recipes? Enjoy our catch of the day.

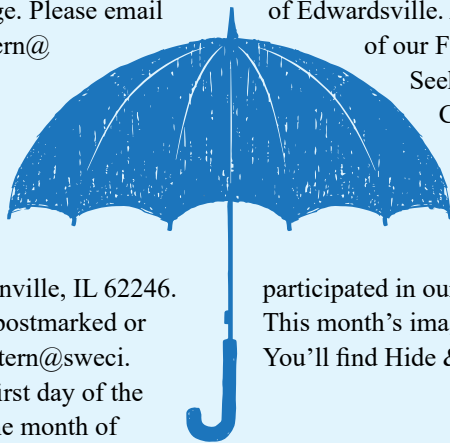
24 Current Events
Spring brings ample opportunity to enjoy the outdoors. You'll find Easter egg hunts, 5k runs and park activities among other events in our April listings.

27 Final Frame
The buzz around town.



Reader Contest

We've hidden an image of an umbrella in your magazine. Your job is to find it. The actual image may be larger or smaller than what you see below. We may change the color or reverse or alter the image we've hidden to make the contest more challenging. If you find the umbrella, email us or send a postcard with your name, address, phone number, and the page number where you found the image. Please email us at thesouthwestern@sweci.com or send your postcard to The Southwestern Magazine, Southwestern Electric Cooperative, 525 US Route 40, Greenville, IL 62246. Entries must be postmarked or in our thesouthwestern@sweci.com inbox by the first day of the month following the month of



publication. For our April contest, we'll need your entries in our inbox or postmarked by May 1, 2025.

We'll choose one winner in a random drawing. Our winner will receive a \$25 credit on an upcoming electric bill. We'll publish the name of this month's contest winner in the June issue of The Southwestern.

FEBRUARY WINNER

Congratulations to Carmen Green of Edwardsville. As the winner of our February Hide & Seek contest drawing, Carmen will receive a \$25 credit on an upcoming electric bill. Thank you to everyone who participated in our February contest. This month's image appears at left. You'll find Hide & Seek rules below.

RULES TO PLAY BY

- One entry per membership per month.
- A membership can only win once per calendar year.
- No phone calls, texts, social media posts, walk-in traffic, carrier pigeons, singing telegrams or other clever means of communication that may occur to you.
- Please respond *only* by emailing us at thesouthwestern@sweci.com or by sending a postcard to The Southwestern Magazine, Southwestern Electric Cooperative, 525 US Route 40, Greenville, IL 62246.
- Entries submitted by other methods will be disqualified.
- Entries emailed to other Southwestern Electric email addresses will be disqualified, deleted, then disqualified again, just to be safe.
- Entries mailed to other departments or included with other correspondence will likely never find their way to the editor. If they do, they'll be disqualified. Also, he'll add you to his list of people who can't follow instructions. It's a long (and growing) list and not one you care to be part of.
- April contest entries must be in our inbox or postmarked by May 1.
- We'll never hide the image on the front or back cover or on the page where we list the rules.

ON THE COVER

Looking for an outdoor adventure? You'll encounter a bevy of beasts, including bobcats, coyotes, vultures and eagles at TreeHouse



Wildlife Center in Dow, Ill. The center is dedicated to the rescue, rehabilitation and release of native wildlife, and the promotion of environmental awareness. See our story on page 15.

CO-OP REMINDERS

April 14 Payment processing systems will be unavailable from midnight to 4 a.m., while we perform system maintenance. No payments will be processed during this time. We will resume processing payments at 4:01 a.m.

April 18 Offices closed for Good Friday.



FIND US ON SOCIAL MEDIA



For the latest news and notes, follow us on Facebook and x (formerly Twitter). You'll find us at facebook.com/SWECI and x.com/sweci. Search for Southwestern Electric on YouTube and Instagram. You can listen to our podcast, WireSide Chat, on Apple Music, Spotify, Audible and anywhere podcasts are found.

Illinois Electric Co-op Trade Association Offers \$2,000 Lineworker Scholarship

The Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives (AIEC), Southwestern's statewide trade association, is encouraging students of Southwestern Electric Cooperative members to apply for the LaVern and Nola McEntire Memorial Lineworker's Scholarship. The \$2,000 scholarship will help pay for costs to attend the lineworker's school conducted by the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives (AIEC) in conjunction with Lincoln Land Community College, Springfield, Ill.

To be eligible for the LaVern and Nola McEntire Memorial Lineworker's Scholarship, a student must be related to an electric cooperative employee or

director in Illinois, the son or daughter of an electric cooperative member in Illinois, currently be enrolled in the Lincoln Land lineworker's school, or have served or be serving in the U.S. armed forces or National Guard.

The scholarship is awarded based on an essay, a biographical statement, references, and a recommendation. Applications must be submitted online or postmarked by April 30, 2025.

You'll find full eligibility requirements and application instructions for the LaVern and Nola McEntire Memorial Lineworker's Scholarship at <https://aiec.coop/lavern-and-nola-lineworkers-scholarship>.



Co-op Offers Rebates for High Efficiency Heat Pumps, Electric Water Heaters, Smart Thermostats



Our rebate program will help you save money on the replacement or new installation of air source heat pumps, geothermal systems, electric water heaters and smart thermostats.

Members are eligible for one rebate per category per year. All rebates will be applied as a bill credit upon receiving the completed rebate application and proof of purchase.

Rebate forms are available on our website at sweci.com. You can email your completed application and proof of purchase to julie.lowe@sweci.com, or mail it to: Julie Lowe, 525 US Route 40, Greenville, IL 62246. You're also welcome to drop off your materials at our Greenville office.



HAVE QUESTIONS?

Call Julie Lowe at (800) 637-8667
or email her at julie.lowe@sweci.com.

Board Candidate Nominations

Filing Deadline: May 22

As a not-for-profit cooperative, Southwestern Electric is both owned and governed by its members — the consumers who receive their electricity from the co-op. A board of directors, consisting of nine members democratically elected by their peers, is responsible for overseeing the general direction and financial stability of the organization.

The cooperative's service territory is divided into three voting districts. Three of the nine board seats — one per voting district — are open for election each year. District I encompasses the co-op's territory in Macoupin, Madison and St. Clair counties; District II includes Bond, Clinton and Montgomery counties; and District III covers Clay, Effingham, Fayette, Marion and Shelby counties. The three directors whose terms expire in 2025 are Sandy Grapperhaus in District I, Ted Willman in District II, and Ann Schwarm in District III.

Potential board candidates are advised to begin their preparations for the 2025 election soon. The names, addresses, and telephone numbers of the 2025 Nominations Committee will be published in the May issue of *The Southwestern*.

Any Southwestern Electric member interested in running for a seat on the board, or who would like to submit another member's name for consideration, must notify a Nominations Committee member from the appropriate district prior to 4:30 p.m. on Thursday, May 22.

If the nomination deadline is missed, members may also file for candidacy

Any Southwestern Electric member interested in running for a seat on the board, or who would like to submit another member's name for consideration, must notify a Nominations Committee member from the appropriate district prior to 4:30 p.m. on Thursday, May 22.

by petition. Such a petition, bearing the names, addresses and signatures of at least 15 Southwestern Electric Cooperative members, must be filed at the co-op's headquarters by Monday, June 23. Any candidate who doesn't file by June 23, 2025 will not be eligible to run for election until 2026.

All members 18 years of age or older and in good financial standing with the co-op are eligible to serve on the board of directors, so long as they meet the qualifications set forth in Section 5(B) of the bylaws. The relevant sections of the cooperative's bylaws are reprinted on the next page for your reference.

The results of the 2025 board election will be announced at Southwestern Electric's 87th Annual Meeting of Members, which will take place on Saturday, September 6. Each director will be elected to serve a three-year term beginning on September 6 and ending on the date of the 2028 Annual Meeting.

Questions about board service and the election process should be directed to Susan File, Southwestern Electric Cooperative's vice president of member services. She may be reached by telephone at (800) 637-8667, or by e-mail at susan.file@sweci.com.

SOUTHWESTERN ELECTRIC 2025

Verify your voting eligibility today. In a joint membership, either person who signed the membership application may vote. With an individual membership, voting rights are granted solely to the person who signed the application.

Names of Nominations Committee members appear in the May issue of *The Southwestern*.

Board candidates should express their interest in running for a seat on the board by contacting a Nominations Committee member from the appropriate district by 4:30 p.m., Thursday, May 22.

Board candidates who missed the nomination deadline may file for candidacy by petition. The petition for candidacy, with required signatures and residency information, must be filed by June 23.

Candidates for the Board of Directors: Qualification & Nomination Guidelines

Section 5 (B): Qualifications

To be eligible to become or remain a Director of the Cooperative, such person:

1. Shall not be a Close Relative of an incumbent Director;
2. Shall not be an employee or agent of the Cooperative;
3. Shall not be, directly or indirectly, employed by or financially interested in a competing enterprise, business selling electric energy or supplies to the Cooperative, or a business primarily engaged in selling electrical or plumbing appliances, fixtures or supplies to, among others, the Members of the Cooperative;
4. Shall not be, directly or indirectly, interested in any contract, permit, franchise or other similar agreement or authorization to which the Cooperative is or may be a party;
5. Shall be a Member in good standing with the Cooperative and receiving energy or service from the Cooperative at his primary place of abode;
6. Shall be a Natural Person;
7. Shall be at least eighteen (18) years of age; provided, however, that a duly elected officer or duly appointed agent of any Member which is not a Natural Person shall be exempt from the qualifications stated in Section 5(B)(6) and Section 5(B)(7) if such Member is in good standing with the Cooperative and receiving energy or service from the Cooperative.

