

THE *Southwestern*

A SOUTHWESTERN ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE MEMBER MAGAZINE

JANUARY 2026 • VOLUME 78 • ISSUE 1

Demand Charge

NEW WAY TO SAVE

GRAIN BIN
SAFETY

CELEBRATION
OF SERVICE

HOME SERVE

CO-OP
KITCHEN

Power For Progress

APPLY FOR A \$1,200
CO-OP SCHOLARSHIP

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Baby, it's cold outside! Find the stocking hat hidden inside these pages and you could win a \$25 bill credit to help keep you warm this winter.

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09 SmartHub

If you haven't yet signed up for SmartHub, our easy-to-use account management portal, change that today and start reaping the benefits.

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ON THE COVER



Tire treads cut a path through a winter wonderland of freshly fallen snow on the General Dacey Trail along Lake Shelbyville in Shelby County. Read more about the Shelbyville destination in this month's Out & About section on page 18.

CO-OP REMINDERS

January 1 Offices closed for New Year's holiday.

January 20 Payment processing unavailable 6 p.m. to midnight (maintenance).



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/SWECL and x.com/sweci. Search for Southwestern Electric on YouTube, Instagram & LinkedIn. You can listen to our podcast, Wireside Chat, on Apple Music, Spotify, Audible and anywhere podcasts are found.



Reader Contest

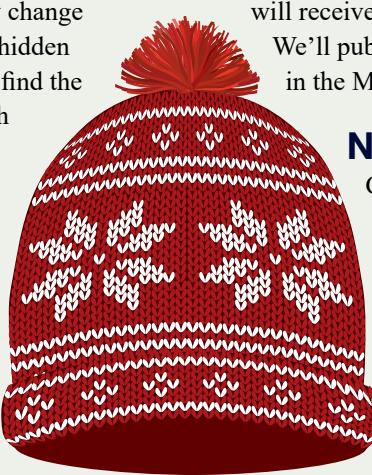
We've hidden an image of a stocking cap in your magazine. Your job is to find it. The actual image may be larger or smaller than what you see below. We may change the color or reverse or alter the image we've hidden to make the contest more challenging. If you find the stocking cap, email us or send 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 January contest, we'll need your entries in our inbox or postmarked by February 1, 2026.

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 March issue of The Southwestern.



NOVEMBER WINNER

Congratulations to Marilyn Cron of Saint Jacob. As the winner of our November Hide & Seek contest drawing, Marilyn will receive a \$25 credit on an upcoming electric bill. Thank you to everyone who participated in our November 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.
• January contest entries must be in our inbox or postmarked by February 1.
• We'll never hide the image on the front or back cover or on the page where we list the rules.

WHO DO YOU WANT TO BE?

We'd like to help you find out.

Since 1995, Southwestern Electric Cooperative's Power For Progress Scholarship Program has provided more than \$300,000 in academic assistance.

What's Available?

- 14 TOTAL SCHOLARSHIPS of \$1,200 each will be awarded for the 2026 school year.
 - 12 Southwestern Electric Scholarships
 - 1 Alan G. Libbra Memorial Scholarship
 - 1 Richard Gusewelle Memorial Scholarship
- Use the funds for tuition at any accredited U.S. university, college, or technical school.

Are You Eligible?

- You (or your parent/guardian) must be an active Southwestern Electric Co-op member.
- You must be admitted as a full-time student for Fall 2026.
- High school seniors as well as those already attending college are eligible.
- SWEC directors, employees, and their immediate families are not eligible.

DEADLINE: Friday, March 13, 2026



HAVE QUESTIONS?

Call Jennifer Gillan at (800) 637-8667 or email her at community@sweci.com.



In Celebration of Service

Cooperation is defined as a group working together to achieve a common goal.

We'd like to begin the year by recognizing 29 Southwestern Electric employees who reached service milestones in 2025. Though their responsibilities vary, they share a single goal: providing you with the best possible service, day in and day out. You see the results of their work each time you turn on the lights, when power is restored after a storm, and when you're greeted with a kind word in our office or on the phone.

Together, the employees on these pages represent more than 300 years of service to our members.

Please join us in welcoming our new employees, thanking our retirees, and celebrating the accomplishments of people committed to serving you.

NEW EMPLOYEE



Steve Cannon
Vice President of
Operations



Jennifer Gillan
Manager of
Member Services



Erin Jurke
Manager of
Business
Development



Sarah McConnell
Cashier
Receptionist



Mallory David
Accounting
Manager



Shane Howes
Warehouseman/
Groundman Truck
Driver



Brady Kinder
Forestry Foreman



Steve Smith
Forestry
Journeyman



Reid Fahrenholtz
Journeyman
Lineman



Seth Jones
Engineering
Supervisor



Amanda Loepker
Vice President of
Accounting and
Finance



Brenden Wasmuth
Forestry
Journeyman

5 YEARS OF SERVICE



Nathan Grimm
Media Specialist



Dan Page
Forestry Manager



Vic Buehler
Chief Operating
Officer



Adam French
Journeyman
Lineman



Natalie
Goestenkors
Staking Engineer



Tyler Isaak
Maintenance
Foreman



Chris Schmid
Lineman/
Polyphase
Meterman &
Tester

15 YEARS OF SERVICE



Pat Harris
Senior
Warehouseman/
Groundman Truck
Driver



Sonny Lampe
Warehouseman/
Groundman Truck
Driver



Jessica
Whitehead
Accounting Clerk

20 YEARS OF SERVICE



Mike Barns
Art Director



Carrie Knebel
Vice President of
Human Resources

35 YEARS OF SERVICE



Jo Ellen Wharton
Meter Technician



Kath Lewey
Staking Engineer

45 YEARS OF SERVICE

RETIREEs



Carla Schneider
Cashier
Receptionist

31 years of
service



Dean Schnurbusch
Senior Staking
Engineer

37 years of service



Michael Willman
Vice President of
Operations

21 years of service



*Thank you for your service
and dedication to the cooperative!*



Understanding the Demand Charge

A New Way to Save

In 2026, Southwestern will introduce a demand charge to your electric bill. This change gives you new opportunities to save money by being strategic about when you use electricity.

WHAT IS A DEMAND CHARGE?

A demand charge is based on the single highest hour of electricity use during your billing period. To understand why this matters, you need to know how utilities pay for power.

Southwestern doesn't just pay for the total amount of electricity our members use — we also pay transmission and capacity costs based on our membership's peak demand. Transmission costs cover moving power across the grid to reach you, while capacity costs ensure power plants are ready to meet everyone's highest usage moments. These charges are calculated based on when the entire system experiences its greatest strain.

When thousands of members use large amounts of electricity at the same time, particularly during hours of high demand on the regional grid, it drives up transmission and capacity costs for the cooperative. By managing your peak usage, you help reduce these expenses, and we can pass those savings along to you.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Imagine coming home at 4 p.m. and immediately turning on your space heater, starting the dishwasher, throwing clothes in the dryer, and plugging in your EV to charge. That single hour becomes your peak demand for the month, establishing your demand charge.

This isn't a new cost. It's already built into your current rate. When you lower your demand, you lower our transmission and capacity costs, and those savings come back to you.

If you stagger those same activities throughout your evening — running the dishwasher after dinner, doing laundry before bed, and charging your EV overnight — you lower your peak demand, reducing your demand charge and your overall bill.

