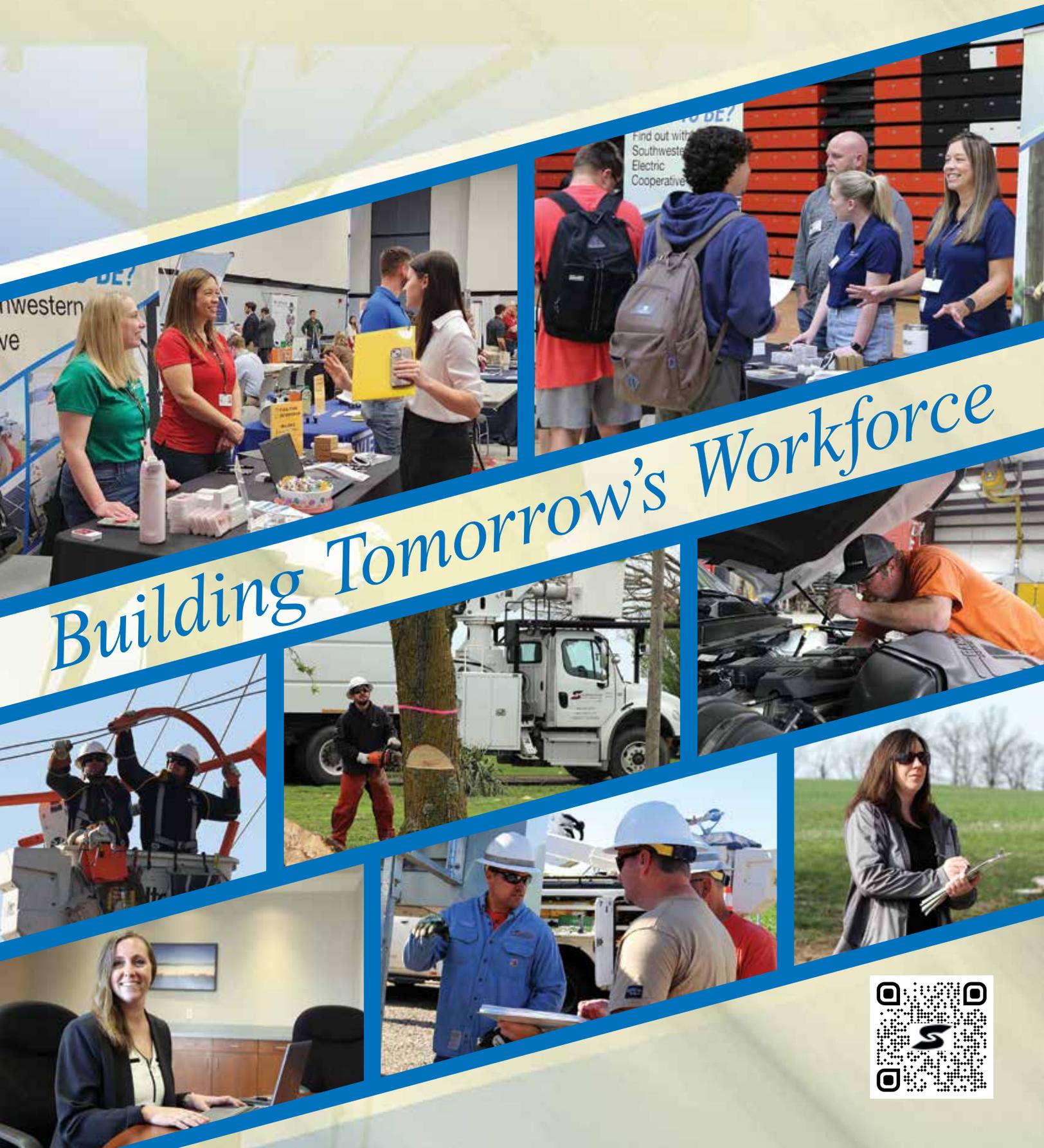


THE *Southwestern*

A SOUTHWESTERN ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE MEMBER MAGAZINE

JULY 2025 • VOLUME 77 • ISSUE 7



Building Tomorrow's Workforce



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

04 Reader Contest

More than 400 of you found the lifebuoy in our May issue. For this month's challenge, we're inviting you to play ball.