Section 4 (D): Election of Directors

At each annual meeting of the Members of the Cooperative, Directors shall be elected by secret written ballot cast (except as otherwise provided in this section) by the Members present at such annual meeting and qualified to vote under the terms and conditions of the Bylaws. Such election shall be conducted as follows:

1. Appointment of Nominations Committee: The Board of Directors shall appoint, not less than one hundred fifteen (115) nor more than one hundred forty-five (145) days prior to the date of the annual meeting of the Members of the Cooperative, a Nominations Committee which shall consist of nine (9) Natural Persons, three

from each Directorate District. Members of the Nominations Committee shall not be employees, agents, officers, or Directors of the Cooperative, shall not be known candidates for Director, and shall not be Close Relatives of employees, agents, officers, Directors of the Cooperative, or known candidates for Director.

2. Candidates Nominated by Nominations Committee: On or before eighty-five (85) days prior to the annual meeting of the Members of the Cooperative, the Nominations Committee shall:
 - a. Nominate as many Natural Persons who meet the qualifications stated in Section 5B of these Bylaws as the Nominating Committee deems desirable to be candidates for election to the Board of Directors; and,
 - b. Post a list of the names of such Natural Persons so nominated by the Nominations Committee at the principal place of business of the Cooperative.

3. Candidates Nominated by Petition: In addition to those candidates named by the Nominations Committee, any fifteen (15) or more Members of the Cooperative may nominate such other Natural Persons as candidates for election to the Board of Directors by filing with the Secretary of the Cooperative not less than seventy-five (75) days prior to the annual meeting of the Members of the Cooperative a written petition bearing the signatures, names and addresses of at least fifteen Members of the Cooperative nominating such other Natural Persons as candidates for election to the Board of Directors and listing the candidate's name, address, age, and telephone number. The Secretary of the Cooperative shall post such petition at the principal places of business of the Cooperative where the list of nominations made by the Nominations Committee was posted.

4. Notice to Members of Nomination of Candidates: The Secretary of the Cooperative shall mail or cause to be mailed to the Members notice of the annual meeting of the Members of the Cooperative at least fifteen (15) days but not more than sixty (60) days before the date of said annual meeting a statement of the names, addresses, ages, and telephone numbers of all candidates nominated for election to the Board of Directors. Such statement shall identify the Directorate District to which such candidate may be elected, and such statement shall identify which candidates were nominated by the Nominations Committee and which candidates were nominated by petition filed by Members of the Cooperative.

VOTING AND ELECTION OUTLINE

Members may vote absentee at the cooperative's headquarters (525 US Route 40, Greenville) Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., August 22 - September 5.

Members may vote for board candidates during Southwestern Electric Cooperative's 87th Annual Meeting of Members, Saturday, September 6, at The American Farm Heritage Museum in Greenville.

Members elected to the board begin serving a three-year term September 6, 2025. Their term ends on the date of the 2028 annual meeting.

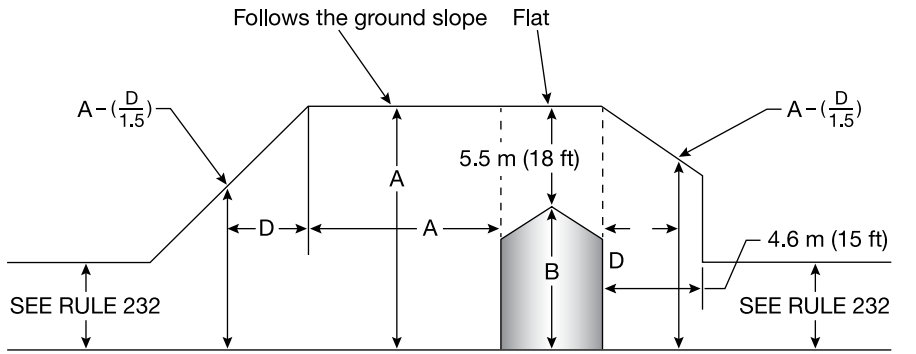
Election results are published in the October issue of The Southwestern. A summary of the annual meeting appears in either the October or November issue.

Building a grain bin? Call us first!

**PLANNING TODAY
COULD SAVE LIVES
TOMORROW**

While safety is usually a matter of being in tune with your environment at any given moment, there are instances when forethought on your part can prevent accidents for years to come. Grain bin construction is

Left: Clearance envelope for grain bins filled by portable augers, conveyors, or elevators, as printed on page 128 of the 2023 edition of the National Electrical Safety Code. Appears courtesy of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, Inc.



B = Height of highest filling or probing port on grain bin
A = B + 5.5 m (18 ft)
D = Variable horizontal dimension

ELEVATION

In the area of sloped clearance, the vertical clearance is reduced by 300 mm (1 ft) for each additional 450 mm (1.5 ft) of horizontal distance from the grain bin.

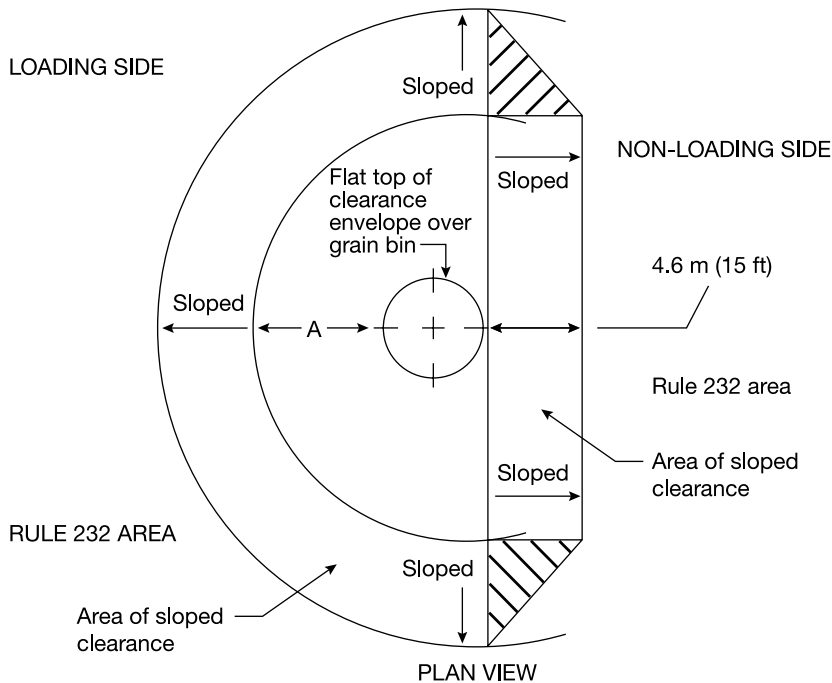
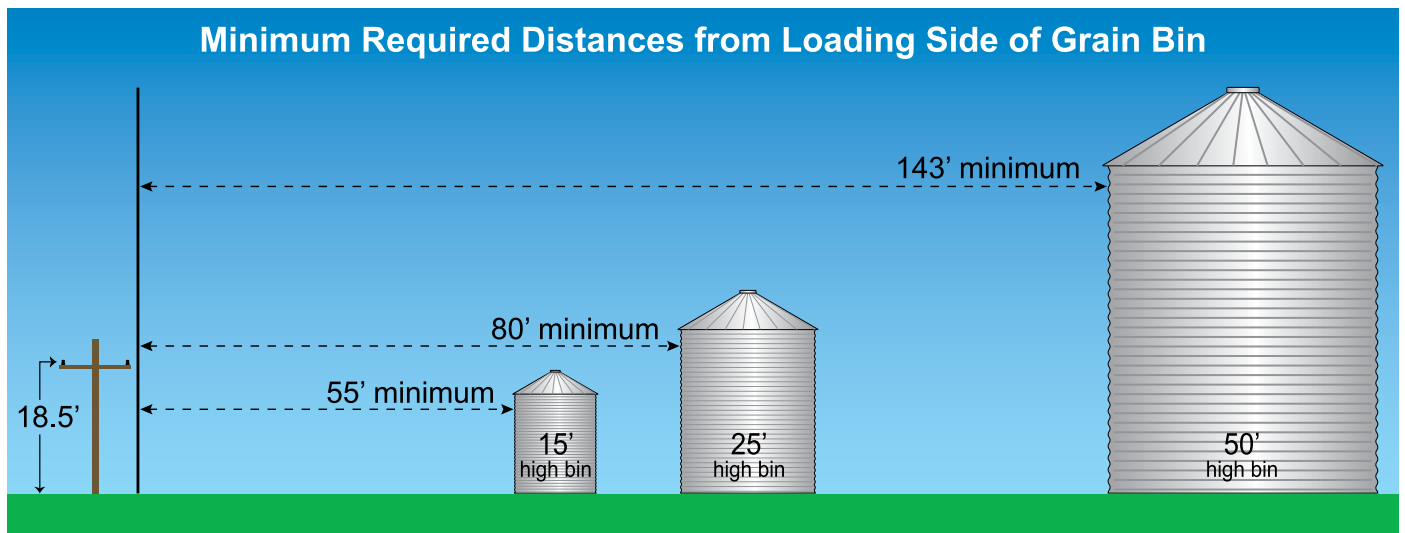


Figure 234-4(b)—Clearance envelope for grain bins filled by portable augers, conveyors, or elevators



a perfect example. Just as you'd survey a new field before planting, you should also take a minute to survey your grain bin site.

First, look up. Are there power lines nearby? They don't have to be directly overhead to pose a problem. Plot the movement of your equipment around the field. How many times do you pass near or beneath power lines? Can you re-route traffic in ways that will keep you farther from them?