This isn't a new cost. It's already built into your current rate. We're breaking it out separately so we can reward members who help lower the cooperative's overall peak demand. When you lower your demand, you lower our transmission and capacity costs, and those savings come back to you.

PRACTICAL WAYS TO LOWER YOUR DEMAND CHARGE

Managing your demand charge is about avoiding the simultaneous use of multiple high-wattage appliances. Here are some effective strategies:

- **Spread out major appliance use.** Don't run your heating and cooling system, water heater, dryer and dishwasher at the same time.
- **Use delay-start features.** Program dishwashers and washing machines to run during off-peak evening or overnight hours.
- **Charge EVs strategically.** Set your electric vehicle to charge overnight when other household electricity use is minimal.
- **Monitor weather extremes.** On very hot or cold days when your HVAC system works hardest, postpone running other major appliances until heating or cooling demand decreases.
- **Think about timing.** Consider which tasks need to happen immediately and which can wait a few hours.

TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR ENERGY COSTS

The demand charge puts more control in your hands. By making simple adjustments to when you use electricity, you can reduce your peak demand and lower your bill while helping the cooperative manage transmission and capacity costs more efficiently. It's a win-win that rewards thoughtful energy management.

SmartHub is your one-stop account management portal

Earlier this year, we rolled out SmartHub, our new account management portal. Sound familiar? It should, but we know life gets in the way. Fortunately, it's not too late to register and start reaping the various benefits of the app, including:

- **Billing & Payments** – No more waiting for your bill to arrive in the mail. Access your bill anytime, anywhere. Save time with easy payment options to avoid late fees and service interruptions.
- **Alerts & Notifications** – Stay informed on important account events via email or text messages. Receive the information you need to make informed decisions about your account.
- **Paperless Billing** – Save some time and a tree 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.



For more information on SmartHub and how to get it, visit our website at <https://www.sweci.com/smarthub>.

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.

Backup heat must be electric for the heat pump rebate. 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.

Building a grain bin?

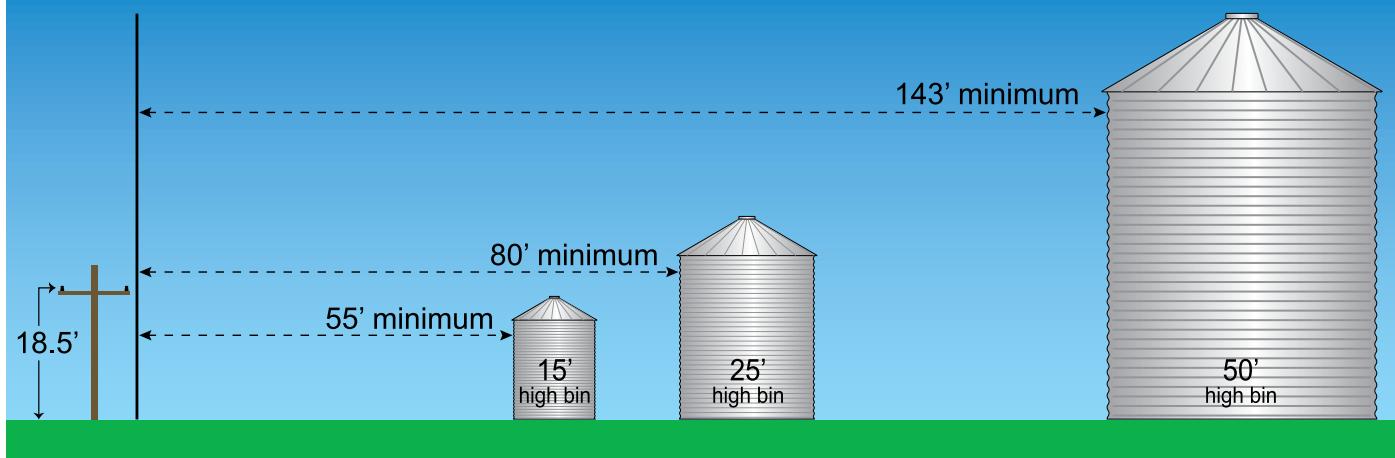
Call us first!

**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.

Minimum Required Distances from Loading Side of Grain Bin



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?

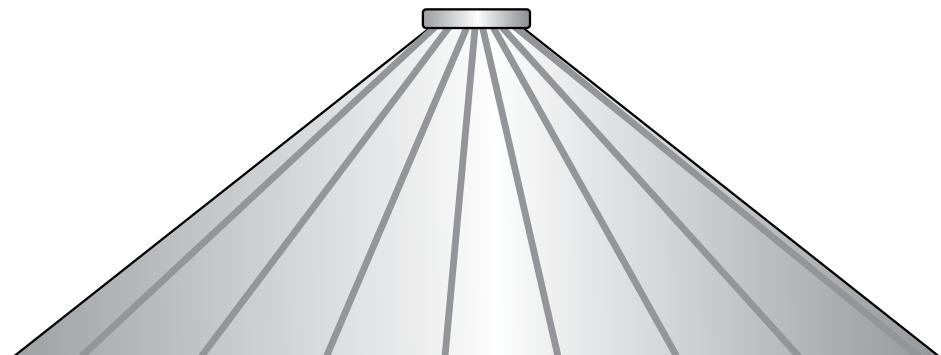
You can cut down on the danger significantly by building your bin far from power lines.

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)	Horizontal Distance from Bin (ft)	Minimum Conductor Height (ft)
15	0	33.0	33' 0"	0
	33	33.0	33' 0"	10
	40	28.3	28' 4"	15
	50	21.7	21' 8"	
	54.75	18.5	18' 6"	
20	0	38.0	38' 0"	0
	38	38.0	38' 0"	10
	50	30.0	30' 0"	15
	60	23.3	23' 4"	
	67.25	18.5	18' 6"	
25	0	43.0	43' 0"	0
	43	43.0	43' 0"	10
	50	38.3	38' 4"	15
	60	31.7	31' 8"	
	70	25.0	25' 0"	
	79.75	18.5	18' 6"	
30	0	48.0	48' 0"	0
	48	48.0	48' 0"	10
	60	40.0	40' 0"	15
	70	33.3	33' 4"	
	80	26.7	26' 8"	
	90	20.0	20' 0"	
	92.25	18.5	18' 6"	
35	0	53.0	53' 0"	0
	53	53.0	53' 0"	10
	60	48.3	48' 4"	15
	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.



Home Service Repair Plans Offer Assurance, Quality and Convenience

We've all experienced home mechanical and system failures. When breakdowns involve exterior home electrical lines, members sometimes call Southwestern to request repairs. Many members understandably assume all electrical lines outside their home are owned by the cooperative. But components that connect a member's home to the cooperative's distribution system — elements like the weather head, insulator, riser, meter base or loop, and service entrance conductor — are owned by the member.

That's why Southwestern partnered with HomeServe USA, an independent provider of home repair service solutions. HomeServe offers home service repair plans that protect a homeowner's budget from expenses that come with water, sewer, electrical and heating and cooling home emergencies. Their external electrical line plan will pay for repair or replacement of items that your homeowners insurance may not cover when the components fail due to normal wear and tear.