Perhaps you know precisely where the lines are and always use extreme caution when working near them. But what about the people who work with you? Are they just as diligent? Will a distraction or lapse in judgment place them in danger of electrocution?

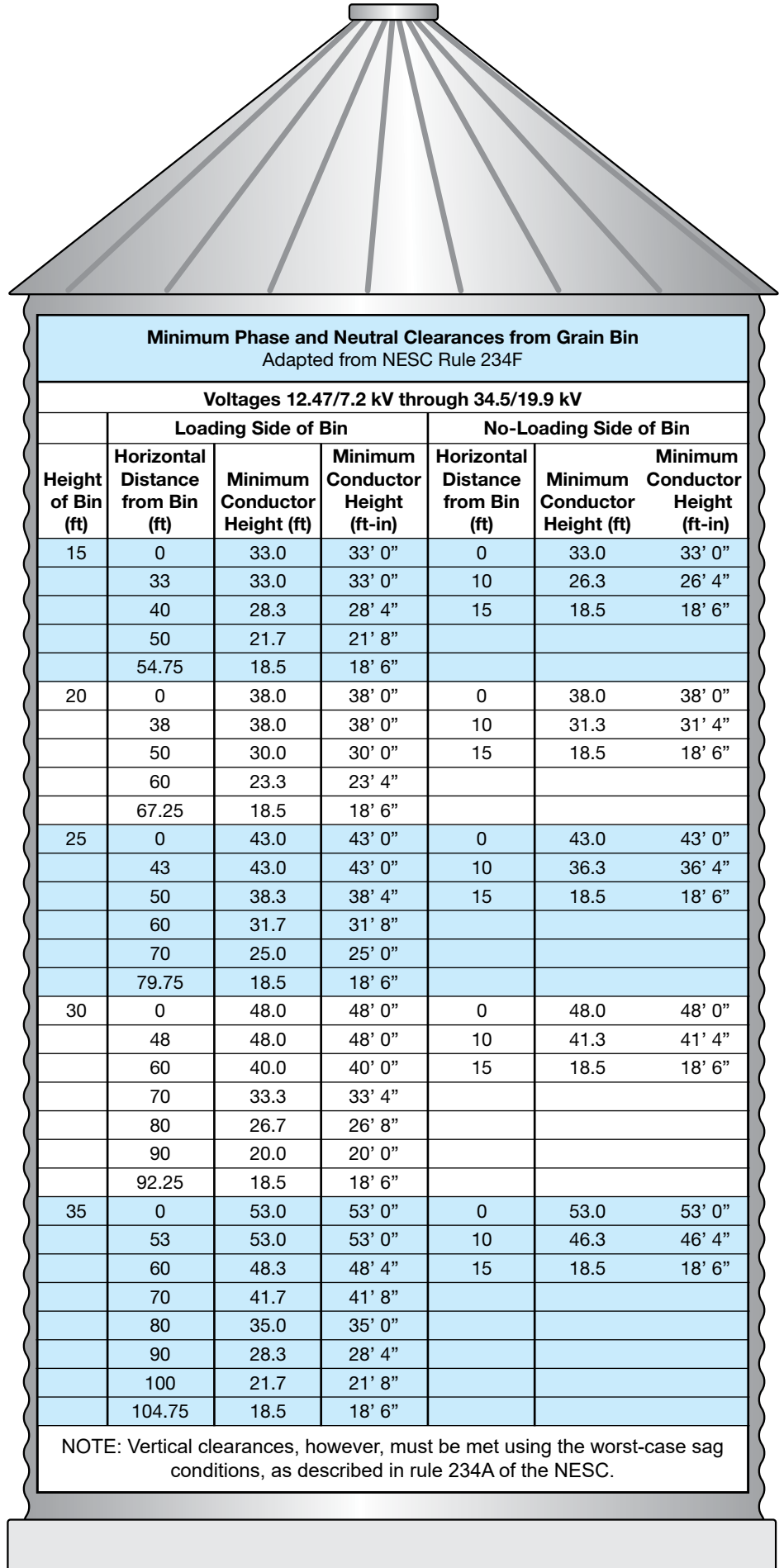
You can cut down on the danger significantly by building your bin far from power lines.

How far is far enough?

We've included diagrams and a table that illustrate requirements established by the National Electrical Safety Code (NESC). Keep these distances in mind when you search for a bin site, and then call Southwestern Electric Cooperative. We'll send a staking engineer to survey your site. It's the best way to make sure your bin will meet NESC guidelines.

While safety is certainly your first concern, there are also financial penalties for violating the NESC. If grain bins are constructed too close to power lines, Southwestern Electric is obligated to alter the path of the electrical system and bring the site into compliance. The member who violated the code by constructing the bin too close to a line is liable for the cost. In other words, if you build a bin too close to a power line, you'll have to pay the cost of relocating our facilities.

The easiest way to avoid such a problem is to call Southwestern Electric Cooperative before building. Our staking engineers will be happy to visit your site and help you plot a safe and efficient solution. For assistance, please call (800) 637-8667 and ask for the engineering department.



Minimum Phase and Neutral Clearances from Grain Bin
Adapted from NESC Rule 234F

Voltages 12.47/7.2 kV through 34.5/19.9 kV

Height of Bin (ft)	Loading Side of Bin			No-Loading Side of Bin		
	Horizontal Distance from Bin (ft)	Minimum Conductor Height (ft)	Minimum Conductor Height (ft-in)	Horizontal Distance from Bin (ft)	Minimum Conductor Height (ft)	Minimum Conductor Height (ft-in)
15	0	33.0	33' 0"	0	33.0	33' 0"
	33	33.0	33' 0"	10	26.3	26' 4"
	40	28.3	28' 4"	15	18.5	18' 6"
	50	21.7	21' 8"			
	54.75	18.5	18' 6"			
20	0	38.0	38' 0"	0	38.0	38' 0"
	38	38.0	38' 0"	10	31.3	31' 4"
	50	30.0	30' 0"	15	18.5	18' 6"
	60	23.3	23' 4"			
	67.25	18.5	18' 6"			
25	0	43.0	43' 0"	0	43.0	43' 0"
	43	43.0	43' 0"	10	36.3	36' 4"
	50	38.3	38' 4"	15	18.5	18' 6"
	60	31.7	31' 8"			
	70	25.0	25' 0"			
30	79.75	18.5	18' 6"			
	0	48.0	48' 0"	0	48.0	48' 0"
	48	48.0	48' 0"	10	41.3	41' 4"
	60	40.0	40' 0"	15	18.5	18' 6"
	70	33.3	33' 4"			
35	80	26.7	26' 8"			
	90	20.0	20' 0"			
	92.25	18.5	18' 6"			
	0	53.0	53' 0"	0	53.0	53' 0"
	53	53.0	53' 0"	10	46.3	46' 4"
	60	48.3	48' 4"	15	18.5	18' 6"
	70	41.7	41' 8"			
	80	35.0	35' 0"			
	90	28.3	28' 4"			
	100	21.7	21' 8"			
	104.75	18.5	18' 6"			

NOTE: Vertical clearances, however, must be met using the worst-case sag conditions, as described in rule 234A of the NESC.

Considering Cogeneration? Call Before You Install

A new solar array won't pay for itself anytime soon. It may not deliver the rate of return you've seen in brochures. You'll still pay a monthly bill.

Members who fail to consult with Southwestern before they go solar may find they've invested tens of thousands of dollars in a disappointment. Before you sign the contract, get the full story.

by Julie Lowe, Energy Manager

The appeal of green energy — and solar power in particular — is clear. It's clean, quiet and renewable, and harnessing your own energy can cut dollars from your electric bill. The benefits of generating your own energy are significant — but the expenses and obligations are as well.

It is very important that we all work together — you, your chosen solar installer, and Southwestern Electric — to ensure that you are completely satisfied with your investment. Below are some of the key factors to consider *before* signing a contract with a solar installation company.

THINK AVOIDED COST, NOT NET METERING

We can't emphasize this point strongly enough: If you are considering installing solar, *call us first*. That call will help you make an informed decision about your solar project. We want you to understand how we meter and reimburse you for energy, so you will know what to expect on your first post-installation bill.

Many solar companies are used to working with investor-owned utilities, like Ameren, who use net metering.

Southwestern Electric, like many cooperatives, doesn't use net metering to calculate cogeneration reimbursement. Your co-op calculates reimbursement based on *avoided cost* — the cost Southwestern Electric avoids paying for wholesale energy supplied by its primary power provider.

When you install a cogeneration system, we'll equip your home or business with a dual-register

Continued on next page ▶

Member-Owned Cogeneration 2010-2025



492

Member-Owned Cogeneration Projects

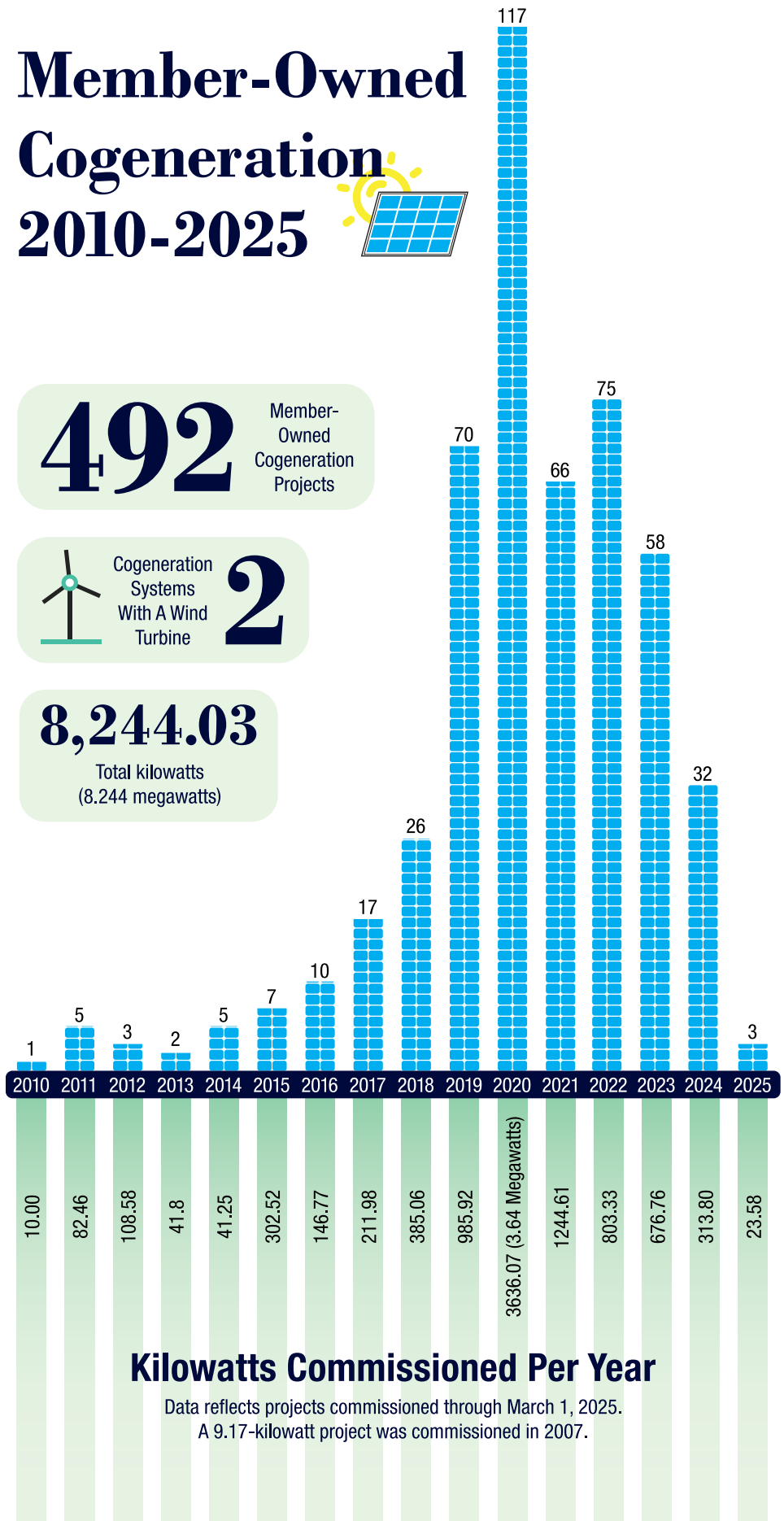


Cogeneration Systems With A Wind Turbine

2

8,244.03

Total kilowatts (8.244 megawatts)



Kilowatts Commissioned Per Year

Data reflects projects commissioned through March 1, 2025.
A 9.17-kilowatt project was commissioned in 2007.

► *Continued from page 11*

meter. As the name suggests, the meter is equipped with two registers. One register tracks the kilowatt-hours (kWh) you use from the grid. The other tracks the kWh your system overproduces and supplies to the grid.

We read both registers on the first day of the month. Kilowatt-hours you pull from the grid are calculated at our retail rate, which includes fees associated with moving energy across the grid and delivering it to your home or business.

Kilowatt-hours your system pushes to the grid are calculated at our avoided cost — about \$0.0377 per kilowatt-hour.

We apply credit from your overproduction to your bill. If the dollar amount of your credit is greater than the dollar amount of your energy charge, we deposit the difference in your “cogen bank.” We’ll apply that credit to your bill in a future month.

Cogeneration credits expire April 30. Southwestern doesn’t issue checks for the energy you generate, so to get the greatest value from your system, you’ll want to design it with the energy needs of your home in mind.

“Before you talk to an installer, call us. We’ll give you a list of questions to ask before you invest. Those questions may save you a lot of disappointment — and a lot of money.”

—Julie Lowe, Energy Manager

BEFORE YOU SIGN

It’s important to understand the difference between net metering and reimbursement based on avoided cost, and to be certain your installer knows, so they can accurately estimate your return on investment.

When you call, we’ll send you an information packet. The packet will explain how we meter and reimburse for energy, and information regarding your responsibilities as a cogeneration owner.

We’ll also include a list of local installers Southwestern members have used and recommend. While you aren’t limited to this list, you can be assured they’ll know how to figure your return on investment based on how we meter.

If you choose an installer not on this list, please make sure they’re aware of our metering policy so they can provide you with an accurate estimate.

HOW MUCH WILL MY COGEN SYSTEM COST?

Expenses vary from one installation to the next. A system’s rating, manufacturer, the complexity of the installation, and contractor costs affect your overall investment. Ask your installer about tax credits that may help you offset the cost of your system.

Keep in mind, each installer is unique. You can expect to see differences in the equipment they recommend, cost of labor, and project timelines. We recommend you get no less than three estimates for your project. Each estimate should be detailed and include an outline of your return on investment. Make sure the estimates for return on investment aren’t based on net metering.

KNOW YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

In addition to the items we’ve already mentioned, the information packet we send will include our interconnection policy, an example certificate of insurance and sample bills from accounts with solar projects. Please read these documents carefully and don’t hesitate to contact us with any questions.

We’ll also include a list of terms and conditions so you can easily see what

you will be responsible for. One of your primary responsibilities will be to speak with your insurance agent and make sure they understand exactly what it is that you’re asking them to insure.

THE WRONG IDEA

Some misconceptions involving solar energy are as old as the sun. Others are more recent. Here are three ideas about solar energy that are more fiction than fact.

I’ll have power during an outage.
If you’re connected to Southwestern’s distribution system, your home remains part of, and is affected by, conditions on the grid. Which means you’ll lose service during an outage — even if your array is producing power. The only exception to this would be if you have battery storage.

If I produce enough power I won’t have a bill to pay. Regardless of how much power you produce, you’ll get a bill from the cooperative to cover service charges and taxes.

Solar energy is free. Sunlight is free. Technology that converts it into a form your home can use, isn’t. A cogeneration system is a significant investment. Solar energy is efficient — it isn’t cheap. Be wary of any installer who says installation will cost you nothing. Ask a lot of questions. If the answers you get sound too good to be true, they probably are.

ILLINOIS SHINES

In recent years, solar installations in Southwestern Electric Cooperative’s service area have been steady. Key incentives include federal tax credits and the Adjustable Block Program, now known as Illinois Shines.

Developed by the Illinois Power Agency and administered by Energy Solutions (a third-party program administrator), Illinois Shines was established by the Future Energy Jobs Act of 2018 to support the development of solar projects in Illinois. Illinois Shines buys solar renewable energy credits (SRECs) produced by solar photovoltaic systems. The dollar amount per SREC falls as program blocks fill.

Blocks are currently available for

Program Year 2024-2025 You may purchase, install and finance solar projects and vendors may continue to submit applications. If blocks fill up, you will be put on a wait list. These applications will be first in line for review when capacity becomes available for Program Year 2025-2026.

You can learn more about Illinois Shines at www.illinoisshines.com.

To search for installers certified by the Illinois Commerce Commission, go to www.icc.illinois.gov/public-utility.

ASK QUESTIONS

At Southwestern Electric, we hear solar terms used every day. Most installers are well-versed in technical language and often use it when presenting information to interested consumers. It's easy for people in our field to think of industry-specific language as something everyone is familiar with — but this likely isn't the case. If we're using terms that are unfamiliar or unclear to you, ask us to

define those terms or explain the point we're making in another way.

Write a list of questions. Spend some time working on your list. Have it in hand when you're gathering estimates. Your list may include questions like:

- How will the installer determine which size of system will be best for you?
- Is battery storage a good option for you? Why or why not?
- Based on your bills, how long will it take for your system to pay for itself?
- Are their return-on-investment projections based on Southwestern's avoided cost, as they should be, or did they mistakenly calculate your savings based on net metering?

Your list should help to ensure you know exactly what to expect from your installation. Which brings me back to my first point: If you're considering solar, make Southwestern Electric your first call. I'll be happy to help you create a

list of questions to ask the installers you contact, and I'll explain our approach to metering and the co-op's safety requirements. You can reach me at 800-637-8667 or julie.lowe@sweci.com. I look forward to hearing from you. **S**

As Southwestern Electric's energy manager, Julie Lowe coordinates a variety of member-oriented programs involving cogeneration and solar energy, electric vehicles, home and commercial EV chargers, and Southwestern Electric Cooperative's energy efficiency rebate program. You can speak with Julie by calling 800-637-8667 or email her at julie.lowe@sweci.com.



SmartHub Puts Energy-Saving Information at Your Fingertips

Last month, Southwestern Electric launched SmartHub, its new account management portal and easy-to-use app. SmartHub offers tools and information you can use to save time and money.

You can use SmartHub for:

Billing & Payments. With SmartHub, you don't have to wait for your bill to arrive in the mail. You can access your bill anytime, anywhere, and save time with easy payment options that help you avoid late fees and service interruptions.