If something goes wrong with a system or appliance covered by a HomeServe repair plan, the member can call HomeServe anytime, 24/7, at 833-334-1874. The company will dispatch a pre-screened, local repair technician to the member's home to diagnose the problem. The technician will fix the issue or replace the covered item as detailed in the home repair plan.

HomeServe is available to take emergency repair calls around the clock. Technicians dispatched through HomeServe are local, licensed and insured. Their work is covered by a one-year HomeServe guarantee.

HomeServe lessens the financial burden of unexpected breakdowns by paying the bill on covered repairs up to the benefit amount, and eases the stress and inconvenience that comes with the event. You don't have to research repair bids or vet and hire a technician.

And if the work doesn't measure up to your expectations? HomeServe will work to address the issue as quickly and comprehensively as possible.

Southwestern has partnered with HomeServe to offer home service repair plans as an optional member service. No one is obligated to buy a plan. Southwestern recommends that members interested in a plan speak with their insurance agent before buying, to make sure the terms and conditions listed in the plan aren't already addressed by your homeowners policy.

HomeServe returns a portion of the proceeds from plan sales to Southwestern Electric Cooperative. The funds support Southwestern Electric's energy efficiency programs and other energy-related initiatives. You can read more about HomeServe at www.HomeServe.com and view videos on HomeServe's YouTube channel.

Get peace of mind against emergency home repair costs

Southwestern Electric Cooperative has partnered with HomeServe to offer members optional coverage to help protect against the costs of unexpected breakdowns.

See why over **4.8 million customers** trust HomeServe.



Scan this code, call 1-833-334-1874 or visit HomeServe.com/SWECI to learn more about HomeServe service repair plans.



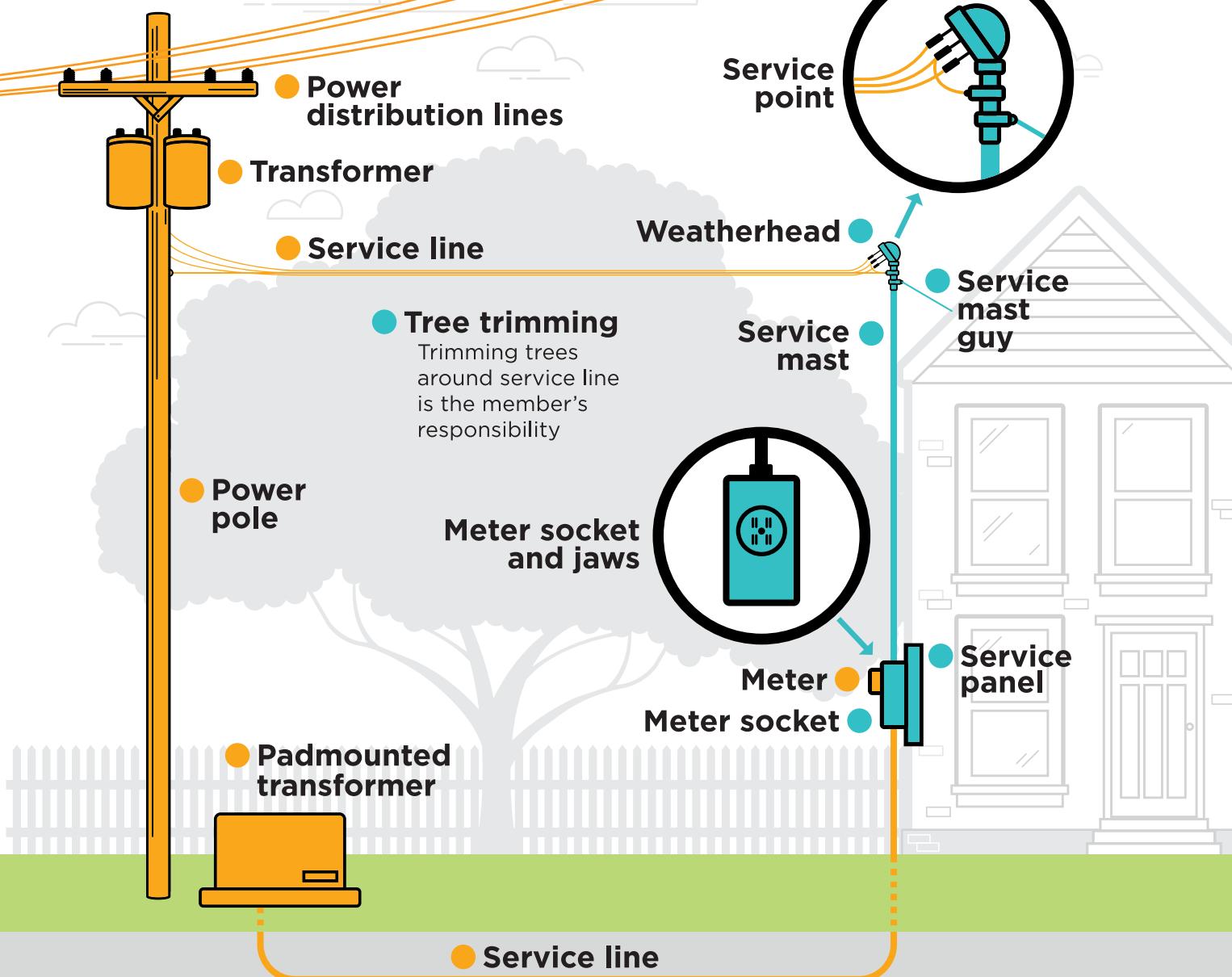
Who Owns What?

Electric Co-op Owned Equipment vs Member-Owned Equipment

This graphic depicts equipment owned by the co-op (in gold) and the member (in blue). If a storm damages any equipment owned by the co-op, we are responsible for repairs. If a storm damages any member-owned equipment, the member is responsible for repairs. Repairs to member-owned equipment should be performed by a licensed electrician.

● Co-op owned

● Member-owned



Note: This graphic depicts overhead and underground service. Please be aware of which type of service you receive at your home or business.

ENERGY SAVING RESOLUTIONS

Small Investments Add Up To Year-Round Savings

by Energy Manager Julie Lowe

When you're pressed for time and living on a tight budget, making home improvements may not seem worth the effort. But small investments made with energy efficiency in mind can keep cash in your pocket year-round. And you don't have to spend the time or money all at once. Commit to making a single energy-efficiency investment each month, and watch your savings grow. Here are 12 projects to take you through the year.

JANUARY

Lowering your thermostat just a few degrees during winter can save as much as \$85 per year on your energy bill. Programmable and smart thermostats make it easy to save by offering pre-programmed settings to regulate your home's temperature throughout the year, or allowing you to control settings remotely.

Southwestern Electric is now offering a \$50 rebate on the purchase of a smart thermostat. See www.sweci.com for details!



FEBRUARY

Sunlight can help your heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) system do its work in winter. During cold months, open your curtains and blinds during the day to harness the sun, so it can help you heat your home. (In summer, use light-colored window treatments to shut out the sun, keeping your home cooler.)

MARCH

Make sure your refrigerator is on your spring cleaning to-do list. Throw out expired items, clean the refrigerator inside and out and check the temperature gauge. For maximum operating efficiency, your refrigerator's temperature should be set between 37 and 40 degrees Fahrenheit.