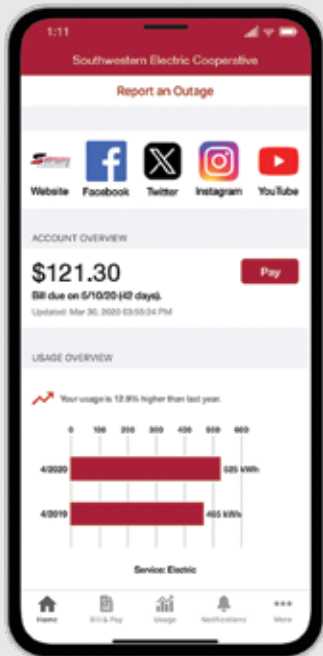
Alerts & Notifications. You can stay up to date on important account events via email or text messages, and receive the information you need to make informed decisions about your account.

Paperless Billing. Save trees and time when you activate SmartHub paperless billing, an eco-friendly way to instantly access your bill.

Usage Monitoring. Worrying about usage or surprising bill amounts can be stressful. When you know what devices are using the most energy, you can make money-saving decisions about your account.

Outage Reporting. Need to report a power outage? SmartHub is the fastest and easiest way to let us know when your power goes out. When widespread storms knock out power to an entire region, phone lines can become overloaded. With SmartHub, you can avoid busy signals and report outages with a few simple taps on your mobile device.

We've offered an overview of a few key features. Learn more by watching or reading our tutorials at sweci.com/smarthub or by downloading and exploring the SmartHub app from Google Play or the App Store.



ACCOUNT DASHBOARD

From the SmartHub account dashboard you'll see:

- Quick links that will lead to the features of SmartHub
- Usage Overview graphs to help you analyze and understand your energy usage trends
- The latest communications and alerts from us
- A Pay button to make quick payments right from the home screen

BILLING HISTORY

From this screen, you can see the history of past bills for your account.

You can also view your bill or usage per bill by clicking on the View Bill or View Usage links.

The Total Due column will reflect any adjustments made to your bill since it was printed.

AUTO PAY PROGRAM

Enjoy the convenience of having your bill automatically paid each month from your bank account or credit card when you enroll in Auto Pay.

You no longer have to worry about due dates or late fees since payments are automatically deducted from your account each month.

For each account you have with us, you'll be able to add, edit, and remove any payment accounts you have setup to automatically make payments on your bill each month.

LEVELIZED BILLING

Levelized billing eliminates significant seasonal changes you may sometimes see in your electric bills.

When you enroll in the program, Southwestern Electric determines your new monthly bill amount by averaging the last 12 months of electric usage on your account.

To enroll in levelized billing, you must have at least 12 months of usage history on your account, no more than one late notice over the last 12 months and a zero balance.

Levelized billing is only available for residential rate accounts. If Enroll Online isn't highlighted, your account isn't eligible for the program. If it's highlighted, you can sign up for levelized billing.

BUDGET GAUGE PLANNING TOOL

Budget Gauge helps you set up a target monthly energy budget, and using your daily usage data, analyze where you are relative to your budget. Budget Gauge is a planning tool — it doesn't change your amount due.



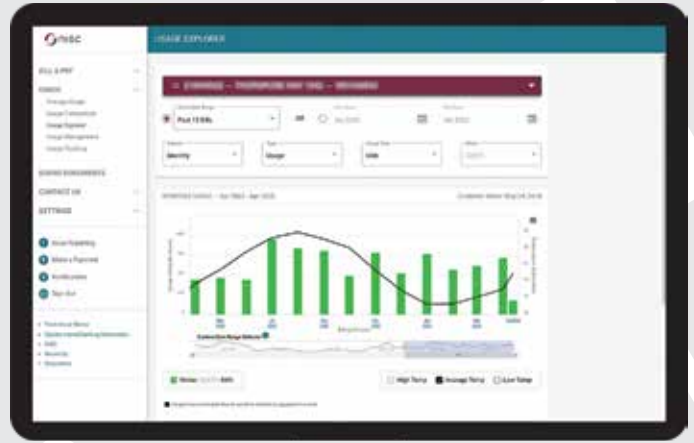
USAGE COMPARISON

This tool lets you compare two monthly bills side-by-side to see “this year versus last year” or “this month versus last month.”

The comparison tool illustrates how weather and temperature affect your energy bills.

The comparison tool can also help you determine how changes in your lifestyle and energy usage habits or the addition of a new appliance is impacting your bill, and may suggest energy-saving measures that will offer the best return on your investment.

Learn more about SmartHub on our social media channels and at sweci.com.



USAGE EXPLORER

The Usage Explorer will give you a detailed look at your past and current usage, all in one place. You'll be able to view your power use alongside weather trends by month, day or hour.

You'll be able to set filters for graphs to highlight data from specific dates and meters, and see monthly costs graphed against temperature data.

SAVE ENERGY & MONEY

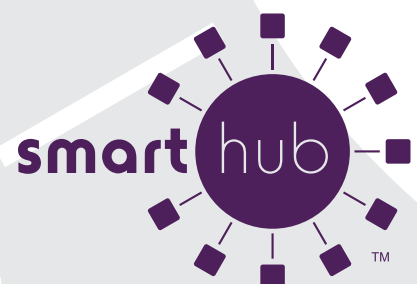
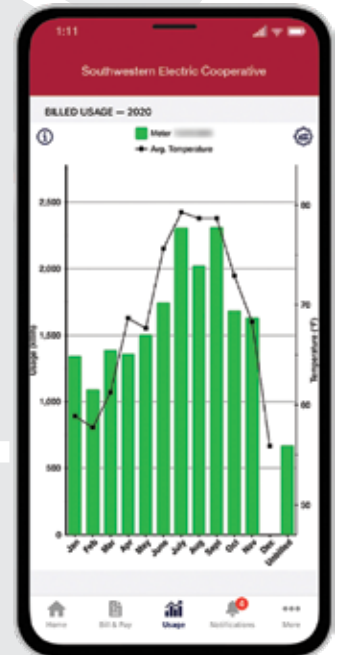
Usage Management provides tools to help you identify how you use energy and evaluate ways to save money.

You can use SmartHub's HomeEnergyCalculator™ to see your energy usage based on home inputs, weather and billing information.

SmartHub will offer tailored energy recommendations to pinpoint savings opportunities.

AVERAGE USAGE

One of the most powerful features of SmartHub is the ability to see how much electricity you typically use during a specific period. This equips you to plan and may suggest opportunities to save on your bill.



KNOW WHAT'S BELOW

Call Before You Dig

From where you're standing, your yard may look peaceful — but there's a lot going on underfoot. Most utilities — Southwestern Electric included — deliver services underground. To avoid personal injury and damage to underground lines, state law requires you to contact Joint Utility Locating Information for Excavators (JULIE), Inc., before any digging project, regardless of the project size or depth.

You can call JULIE at 8-1-1 or enter your locate request at illinois1call.com. Both the call and JULIE's services are free.

When homeowners inadvertently cut or damage lines during routine projects, the results can take a staggering toll in terms of costly delays, environmental or property damage, liability, personal injury and loss of life.

All digging projects — from relatively small tasks like planting a tree or shrub to more complex projects like installing a deck, fence or home addition — require a call.

Any number of utility lines may rest where you intend to dig. What appears to be the perfect place to plant a shrub or set a post may be home to water, electric, gas or sewer lines.

When you call 8-1-1, you'll speak with a JULIE call center agent. The agent records the location and description of your project site, and notifies affected member-utility owners and operators. The utilities send a professional locator (JULIE personnel do not perform locating or marking services) to mark the approximate location of their underground utility lines with small flags or paint.

JULIE's call center agents are available to receive and process requests 24 hours a day, seven days a week at either 8-1-1 or (800) 892-0123. Homeowners can also submit locate requests online via E-Request, a free, web-based program, at www.illinois1call.com.

Projects that require notifying JULIE include, but are not limited to, planting trees, bushes or shrubs; putting up a fence or tent; installing a swing set, a mail box post or water feature such as a pool, pond or fountain; building a deck; or preparing a new garden or landscape area.

For a free copy of JULIE's Homeowner's Guide with information about the one-call process, visit www.illinois1call.com.

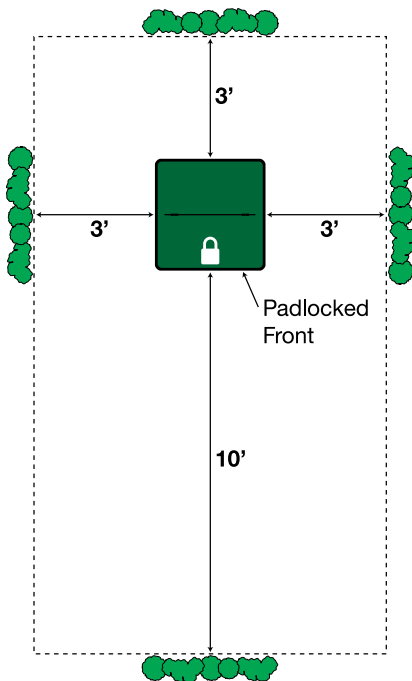
All digging projects — from relatively small tasks like planting a tree or shrub to more complex projects like installing a deck, fence or home addition — require a call.



BURY ME NOT

If there's a pad-mounted transformer in your yard, please don't bury it. It isn't dead. To the contrary, there are live electrical components inside the cabinet. Our crews need to work with those components now and then. By planting thorns around your transformer, or fencing it in, or burying it, you're making it more difficult to restore power to your neighbors and yourself during an outage. You're also compromising your safety and possibly the integrity of Southwestern Electric's distribution system.

A pad-mounted transformer isn't the most attractive feature in your yard, but it is one of the most useful items on your property. Please help us maintain it by following the guidelines we've provided here.



FIVE STEPS TO SAFETY

There are five important steps to every safe excavation project

1. Identify your dig area.
2. Submit a request.
3. Wait for the paint or flags.
4. Respect the markings.
5. Dig with care.

Exploring the TreeHouse

TREEHOUSE WILDLIFE CENTER IN DOW MIXES EDUCATION, REHABILITATION

Story by Nathan Grimm | Photos by Mike Barns

Like many people, Shelby Beatty has made friends at work.

Unlike many people, most of Beatty's friends have feathers, fur or scales.

Beatty is one of two wildlife rehabilitation specialists at TreeHouse Wildlife Center, a Dow, Illinois-based wildlife rescue, rehabilitation and release organization. The center, which celebrated its 45th anniversary last year, is a nonprofit organization with a stated mission of being “dedicated to the rescue, rehabilitation, and release of native wildlife while promoting environmental awareness through education.”

Adele Moore and Richard Evans founded the center in Brighton in 1979 after taking an interest in an injured adult cottontail rabbit sitting in the middle of Milton Hill Road in Alton a few years prior. The center grew from there, both physically and in presence, and in 2003 it was decided to look for a larger space to house the operation. Since 2010, the center has called the Dow property, once a private residence, home.

As Beatty walks the 8.5-acre property on a Friday morning, she's greeted by Spuds, a bald eagle known for her vocal nature. Nearby, an enclosure is being

readied for two of TreeHouse's newer residents, a pair of Canada geese.

Spuds and the geese are among the center's permanent residents, those unable to be released back into the wild due to injury or having been imprinted on by humans.

Still, Beatty said the center is able to successfully release more than half of the animals it takes in, a point of pride when the national success rate is closer to one-third of rehab patients. When the center sees between 1,300 to 1,400 patients a year – with just two rehab specialists on staff – that's a lot of animals being rehabbed and returned to their natural habitat.

“We do the best we can,” Beatty said. “I think for two people we do a pretty good job.”

Those unable to be released become static display animals, helping educate visitors on their species, and animals with the right temperament and training might even become education animals for outside programming at places like schools and senior citizen homes. Still others might become foster parents, raising new intakes to the center.

Resources, both human and capital, are the biggest obstacles that face the nonprofit. Beatty said the property itself

fits the center well but having limited funding, all of which comes either by way of grants or donations, restricts how many animals they can help. A handful of staff members – even fewer of which are full time – and roughly 20 volunteers keep the center running throughout the year.

To that end, Beatty said the center has a volunteer orientation event on April 13 from 4 to 5 p.m. for those interested in giving their time. Volunteer applications are available on the TreeHouse website, treehousewildlifecenter.com/volunteer, and they can be filled out and returned to the center or emailed to treehousewildlifecenter@gmail.com.

Also on the horizon is the center's Baby Shower Donation Drive. The event, which will be held at the center from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday, April 26, will have vendors, raffles, a bake sale and food from Klausti's Kitchen food truck, among other features. The event is free to attend, but guests are encouraged to bring donations such as bleach, fleece blankets, fresh and frozen produce, Pedialyte and other items that help with the care of the animals. For more information, visit treehousewildlifecenter.com/baby-shower.





Kayla Komac, a Northern Michigan University student who interns at the center, holds Noodle, the center's resident albino California kingsnake. Noodle, who has lived at TreeHouse since 2019, is one of the center's education outreach ambassadors.



GETTING THERE

Like any good treehouse, TreeHouse Wildlife Center is adequately tucked away amid the trees. To get there, head west on Interstate 70 until it meets Illinois Route 3. Go north on Route 3 through Elsah. Make a left turn onto Cemetery Road, then the first right onto Green Acres Road. A sign roughly a mile later marks the entrance to the center.

HOURS OF OPERATION

TreeHouse Wildlife Center's gift shop and education center is open to the public Friday through Monday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The grounds on which the permanent residents live are open Saturdays and Sundays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

WHO • WHAT • WHERE

In March we held our puzzle pages to bring you a feature and a few timely reminders. This month? We're doubling up on solutions.

In January, we asked you to identify a railroad-related item. In February, we challenged you to name the hometown of a little red caboose. Given both items are rail-related, we've elected to share your solutions to both puzzles.

Thanks to Bill Malec of O'Fallon for solving both challenges and to Steve Summers of Beecher City for sharing his extraordinary memories of a by-gone, beautiful era (see page 21). We're beholden to you. Speaking of solutions, can you place a name with the face on page 25?

He founded a farm, a distillery and a church. He moved to Macoupin County in 1833, where he established two churches and worked for Illinois College. And a seminary was named in his honor.

We'll share your responses in May. Meanwhile, here's what you had to say about our January and February puzzles.

The picture is of a type of Train Order Hoop. My late husband, Marvin Debolt, worked as an Agent Operator for the Illinois Central Railroad, before he went into the U.S. Army and was sent to Vietnam, as well as when he came back from military service, while he attended college, earning a master's degree in education.

The pictured device was used to give printed orders to the engineer of the train. It is very time-consuming for a train to start and stop due to the immense weight of the cars, so the engineer would slow the train at the depot and reach for the orders.

If the engineer missed the orders, then the conductor at the end of the train would attempt to grab them. If the conductor also missed, then the engineer would stop the train, and the conductor would walk back to the depot to get the printed orders.

When Marvin started work for the Illinois Central Railroad he used a key to tap out information and send it up and down the line from the depots that he worked at. When he was standing

outside the depot holding the orders up for the engineer to grab, he had to be aware of what was going on around him. Once while he was standing beside the tracks some small heavy parts came bouncing off the brakes on a railroad car, and he had to jump out of the way to keep from getting hit by the heavy metal pieces, while the train was going by. Bad weather and nighttime made the process of getting the printed orders to the train engineer more perilous.

—Linda Debolt, *Shumway*

The "What Am I" picture in the magazine is of someone handing up train orders to the conductor or engineer on the caboose when they are going by and moving. You can catch the orders going by the operator's office. My brother-in-law who is retired train operator caught many of these orders.

—Carla Wiegand, *Pocahontas*

The item pictured as the January 2025 "What is it" is a train order hoop. It was used for the vital task of passing train orders up to the engineer (at the front) and conductor (at the end) of trains as they slowed, but often did not fully stop at stations. It required the station operator to stand perilously close to the moving train, holding up the hoop so that the engineer, and then the conductor, could catch it on an arm, remove the order clipped in place, and toss the hoop beside the tracks to be retrieved later. As you might imagine, all parts of this exchange were difficult, especially at night or in bad weather.

These were used up the mid-1980s when they were replaced by signals and track authority warrants given over the railroad radio systems.

—Bill Malec *O'Fallon*

Continued on page 25



Mode Memories

You bring back *old* memories – I had forgotten about these.

The object shown in Who-What -Where in your January issue of *The Southwestern* is an apparatus that was used by railroad tower operators to pass messages to engineers and conductors on moving trains during the steam engine era. This would be used when the train was moving through and not stopping at that particular station.

The message, having been received by the tower operator over the telegraph, was written out on paper and the paper folded up and tied into a string which was attached to the apparatus by an easy release clip at the base of the “Y”. The engineer and/or conductor, would reach their arm out and stick their hand through the center of the “Y” as the train passed by. The string along with the message would come off the apparatus and end up on the individual’s arm.

Usually, the same message would be given to both the engineer and the conductor on the train. These messages contained train schedules (called a lineup) and other important information passed along for safety. Note that in the picture on page 23, you can faintly see the engineer leaning out of the engine with his arm extended as the train approached, ready to snatch his message from the apparatus.

As a youngster growing up in the 1950s and 1960s, I spent a lot of time

including most all of my summer days in Mode, Illinois, in southern Shelby County, at the home of my maternal grandparents. Two railroads crossed in Mode. The Chicago and Eastern Illinois (C&EI), now the Missouri Pacific, ran through Mode north and south. The Nickel Plate ran through Mode east and west. The Mopac still runs through



Mode today. The Nickel Plate, which ended at its western most point in Madison, Illinois, has long since been shut down and removed.

My Granddad worked on the Nickel Plate Railroad as a section hand and I spent many summer days going to work with him and the rest of the section gang, starting at about age eight or nine and continuing until I was thirteen when granddad retired. You would not see that taking place today. I loved riding on the motor car and being with the railroaders. During the day I would carry water to the men who would be mowing out railroad crossing approaches with hand

scythes, or they would be tamping ties, replacing ties, gauging rails, etc.

During my days in Mode, I also spent a lot of time in and around the tower which was located within a few feet of where the two railroads crossed. The tower stood next to the depot. As I remember the tower was about 16’ x 16’ and approximately 20’ in height with wooden steps up to the top floor. The telegrapher occupied the top floor where he had a desk and chair. The telegraph key was located on his desk. That is how he got the messages by Morse Code from the dispatcher. There were also eight huge levers in the tower which came up through the floor from below and stood about 4 or 5 feet tall. By moving those levers the telegrapher could raise and lower arm signals on tall poles down the tracks from the tower which told trains to stop or proceed on.

I also hung around the depot a lot and saw many steam powered trains pass through Mode every day. At the Mode station, apparatuses, such as the one in your picture, were not held up by a human. They were mounted on poles along the side of the tracks about 100 feet in all four directions from the tower. Each pole had mounting brackets for two of these apparatuses. One was higher for the engineer and the other was lower for the conductor who was in the caboose at the back end of the train. During those times I saw many messages snatched from these apparatuses. It was one of those things which amazed me at that age. One second the message was there, the next second it was headed out of Mode on a train — on someone’s arm.