APRIL

A little caulk goes a long way toward energy savings. Caulking cracks and openings to the outside can save you more than \$200 a year.



MAY

If you're buying a dehumidifier to keep your home comfortable, look for the ENERGY STAR label. ENERGY STAR certified dehumidifiers have more efficient refrigeration coils, compressors, and fans than conventional models, which means they remove the same amount of moisture, but use nearly 30 percent less energy. Look for a model that has the feature to shut off when the environment reaches the chosen humidity level, or has a timer you can set to control how frequently the unit runs.

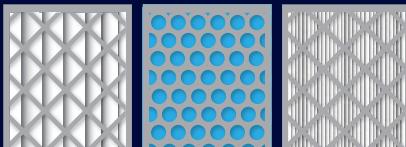
The annual energy saved by an ENERGY STAR certified dehumidifier could run your ENERGY STAR certified refrigerator for four months.

JUNE

Hire a contractor to check your heating and cooling system. Commit to an annual HVAC system check-up from a qualified technician. A good contractor will make sure your home's heating and cooling system is operating safely and efficiently. The up-front expense can save you money over time, and it's an investment in the health of your home and family.

AUGUST

Change your home's air filters regularly—at least every three months. Dirty filters restrict air flow and reduce the efficiency of your heating and cooling system, forcing it to work harder year-round. This wastes energy and can reduce the life of expensive HVAC equipment.



SEPTEMBER

Seal leaking ducts in your basement. You'll help your HVAC system direct conditioned air where you need it, and keep more of your money where you want it — in your wallet.



OCTOBER

Get ready for winter by insulating your attic. Adding nine or more inches of insulation could save you more than \$150 a year.



NOVEMBER

While you're decorating for the holidays, swap out your home's traditional light bulbs for energy-efficient LEDs.



DECEMBER

Put a new ENERGY STAR appliance at the top of your Christmas wish list. Upgrading appliances like washing machines to ENERGY STAR-rated models can save up to \$140 per year.



For more energy efficiency tips, call Julie Lowe, energy manager, at (800) 637-8667.

Generator Safety

Southwestern Electric Cooperative is urging members who use generators to exercise caution. "When used correctly, generators are a sound, short-term solution to a power outage. But if the proper precautions aren't taken, generators can be deadly to the people using them and to linemen working to restore power," said Joe Richardson, editor of The Southwestern.

"Read your owner's manual and follow the manufacturer's instructions," Richardson said. "It should cover general safety guidelines as well as procedures that apply specifically to your model."

Richardson cautioned members against connecting a generator directly to their home's wiring. "That can backfeed power into our distribution lines. Our transformers will step-up that energy, increasing it by thousands of volts. And that's more than enough to injure or kill a lineman who's working on that system, even if he's a

long way from your home."

Never plug a generator into a household outlet, said Richardson. "That can also backfeed power into the distribution system, energize power lines and injure family members, neighbors or linemen."

Generators also produce carbon monoxide, a colorless, odorless and deadly gas. Never use your generator indoors or in an attached garage, Richardson said.

"Run it outdoors in a well-ventilated, dry area, far away from air intakes to your home."

Homeowners should plug individual appliances into portable generators using heavy-duty, outdoor-rated cords with a wire gauge suitable for the appliance load.

"All the standard cord precautions apply. Don't use extension cords with exposed wires or worn insulation. Make sure the cords don't present a tripping hazard, and don't run them under rugs where heat could build up and start a fire. Be selective with what you plug into your generator," said Richardson. Overloaded cords can cause fires and damage appliances.

"You also need to make sure your generator is properly grounded," he said. "Generators get very hot while they're running. They can deliver a nasty burn. Remind kids to stay clear of them."



PHOTO COURTESY HONDA

TRANSFER SWITCH AND GENERATOR SAFETY TIPS

- Transfer switches make life easier during a power outage while keeping linemen safe as they restore power. Without a transfer switch, power from a generator can backfeed into utility lines and electrocute linemen.
- Your transfer switch should be wired to meet standards outlined in the National Electric Code (NEC) and all local codes.
- Talk to your electrician to make sure you have the proper sized wire to accommodate your generator and the needs of your home.
- Never use a generator indoors.
- Inspect wire from your generator to the power inlet for tears in the insulation.
- Make sure the voltage your generator produces won't damage your electronics.
- Never plug a portable generator into an outlet in your home. It can backfeed energy into power lines and compromise the safety of your family, neighbors, and service crews.

TRANSFER SWITCHES

The only safe way to connect a generator to your home's existing wiring is to hire a licensed electrical contractor to install a double-throw transfer switch. The switch isolates your household, forming a break between the power coming from your generator and Southwestern's distribution system.

"Transfer switches make life easier during a power outage while keeping our linemen safe as they restore service," said Southwestern Electric Cooperative Engineering Supervisor Dylan Casey. "Without a transfer switch, power from a generator can backfeed into utility lines and electrocute line workers."

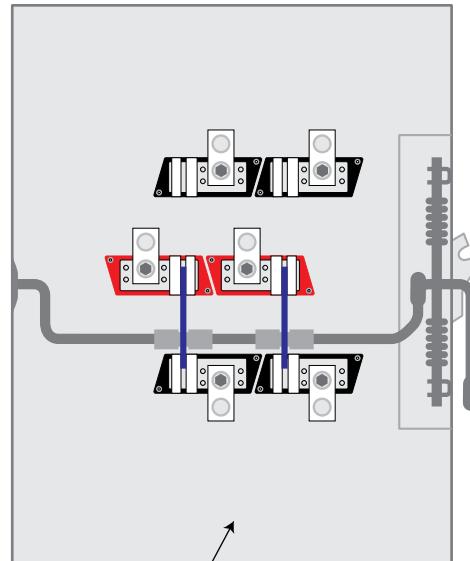
Casey said transfer switches may be manual or automatic. "With a manual transfer switch, during a power outage, you have to manually switch power from the utility to your backup source." By

contrast, automatic transfer switches detect an outage and activate without assistance from the homeowner.

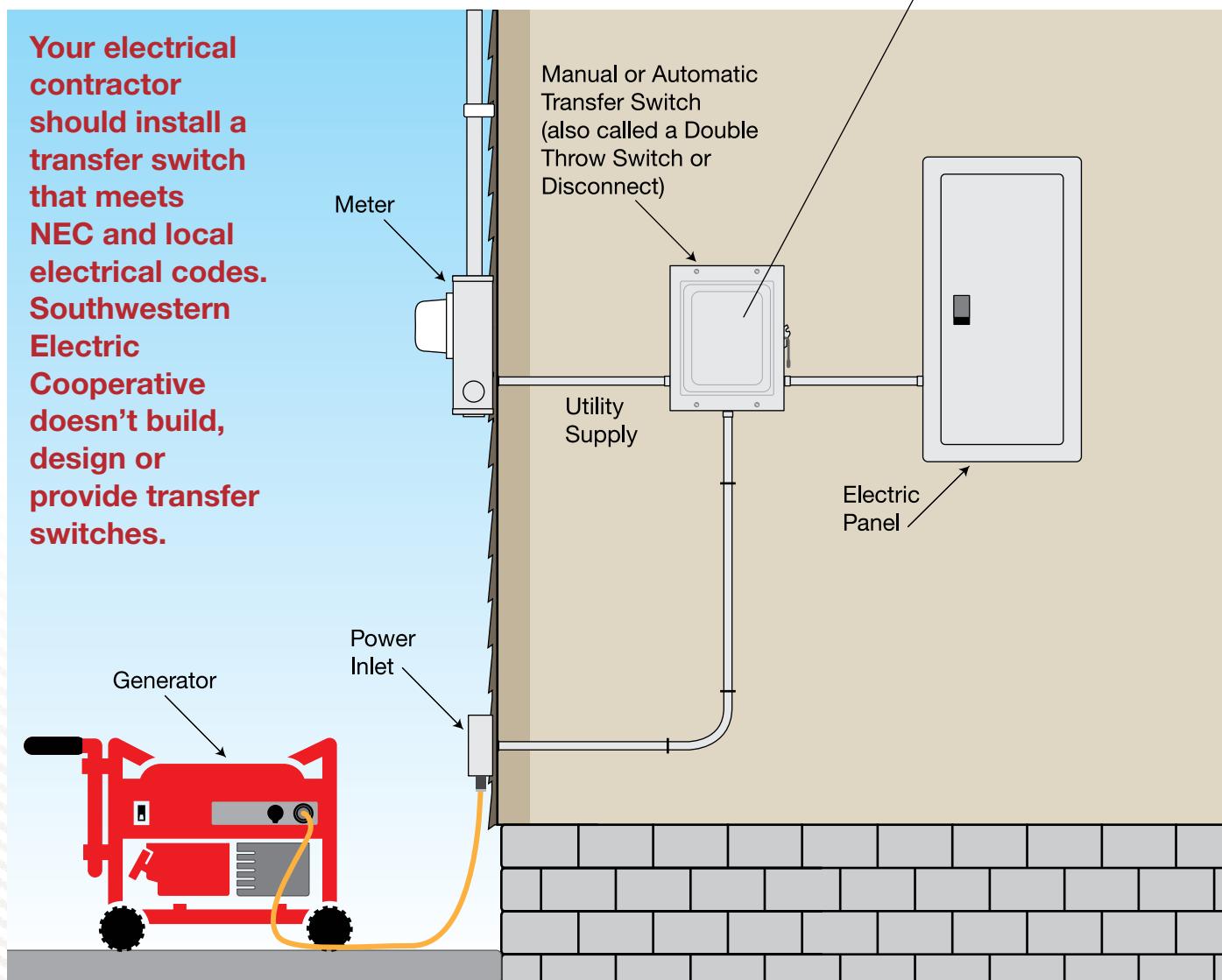
"Inspect the wire going from the generator to the power inlet box for tears in the insulation," Casey said. "And be aware of the voltage you're generating to ensure you don't damage your electronics."

Your transfer switch should be wired to meet standards outlined in the National Electric Code (NEC) and all local codes, Casey added. "Talk to your electrician to make sure you have the proper sized wire to accommodate your generator and the needs of your home."

These guidelines are in place to protect the safety of our linemen and our members, said Casey. "We rely on our members' participation to help us take care of everyone involved."



Your electrical contractor should install a transfer switch that meets NEC and local electrical codes. Southwestern Electric Cooperative doesn't build, design or provide transfer switches.



THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

The General Dacey Trail in Shelbyville is one you have to see for yourself – even if, and perhaps explicitly because, I didn’t

Story by Nathan Grimm | Photos by Mike Barns

The best-laid schemes of mice and men often go awry. That maxim, from Robert Burns’ 1785 poem “To a Mouse,” is one of my favorites. Whenever I put off a task only to have life get in the way and that task does not get done in a timely manner, I remind myself that our best-laid plans seldom go the way we think they will.

Recently, the reminder has come in the form of snow-covered yard waste bags. My intentions were pure – collect the leaves from my yard before the

late-November snow had a chance to bury them for the winter – but in lieu of immediately taking them to the compost center in town, I instead set them near the curb as a prompt to take them soon. As life would have it, the snow arrived before they departed, hence the yard waste bags now being snow-covered yard waste bags.

Similarly, I had good intentions of getting to General Dacey Trail in Shelbyville before this edition of the magazine needed to be shipped off. The multipurpose Shelby County trail

system, which was opened nearly two decades ago in 2006, has something for everyone, offering paths of different lengths and difficulties for those looking to walk, run or ride adjacent scenic Lake Shelbyville.

Before I could get to Shelbyville’s Forest Park to check out the trail for myself, though, my best-laid plans went awry. One long holiday weekend, two separate head colds and roughly six inches of snow foiled my hopes of taking in the sights, leaving me to instead peruse the still-beautiful shots gathered





by Southwestern Electric Art Director
Mike Barns during his visit to the trail.

Fortunately, another well-worn maxim is the saying that a picture is worth a thousand words, meaning fewer of mine in this space leaves room for more of his. Of course, at the end of the day, pictures can only tell you so much; to fully grasp the serenity of the rolling hills and peaceful lake, we recommend visiting the General Dacey Trail yourself.

Whenever life allows.

Photos continued on page 25 ►



WHO • WHAT • WHERE

Ray Litzau of Dorsey sent us one of the best puzzle solutions we've ever received. When Ray solved the November puzzle, naming the park that served as our mystery location, he had an unfair advantage: He designed the site. The journey from concept to completion spanned years, involved countless volunteers, and featured an abandoned sewer plant.

It's a story we're privileged to share in the words that follow.

On a related note, we deeply appreciate the cards, letters and email we receive from you each month. Your voices and stories make Who~What~Where one of the most engaging segments of the magazine.

Thanks to all of you who shared your antiques and attic finds with us in recent years. Our puzzle pages remind us we're linked by a common culture and community, and that the story is still being written today — by you. We look forward to seeing more of your

stories in the coming year. Maybe some of them will relate to the photo on the facing page. Can you identify this month's mystery figure?

We look forward to hearing from you.

Meanwhile, thanks to Ray for envisioning an emblematic shared space (which the editor enjoyed visiting), and the many readers who took time to identify the local landmark he designed.

Here's what Ray and several other Southwestern readers had to say.

I was part of the teams that built Maryville Centre on Highway 40/I-64 in west St. Louis County and Riverport located at I-70 and Earth City Expressway (including the amphitheater). Each year of my career, I found them (or they found me) to donate my talents. The most enjoyed design is the Robert Wadlow plaza in Alton.

Rotary Park was by far the "Longest

Donation." We started with an abandoned sewer plant. Got delayed by the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency due to on-site contamination which had to be encapsulated.

I was amazed by the number of large service utilities which passed through this site. The Rotary logo is positioned in the corner due to the location of these utilities. Future access to these utilities is still possible by working within the adjacent landscape garden.

My one year donation plan got modified to three. I know my final drawings are dated October 2003.

All construction was accomplished by members of the Bethalto Rotary who volunteered their time. One member, Austin Opp, was extremely valuable in building the forms for the plaza.

The set screw mark on the gear key is my Rotary coin. It was planned into the design.

Of all the service projects I worked on over the years, Rotary Park is the only one which carries my name. The members of the Bethalto Rotary were impressed that I stayed with the project through all the delays and helped oversee the construction. They honored me by placing my name on the park's marquee sign.