—Steve Summers, Beecher City



CO-OP KITCHEN

FRIDAY NIGHT BITES



BAKED FISH

Ingredients

- ¾ cup milk
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 pound fish filets
- ½ stick margarine melted
- ½ cup corn flakes crushed
- onion salt to taste
- garlic salt to taste
- 1 tablespoon tarragon vinegar
- toasted slivered almonds

Directions

1. Stir together milk and salt.
2. Place fish filets in shallow baking dish and pour milk over fish.
3. Mix together margarine, corn flakes, onion salt, garlic salt and vinegar.
4. Spread corn flake mixture over fish.
5. Top with almonds.
6. Bake at 375° for 25-30 minutes.

CRUSTLESS CRAB QUICHE

Ingredients

- ½ cup onion chopped
- 1 pound mushrooms chopped
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 4 eggs
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1 cup small curd cottage cheese
- 1 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- ¼ cup flour
- 4 drops hot pepper sauce
- 2 cups shredded Monterey jack cheese
- 1 (6 ounce) can crab meat drained

Directions

1. Saute onions and mushrooms in butter.
2. In mixing bowl combine eggs, sour cream, cottage cheese, Parmesan cheese, flour and hot pepper sauce.
3. Stir in onion and mushroom mixture, cheese and crab meat.
4. Pour mixture into a greased 10 inch quiche dish and bake at 350° for 40 minutes until golden brown on top.
5. Let stand 15 minutes before serving.

SALMON CAKES & DILL SAUCE

Ingredients

- 1¼ cup Ritz crackers coarsely crushed
- 2 eggs slightly beaten
- 2 tablespoons snipped parsley
- 2 tablespoons green onions sliced
- 2 tablespoons milk
- dash of pepper
- dash of Worcestershire sauce
- 1 (16 ounce) can skinless/boneless salmon flaked
- 1 cup shredded sharp cheddar cheese
- 1½ cups corn flakes crushed

Dill Sauce Ingredients

- 1 cup sour cream
- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 2½ tablespoons dried dill weed
- 2 tablespoons dried minced onion
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon dried parsley
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- ½ teaspoon salt

Dill Sauce Directions

1. Combine all ingredients, cover and chill for at least 30 minutes before serving. Better if made a day ahead.

Directions

1. Combine all ingredients except corn flakes, mixing thoroughly.
2. Shape into 4 - 6 patties and coat with corn flakes.
3. Place patties on ungreased baking sheet.
4. Bake at 400° for 15 minutes. Serve topped with dill sauce.

Salmon Cakes
& Dill Sauce

Prepared &
photographed
by Mike Barns

CURRENT EVENTS

April 2 - May 31 NOTABLE WOMEN ON ROUTE 66, Edwardsville. Explore the influence of women on Route 66 at the Notable Women of Route 66 display. Wednesday - Sunday 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Admission is free. West End Service Station, 620 St. Louis Street. Visit cityofedwardsville.com/749/west-end-service-station.

April 3 FAYETTE COUNTY HOSPITAL - HANDBAGS FOR HEALTH, Vandalia. Join us for an evening of fun and a chance to take home great prizes while supporting FCH initiatives. Doors open at 6 p.m.; silent and live auctions start at 7 p.m. Admission is \$35 in advance; \$40 at the door and includes 2 raffle tickets, 1 door prize ticket and signature drink (until gone). 8th Day Venue, 1405 Veterans Avenue. For tickets, call (618) 283-5401 or (618) 283-5446.

April 4-6, 10-13 ALTON LITTLE THEATER: THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE, Alton. A musical by the Alton Little Theater Company. April 4, 5, 10 and 11 at 7:30 p.m.; April 6, 12 and 13 at 2 p.m. Adult \$27; youth 17 years of age and younger \$18. Alton Little Theater, 2450 North Henry Street. For tickets, call (618) 462-3205 or visit alton-littletheater.org.

April 5 LAKE SARA DAM RUN, Effingham. A Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics Illinois. Choose from half marathon, 8-mile run, 5K run or 5K walk, and virtual. Half marathon starts at 7 a.m.; 8-mile at 8 a.m.; 5K run and walk at 9 a.m. Lake Sara Dam Run raises money for Special Olympics. Raceroster will

donate \$1 for each registrant. Lake Sara Dam, 9352 East Park Avenue. For more information or to register, visit lakesarad-amrun.com.

April 6 SPRING CRAFT SHOW, Effingham. More than 80 vendor and craft booths. 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Admission is free. Thelma Keller Convention Center, 1202 North Keller Drive. For more information, email baentertainment21@gmail.com.

April 12 PRINCE MAXIMILIAN AND KARL BODMER: TOURING THE WILDERNESS OF NORTH AMERICA, Hartford. Storyteller and author Brian "Fox" Ellis steps into the shoes of Prince Maximilian, allowing the audience to step back in time. Blending history, science, art and cultural anthropology, the Prince gives us a unique view of America as he saw it in the early 1830s. Much of the text for this performance comes directly from his journals. The backdrop includes the landscapes, portraits, and scenes from everyday life painted by Karl Bodmer. 2 - 3:30 p.m. Lewis & Clark State Historic Site, One Lewis & Clark Trail. Call (618) 251-5811 or visit campdubois.com.

April 13 YOUTH & YOUNG ADULT EGG HUNT, Livingston. Join us for a day of hunting fun with thousands of eggs, lots of candy and prizes. Free hunt for youth 12 years of age and younger at 3 p.m.; free hunt for accessible disabled at 3 p.m.; \$10 (plus tax) for teens and young adults ages 13 - 20 at 6 p.m. Twistee Treat Diner, 908 Veterans Memorial Drive. For tickets, visit twisteetreatteenyaegghunt.fearticket.com.

April 19 ADULTS ONLY EASTER EGG HUNT, Livingston. Event is for adults 21 years of age and older. Enjoy live music with food, drinks, dancing and prizes. Be sure to bring a flashlight and lawn chair. 6 - 10 p.m.; hunt starts at 8 p.m. Admission is \$15 (plus tax). Twistee Treat Diner, 908 Veterans Memorial Drive. For tickets, visit twisteetreatteenyaegghunt.fearticket.com.

April 19 PAWS IN THE PARK, Edwardsville. Event offers your furry friend a fun occasion to romp, scamper and play as part of our doggy Easter egg hunt. There will be lots of treats and prizes, plus dog-oriented vendors. All profits from this event will be donated to the Metro East Humane Society. The egg hunt will start at noon. \$5 per dog if you pre-register and \$8 per dog day-of registration. Edwardsville City Park, 101 South Buchanan Street. Visit cityofedwardsville.com/629/Paws-in-the-Park, call (618) 692-7538 or email Grace at gpellock@cityofedwardsville.com.

April 25-27; May 2-4 THE ODD COUPLE, Breese. A theatrical presentation by Clinton County Showcase. All performances begin at 8 p.m. except for Sundays, which is at 2 p.m. General admission is \$15. Historic Avon Theatre, 535 North 2nd Street. For tickets, visit clintoncountyshowcase.com.

April 26 5K RUN/WALK FOR LIFE, Shelbyville. A challenging race with great scenery. Participants can choose the 5K run/walk starts at 8 a.m.; 1 mile prayer warrior walk starts at 9:30 a.m. \$25 per person

or \$75 for family of five. This run will support the free services offered at the Family Life Center. Dacey Trail at Forest Park, East North 9th Street. To register, visit runsignup.com.

April 26 ARBOR DAY CELEBRATION, Godfrey. Join the village in celebrating the environment and all things trees. The day kicks off at 9 a.m. with a youth fishing derby and continues through 3:30 p.m. with face painting, crafts, youth games and more. Free redbud tree seedlings will be given away to the first 300 visitors. The memorial tree dedication ceremony will take place at 1:30 p.m. to recognize the individuals for whom trees were planted. All ages are welcome. Glazebrook Park, 1401 Stamper Lane. Visit godfreyil.org.

April 26 BABY SHOWER DONATION DRIVE, Dow. Join us at Treehouse Wildlife Center for our 2025 baby shower donation drive. Celebrate the arrival of the new season with fun activities and the chance to see some adorable baby animals. Your donations help us care for these precious creatures and protect their future. Event will feature vendor fair, raffles, bake sale, food truck, educational presentations and animal encounters. The items we need are no-shut-off heating pads, flavored and unflavored Pedialyte, fleece blankets, bleach and fresh and frozen produce. We also have a link to an Amazon wish list on our website. 11 a.m. - 4 p.m. Treehouse Wildlife Center, 23956 Green Acres Road. Call (618) 466-2990 or visit treehousewildlifecenter.com.

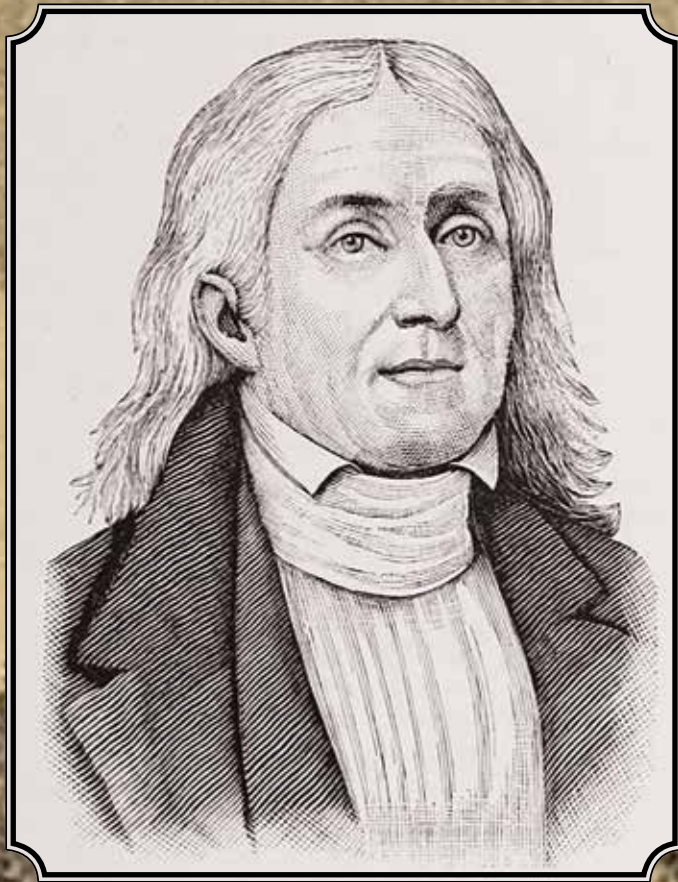
Continued on page 26 ▶

Call to Confirm

Listings are provided by event organizers or taken from community websites. We recommend calling to confirm dates, times and details before you make plans. All are subject to change.