In 1993, I was in charge of the Riverport Levee (privately held at the time) which jammed the flooding Missouri River into an undersized bridge. I have a Landsat picture from 20 miles up that shows my work on the river's highest peak day. Had we failed, I-70 would have been under water and all of Earth City and Corporate Woods



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*.

would have flooded. Missouri would have lost 10% of the State GDP.

I have always wondered how far up the Rotary Gear is visible. Maybe you know someone who can tell us? [Editor's Note: If you can shed some light on Ray's question, please email joe.richardson@sweci.com.]

In closing, I'd like to add that the local Rotary clubs provide camaraderie with men and women who share the belief that Service Before Self can enhance their communities. There may be someone out there who sees your article whose talents may be the very cog to accomplish something in their community.

I recommend Rotary!

—Ray Litzau, Dorsey

This is the Rotary wheel in Rotary Park in Bethalto, Ill., believed to be the largest Rotary wheel in the world.

—Gary Cain, Worden, Member of Rotary Club of Bethalto for more than 50 years

I believe the photograph on page 22-23 of the December 2025 "The Southwestern" is The Bethalto Rotary Club on West Corbin.

We ride past it on our bike rides from time to time.

Thank you and Merry Christmas.
—Heidi & Tim Bertels, Moro

The December 2025 "Where are we?" puzzler photo was taken in Bethalto, Illinois. The Rotary Park, located at the corner of Grant St. and West Corbin, was built by the Bethalto Rotary Club in 2005/2006 in commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of Rotary International.

With a span of more than 80 feet, this Rotary Gear logo is believed to be the largest in existence. This park sits on a property that is the site of a former sewage treatment plant.

—Bill Malec, O'Fallon



This is a picture of the Bethalto Rotary Park, at the corner of Grant and West Corbin Streets in Bethalto.

It was built in 2005/2006 by the Rotary Club in commemoration of the 100 anniversary of Rotary International. With a span of more than 80 feet, this Rotary Gear logo is believed to be the largest in existence.

This park sits on a site that used to be a former sewage treatment plant.

—Kathie Brooks, Bethalto

It looks like what the townspeople of Bethalto call Rotary Park, located on the corner of Grant Street and West Corbin. It was built back in 2005 by the Rotary Club to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of Rotary International. Not sure if it still is but at one time was the largest Rotary Gear Logo in existence.

—Jim McDonald, Moro

CO-OP KITCHEN

Breakfast & Beyond

Breakfast Brunch Quiche prepared & photographed by Mike Barns, mike.barns@sweci.com

BREAKFAST PIZZA

Ingredients

- 1 pound pork sausage
- 1 roll of 10 crescent rolls
- 8 ounces shredded mozzarella cheese
- 8 ounces shredded sharp cheddar cheese
- 6 eggs
- salt and pepper to taste
- 1/2 cup milk
- 1/2 teaspoon oregano

Directions

1. Brown sausage until done, but not hard. Drain and let cool.
2. Unroll crescent rolls in two strips and lay in greased 9 x 13 inch baking dish.
3. Pinch seams together.
4. Crumble sausage over rolls.
5. Mix cheeses together and sprinkle over sausage.
6. Beat eggs, milk, salt, pepper and oregano together.
7. Spread egg mixture evenly over cheese.
8. Bake at 350° for 35 minutes.
9. Let sit 5 minutes before serving.

BREAKFAST BRUNCH QUICHE

Ingredients

- 1/2 pound bacon
- 1 (9 inch) unbaked pie shell
- 1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese
- 5 eggs
- 3/4 cup milk
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 1 cup spinach chopped
- 1/2 cup mushrooms chopped

Directions

1. Cook bacon, drain, and crumble.
2. Line pie shell with half of the cheese and half of the bacon.
3. Combine eggs, milk, salt and pepper and beat well.
4. Stir in spinach and mushrooms.
5. Pour egg mixture evenly over the cheese and bacon.
6. remaining cheese and bacon over egg mixture.
7. Bake at 375° for 25 - 30 minutes until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean.

Can substitute bacon with sausage.

OVEN BAKED FRENCH TOAST

Ingredients

- 1 (1 pound) loaf French bread, cut into 1 inch slices
- 8 eggs
- 2 cups milk
- 2 cups half and half
- 2 teaspoons vanilla
- 1/2 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- 3/4 cup butter
- 1 1/3 cups packed brown sugar
- 3 tablespoons corn syrup
- 1 1/3 cups chopped pecans

Directions

1. Arrange bread in a 9 x 13 inch baking dish in one layer.
2. Combine the eggs, milk, half and half, vanilla, nutmeg and cinnamon in a blender and process until smooth. Pour mixture over the bread.
3. Chill, covered, in the refrigerator overnight.
4. Combine the butter, brown sugar, corn syrup and pecans in bowl. Mix well.
5. Spoon butter mixture over the bread. Bake at 350° for 50 minutes.

TOMATO TOPPED BREAKFAST CASSEROLE

Ingredients

- 7 frozen hash brown patties
- 3/4 bag baby spinach sliced
- 1 pound breakfast sausage browned and drained
- 3 cups shredded cheddar cheese
- 12 large eggs
- 3/4 cup half & half
- 1 1/2 teaspoons salt
- 1 teaspoon pepper
- 4 medium-sized tomatoes sliced
- 2 tablespoons parsley flakes
- 1/4 cup parmesan cheese

Directions

1. Pan fry hash browns according to package directions.
2. Crumble the patties and spread them into greased 9 x 13 inch baking dish.
3. Evenly top the hash browns with spinach.
4. Crumble and distribute sausage evenly over spinach.
5. Sprinkle 2 1/2 cups cheddar cheese over sausage.
6. Whisk together eggs, half & half, salt and pepper.
7. Pour egg mixture over the cheese and pat down with spatula.
8. Top evenly with tomatoes and sprinkle on remaining 1/2 cup cheddar cheese, parsley flakes and parmesan cheese in order. Bake at 350° for 45 minutes.

CIN-A-BONS

Ingredients

- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 1 tablespoon water
- 1/8 cup chopped pecans
- 1 package of 8 Grands biscuits
- 1 tablespoon butter melted
- 2 teaspoons cinnamon
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1/2 cup confectioners sugar
- 1 tablespoon milk
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 teaspoon vanilla

Directions

1. Cook the brown sugar, butter, honey and water until clear.
2. Pour into a 9 x 9 inch baking dish.
3. Sprinkle the pecans over the brown sugar mixture.
4. Cut the biscuits into fourths and place on top of pecans.
5. Brush melted butter over the biscuits.
6. Combine cinnamon and sugar and sprinkle over top.
7. Bake at 400° for 18 minutes. Invert onto a plate while still warm.
8. Mix together confectioners sugar, milk, butter and vanilla.
9. Drizzle confectioners sugar mixture over the top and serve.

CURRENT EVENTS

January 2-4 LET'S GO FISHING SHOW, Collinsville. There will be a wide variety of fishing gear, live demonstrations, kids activities, boats, exhibits and seminars. Friday noon - 8 p.m.; Saturday 9 a.m. - 7 p.m.; Sunday 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Adults \$7; children 6-15 years of age \$3.50; children 5 years of age and younger are free. Gateway Center, One Gateway Drive. Visit gatewaycenter.com.

January 3, 10, 17, 24, 31; February 7, 14 EAGLE SHUTTLE TOURS, Alton. Enjoy a 90-minute guided tour of some of the best American bald eagle watching spots around the Alton area. Sites may include Clifton Terrace, Audubon Center, Maple Island and National Great Rivers Museum. Tickets are non-refundable unless the tour is cancelled due to weather. Shuttles are limited to 15 passengers and are not ADA accessible. Tickets must be purchased in advance. 10 a.m. - noon. Admission is \$22.50. Tour begins and ends at Alton Visitor's Center, 200 Piasa Street. For tickets, visit riversandrout.es.com/things-to-do/buy-tickets.

January 4 CONFLUENCE CREATORS, West Alton. Shop unique handmade goods, connect with fellow outdoor enthusiasts, and support conservation-minded artisans. 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. Audubon Center at Riverlands, 301 Riverlands Way. Call (636) 899-0090 or visit riverlands.audubon.org.

January 10, 17, 24 and 31 EAGLE SATURDAYS, West Alton. Eagle Saturdays offer several opportunities to learn about these amazing birds and enjoy time spent outdoors. Visitors can pre-order tickets (\$10 each) for small group Eagle Meet & Greets, join in on guided Swan & Eagle Walks (registration not required), cozy up by the campfire with some s'mores, or do all three. Event begins at 10 a.m. Eagle Meet & Greets at 10 and 11 a.m., 1 and 2 p.m. Swan & Eagle walks at 10 and 11 a.m. Audubon Center at Riverlands, 301 Riverlands Way. Call (636) 899-0090 or visit riverlands.audubon.org.

January 10; February 7 EAGLE MEET AND GREET, Grafton. The World Bird Sanctuary will bring a bald eagle for up-close viewing. Take a photo

with one of the handsome birds and learn interesting facts about eagles and their conservation. 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. Admission is free. Grafton Visitor Center, 950 East Main Street. Visit riversandrout.es.com.

January 11 SWAN SUNDAY, West Alton. Learn about and view trumpeter swans on the sanctuary through spotting scopes in our heated building. Enjoy themed crafts throughout the day. 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. "Swans of the Confluence" seminar by Paul Moffett in the classroom at noon. Trumpeter swan roost watch from 4 - 5:30 p.m. Audubon Center at Riverlands, 301 Riverlands Way. Call (636) 899-0090 or visit riverlands.audubon.org.

January 17 CANDLE LIGHT WALK, Shelbyville. Come and enjoy the 500 luminaries on the trail that light up 2 miles. Over 200 luminaries will be hanging in the trees also. Enjoy hot chocolate and cider near the huge bon fire. If the weather looks to be raining, high winds, or extreme temperatures we will push the event back a week or two in hopes of better weather so be sure to check for updates on our Facebook page. 6 - 8 p.m. General Dacey Trail at Forest Park, East North 9th Street. Visit facebook.com/DaceyTrail/.

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.

January 17 KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS PANCAKE & SAUSAGE BREAKFAST, Greenville. 7 a.m. - 1 p.m. Adults \$10; children 5 - 12 years of age \$5; children under 5 are free. Dine in or carry out. Bulk sausage will be available for sale. St. Lawrence Church Hall, 512 South Prairie Street. For more information, call Joe Whalen at (618) 292-4519.

January 18 BALD EAGLE FESTIVAL AND LIVE BIRD SHOW, Grafton. Meet our nation's majestic symbol. Festival will have unique vendors, restaurant favorites, drink specials, free face painting, live bird shows, and more. Our Masters of the Sky Bird Show, presented by The

Continued on page 26 ▶

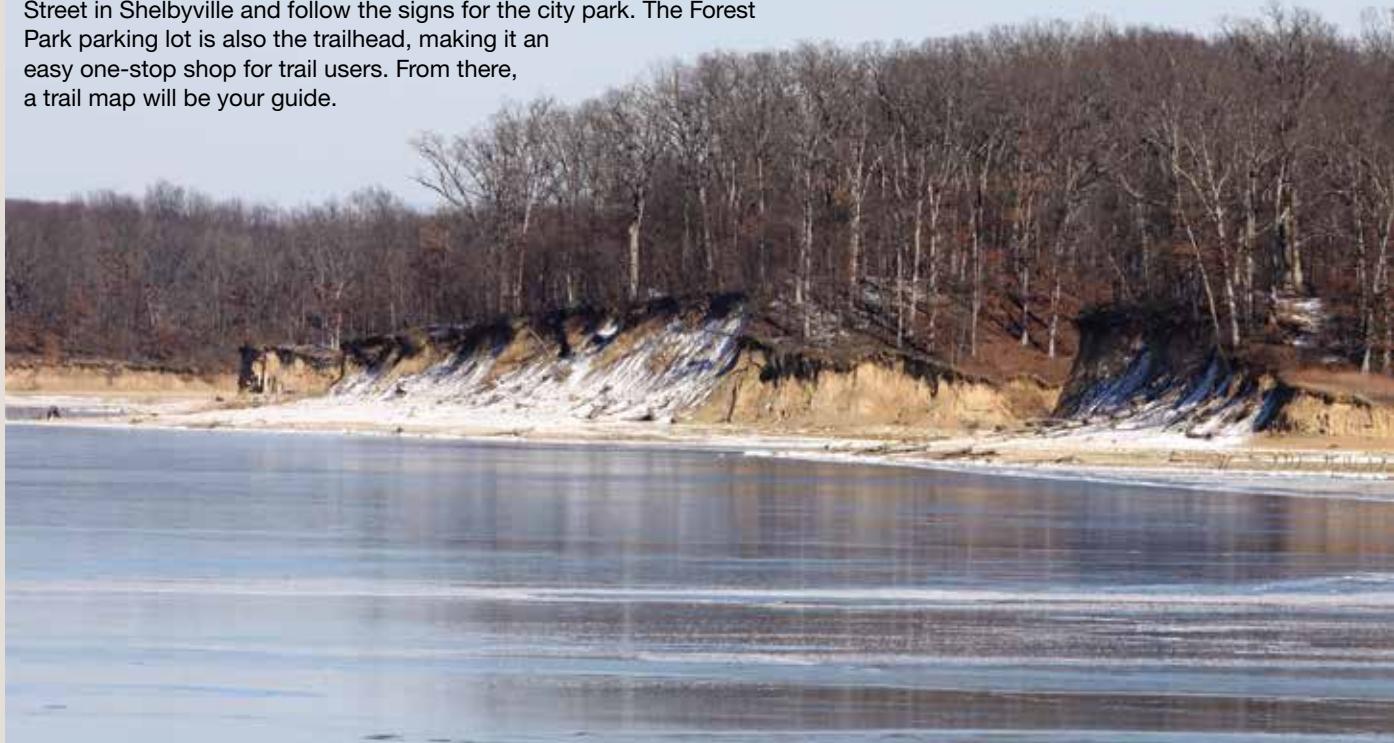


► *Continued from page 19*



GETTING THERE

Coming from the west, as many of our members will be, the best course is taking Interstate 70 east to the St. Elmo exit, exit 76. From there, head north on Illinois Route 128 for about 27 miles until it runs into Illinois Route 16. Turn right onto Route 16 and follow it approximately four miles; make a left onto North Morgan Street in Shelbyville and follow the signs for the city park. The Forest Park parking lot is also the trailhead, making it an easy one-stop shop for trail users. From there, a trail map will be your guide.