Submissions

To submit an event for consideration in our calendar, email your event information to joe.richardson@sweci.com. Please use our Current Events format (as seen on these pages) to write your submission. Include a contact number or email and submit your listing at least two months prior to your event.



Who am I?

Who-What-Where is a contest that challenges your knowledge of people, places and objects in and around Southwestern Electric Cooperative's service area. Here's how it works: Each month, we run a photo. Your job is to tell us who's pictured, what we've photographed, or where we shot the photo. You can email your response to joe.richardson@sweci.com or send it by mail to Joe Richardson, Southwestern Electric Cooperative, 525 U.S. Route 40, Greenville, IL 62246. Please include your name, mailing address, and hometown. If you have a story about our photo topic, include that as well—we love these! The puzzle solution—possibly accompanied by a few words from you—will appear in a future issue of The Southwestern.

February “Where Are We?” Puzzle Solutions

The location of the February 2025 “Where are we?” can be found in Fayette County. There at the site of the old railroad museum, located in the middle of the village of Ramsey, you’ll find a railroad tower, a box car, and a restored bay window caboose with the latter being the focus of this month’s puzzle.

Nickel Plate Road (NKP) Caboose #459 (pictured on page 21) was one of many trains that rolled along the almost 2,200-mile route of the Nickel Plate Road (Railroad). From 1881 to 1964 they strived to attain their motto “High Speed Service.”

—*Bill Malec, O’Fallon*

I just wanted to report on your Where Are We? photo in the February magazine. The caboose Nickel Plate 459 is located in Ramsey, Illinois.

The Nickel Plate Road served parts of the states, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois, and Missouri. Its primary connections were in Buffalo, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Indianapolis, and St. Louis. Got its name due to being a double track, nickel plated railroad.

—*Vicky McElroy,
New Douglas*

► *Continued from page 24*

April 26 EARS MICROCHIP EVENT, Effingham. On-site microchipping. No appointment needed. No geography or number limit. 10 a.m. - noon. Freewill donation. EARS - Effingham Animal Rescue Sanctuary, 408 East Fayette Avenue. Visit effinghamanimalrescue.com or call/text (217) 500-0231.

April 26 RIVERLANDS NATIVE PLANT FESTIVAL, West Alton. Come celebrate native plants and all they do for us and our environment. Local partners will share tips and local resources for native landscaping and its benefits. There will be plant giveaways (while supplies last), open tours of the USACE Riverlands greenhouse, local food, plant and artisan vendors and family friendly activities. We will also be having presentations and guided plant ID hikes with native landscaping and management experts. 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. Audubon Center at Riverlands, 301 Riverlands Way. Visit riverlands.audubon.org.

April 26 THE PLANETS AND THE MANY MOODS OF MUSIC, Godfrey. Experience a celestial journey through the cosmos of classical music as we present Holst's epic masterpiece "The Planets," in a concert that will sweep you off your feet. 7 p.m. Adult \$10; children \$5. Alton Symphony Orchestra, Lewis & Clark Community College, Hatheway Cultural Center, 5800 Godfrey Road. For tickets, visit alton-symphonyorchestra.org.

April 27 MUSHROOM FESTIVAL, Grafton. Come join us for live music, unique craft vendors, lunch in the restaurant, locally made wines, and all there is to know about morel mushrooms. The Great Morel Hunt will be held at 1 p.m. (weather and morel permitting). Join fellow hunters as you scan the ground for these delicious delicacies. If you're new to mushroom hunting the lodge will have 2 seasoned hunters

out in the woods with you for help. Once the hunt is over, see if you found the smallest, biggest, or most morels to win a free night stay to our lodge. Wear sturdy shoes. 11 a.m. - 3 p.m. This event is free and open to the public and great for all ages. Pere Marquette Lodge & Conference Center, 13653 Lodge Blvd. For more information, call Arielle at (618) 786-2331, extension 338 or visit pmlodge.net.

April 27 TELESCOPE NIGHT, Godfrey. Want to look at the universe through a telescope, but don't own one? Come out to the Talahi Lodge on the night after a full moon and we will have some set up. Bring your own telescope and we can help you use it. We will talk about how telescopes work and look at the moon and other night sky objects. 8:30 - 10:30 p.m. Free for members; \$5 for non-members. Space is limited, registration required. The Nature Institute, 2213 South Levis Lane. To register, visit thenatureinstitute.org.

May 3 TOUR DE STOOGES, Lebanon. This is a rolling start ride with riders beginning as soon as after check-in as they choose. Routes range from 9 - 100 miles. After the ride, we spread out, eat and watch Three Stooges shorts until the cows come home. Long distance rider check-in begins at 5:30 a.m. Riders must finish by 4 p.m. Lunch is served 11 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. Adults \$35; children 5 - 12 years of age \$20; family (2 adults, 2 children from same household) \$80; family child add-on (must be from same household) \$15. McKendree University Convocation Center, Alton Street. Register at gatewayeasttrails.org.

May 8-11, 15-18 LOOKING GLASS PLAYHOUSE: A BRIGHT STAR, Lebanon. A theatrical performance by the Looking Glass Playhouse. All performances begin at 7:30 p.m., except for Sunday shows, which begin at 2 p.m. Looking Glass Playhouse, 301 West

Saint Louis Street. For more information or tickets, visit lookingglassplayhouse.com.

May 9-11, 15-18 ALTON LITTLE THEATER: WOMEN OF A CERTAIN AGE, Alton. A theatrical presentation by the Alton Little Theater Company. May 9, 10, 15 and 16 at 7:30 p.m.; May 11, 17 and 18 matinees at 2 p.m. Alton Little Theater, 2450 North Henry Street. For tickets, call (618) 462-3205 or visit altonlittletheater.org.

May 10 5K RUN/WALK FOR LIFE, Effingham. Participants can choose the 5K run/walk or 1K prayer walk. Starts at EPC, continues through the Trek Trail (paved), and returns to the EPC. The course does have some hills and flat portions with beautiful scenery. \$25 per person or \$75 for family of 5. This run will support the free services offered at the Family Life Center. Effingham Performance Center, 1325 Outer Belt West. Register at runsignup.com.

May 10 BIGFOOT FESTIVAL & SPRING MARKET, Livingston. Event will feature guest speakers, presentations, stories, research and theories about Bigfoot and the unexplained. Enjoy family-friendly activities, Bigfoot themed games, photo ops and scavenger hunts. Plus, our spring vendor market and youth entrepreneur market. 9:30 a.m. - 5 p.m. Twistee Treat Diner, 908 Veterans Memorial Drive. For more information, visit pinkelephantantiquemall.com.

May 10 MARYVILLE POLICE DONUT DASH 5K WALK/RUN, Maryville. The course is a loop running on the streets and MCT bike trail. Also, there will be a chance to take off some time off by eating donuts along the course. Each donut you eat will take 30 second off your final time. Race starts at 8 a.m. and will start and finish at Drost Park, East Division Street. \$35 per runner. This event will happen rain or shine and there are no refunds. All proceeds

will go towards the Maryville Police Association, which was established to raise money for local families in times of need. Packet pickup May 8th and 9th at Maryville Police Department, 2500 North Center Street or day of race at Drost Park. To register, visit runsignup.com/race/il/maryville/maryvillepolicedonutdash.

May 10 SIP, SAMPLE, STROLL, Grafton. Participating restaurants and bars along Main Street will be serving a sample of their signature foods and beverages for participants to indulge in as you stroll up and down all the streets, shops, and attractions. 11 a.m. - 6 p.m. Tickets are required to participate and are \$30 each. For tickets, visit graftonilchamber.com.

May 10 & 11 DEPARTURE CELEBRATION, Hartford. Celebrate the departure of Lewis & Clark as they set out on an expedition of discovery. Reenactors, historic artisans, and more will celebrate this important date in Illinois and American history. Demonstrations will include artillery, muskets, candle making, fiber arts, cooking, and more. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission is free. Lewis & Clark State Historic Site, One Lewis & Clark Trail. Call (618) 251-5811 or visit campdubois.com.

May 10 - October 18 LAND OF GOSHEN COMMUNITY MARKET, Edwardsville. Dozens of vendors sell locally-grown fruits and vegetables, local, farm-raised meats, cheeses, eggs, baked goods and numerous non-food items. Expect live music, demonstrations of different arts and crafts, and gardening tips. The market runs rain or shine and only cancels in extremely inclement weather. Every Saturday 8 a.m. - noon. Downtown Edwardsville, North Second Street. Visit goshenmarket.org.

Honeybees
pollinating a field
near Effingham
are a welcome
sign — and
sound — of
spring.



THE FINAL FRAME