► *Continued from page 24*

World Bird Sanctuary, will introduce guests to owls, falcons and eagles. Shows at 11 a.m., 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. Admission fees may apply. 11 - 3 p.m. Pere Marquette Lodge & Conference Center, 13653 Lodge Blvd. Call (618) 786-2331, ext. 338 or visit pmlodge.net.

January 18 FAMILY SUNDAY FUNDAY, West Alton. A day full of fun for the whole family. Throughout the day enjoy live music with Marko Polo, face painting, themed crafts, a beginners bird hike, and an educational activity table. Beginners bird hike 10 a.m.; Marko Polo live music 11 a.m. 1 p.m.; face painting 11 a.m. 1 p.m. Audubon Center at Riverlands, 301 Riverlands Way. Call (636) 899-0090 or visit riverlands.audubon.org.

January 22 GATEWAY WEDDING SHOW, Collinsville. This show takes the stress out of planning your next event. You can meet more vendors than you could visit in a month. We bring you a face-to-face sampling of virtually everything you'll need to plan your perfect event. 4:30 - 9 p.m. Admission is free. Gateway Center, One Gateway Drive. Visit gatewaycenter.com.

January 22-25, 29-31; February 1 ALICE BY HEART, 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. Admission fees vary. Looking Glass Playhouse, 301 West Saint Louis Street. Call (618) 537-4962 or visit lookingglassplayhouse.com.

January 23 & 24 WINTERFEST HAMFEST, Collinsville. The Midwest's largest Hamfest offers more than 30,000 square feet of convention space with multiple vendors, flea market, forums and speakers. Meet and greet Friday at Colton's Steakhouse with social hour at 5 p.m. and dinner at 6 p.m.

(reservations required); Saturday 8 a.m. - 1 p.m. at Gateway Center, One Gateway Drive. For more information and tickets, visit winterfest.slsrc.org.

January 23-25, 29-31; February 1 ALTON LITTLE THEATER: CHICAGO, Alton. This Tony Award-winning musical tells the story of Roxie Hart and Velma Kelly as they fight for fame in the 1920s criminal justice system. Admission is \$25. Thursday - Saturday at 7:30 p.m.; Sunday at 2 p.m. Alton Little Theater, 2450 North Henry Street. For tickets, call (618) 462-3205 or visit altonlittletheater.org.

January 25 BIRDS OF WINTER SYMPOSIUM SUNDAY, West Alton. Enjoy an education table, crafts and locally brewed beverages from Fortitude Coffee. View wild eagles and swans in our heated building through high powered spotting scopes. Enjoy our series of educational workshops and presentations. Event begins at 10 a.m. Birds of the Confluence presentation with Paul Moffett noon - 1 p.m. Learn all about the history and art of carving duck decoys with Carver Mike Steed 1 - 2 p.m. Gull identification workshop with Bill Rowe 2 - 3:30 p.m. Guided gull roost watch with birders Bill Rowe, Matt Rowe and Jonah Eckels-Galbreath 3:30 - 5 p.m. All presentations will be held in the classroom. Programs are free, but registration is encouraged to ensure you have a seat. Audubon Center at Riverlands, 301 Riverlands Way. Call (636) 899-0090 or visit riverlands.audubon.org.

January 30; February 2-4, 18-20, 25-27; March 6 BALD EAGLE DAYS, Grafton. Learn to distinguish between immature and mature bald eagles and why they winter in our area. Programs begin at the park's visitor center at 8:30 a.m. (reservations required). There will be a video presentation and program followed by a drive to view bald eagles. Dress warmly, have a full tank of gas

and bring binoculars. Pere Marquette Lodge & Conference Center, 13653 Lodge Blvd. For reservations, call (618) 786-3323 ext. 1.

January 31 SAUSAGE SUPER, ALHAMBRA. All meals will be in Carry-Out containers. There will be separate parking for those that wish to eat on site. Seating will be available in the upper parish hall. Drive-thru from 1 - 7 p.m. All meals are \$15. Salem United Church of Christ, 1117 West North Street, Alhambra. For more information, visit salemuccalh.org.

January 31 & February 1 HOME SHOW, Effingham. Check out the latest products in the home building and remodeling industry. Explore current trends in home building and construction and meet professionals who are ready to help you remodel or build your dream home. Saturday 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.; Sunday 11 a.m. - 4 p.m. Thelma Keller Convention Center, 1202 North Keller Drive. Visit effinghamhba.com.

February 1 BIRDING SUNDAY, West Alton. Enjoy an education table, crafts and locally brewed beverages from Fortitude Coffee. View wild eagles and swans in our heated building through high powered spotting scopes. This Sunday is all about birding with a series of guided hikes and a presentation for visitors to enjoy. Event is from 9 a.m. - 2 p.m. Guided bird hikes with St. Louis Audubon Society 9 - 9:45 a.m. and 10 - 10:45 a.m. Great Backyard Bird Count training with Riverlands staff at noon. All programs are free, but registration is encouraged to ensure you have a seat in the classroom. Audubon Center at Riverlands, 301 Riverlands Way. Call (636) 899-0090 or visit riverlands.audubon.org.

February 6-8, 13-15 BOEING BOEING, Breese. A theatrical presentation by Clinton County Showcase. A witty and touching comedy about friendship, living life to the fullest, and

finding joy in the unexpected. All performances begin at 8 p.m. except for the last Sunday showing, which is at 2 p.m. General admission \$15. Historic Avon Theatre, 535 North 2nd Street. For reservations, call (618) 526-2866 or visit clintoncountyshowcase.com.

February 12 METRO THEATRE CO. PRESENTS: LIFE DOESN'T FRIGHTEN ME, Lebanon. Inspired by Dr. Maya Angelou's powerful poem Life Doesn't Frighten Me, this original play by multi-disciplinary hip-hop artist Paige Hernandez brings to life the everyday fears we all face—and the courage within us to rise above them. Told through spoken word, hip-hop, and dance, the story celebrates every child's unique strength and reminds us all that we are indeed fearless royalty. 10 a.m. Ticket fees vary. The Hett Center for the Arts, 400 North Alton Street. For tickets, visit thehett.com.

February 21 & 22 GATEWAY HOME SHOW, Collinsville. The show features a wide variety of home improvement professionals in a fun, interactive environment. Visitors can meet, compare, and connect with expert exhibitors, leaving inspired and confident to start planning. Friday 10 a.m. - 8 p.m.; Saturday 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. Register online for a free entry pass; \$10 at the door. Gateway Center, One Gateway Drive. gatewayhomeshow.com.

February 22 CHRISTINE BREWER'S MUSICAL JOURNEY, Lebanon. Christine Brewer's appearances in opera, concert, and recital are marked by her own unique timbre, at once warm and brilliant combined with a vibrant personality and emotional honesty reminiscent of the great sopranos of the past. Her discography includes over 25 recordings. Event will also feature acclaimed pianist Alla Voskoboinikova. 3 p.m. Ticket fees vary. The Hett Center for the Arts, 400 North Alton Street. For tickets, visit thehett.com.



Boughs limned
in shadow
and snow turn
trees into living
sculptures at
Carlyle's Eldon
Hazlet State
Park.

THE FINAL FRAME