05 \$30 Bill Credit

Redeem the 2025 voter registration card in the back cover of this magazine for a \$30 bill credit.

06 Power for Progress

Southwestern Electric's Scholarship Committee awarded \$1,200 scholarships to 14 students this year, bringing the total to more than \$300,000 since the scholarship program's inception.

07 Member Meeting

Five candidates have filed their paperwork to be on this year's board of directors election ballot. Read more about them and this year's Annual Meeting.

08 HomeServe

When emergency home repairs are needed for your electrical service, a HomeServe home service repair plan offers welcome peace of mind.

09 VanillaDirect Pay

With VanillaDirect, you can pay your electric bill using cash at more than 40,000 retail locations nationwide, including CVS, Dollar General, Family Dollar, Speedway, 7-Eleven, and Circle K.

10 Pay As You Go

Our Pay As You Go electric service is changing. Find out how – and why – here.

11 E-cycling Drives

Have an outdated television, computer or phone taking up space in your home? Our e-cycling will help your old electronics find new life.

12 Building Tomorrow's Workforce

With utilities across the country competing for select job candidates, how does Southwestern Electric recruit top talent? One conversation at a time.

16 Energy & Efficiency

Take the heat off your wallet by keeping your air conditioning system clean, clear and cared for this summer.

18 Out & About

Lose track of time at O'Fallon's Rock Springs Park.

20 Who-What-Where?

This month we invite you to play pool with Tom Sawyer, Huck Finn and Hank Morgan.

22 Co-op Kitchen

Keep your kitchen cool with our summer salads.

24 Current Events

Relive the history of Route 66 in Edwardsville, cycle the Tour de Donut in Staunton, meet railroad modelers in Collinsville, and catch a concert near you.

26 Final Frame

Toad Stool.

27 Voter Registration Card

Redeem this card for a \$30 bill credit.



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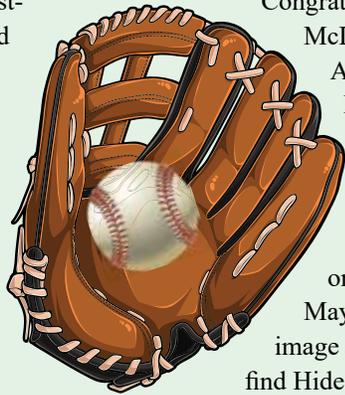
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Reader Contest

We've hidden an image of a baseball glove 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 baseball glove, 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 July contest, we'll need your entries in our inbox or postmarked by August 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 October issue of The Southwestern.

MAY WINNER

Congratulations to William McDonald of Brownstown.

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

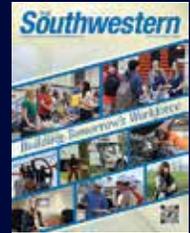
RULES TO PLAY BY

- 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.
- July contest entries must be in our inbox or postmarked by August 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

With utilities across the country competing for select job candidates, Carrie Knebel, Vice President of Human Resources for Southwestern

Electric, and Marissa Horn, Human Resources Administrator, have developed a talent acquisition strategy that combines social media awareness with in-person outreach and a renewed focus on showcasing what makes the co-op an exceptional place to build a career. See our story on page 12.



CO-OP REMINDERS

July 4 Offices closed in observance of Independence Day.

July 14; Aug. 11; Sept. 8 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.

August 8 Offices closed for employee safety training. See next page.

September 1 Offices closed for Labor Day.

September 6 Southwestern Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting.



ANNUAL MEETING 2025

Southwestern Electric's 87th Annual Meeting of Members will be held Saturday, Sept. 6, at 10 a.m. at the American Farm Heritage Museum, 1395 Museum Avenue, Greenville, IL 62246.

See you soon!



Offices Closed Friday, Aug. 8 for Employee Safety Training

On Friday, Aug. 8, Southwestern Electric will provide a full day of safety training for all cooperative employees. Our offices will be closed and our personnel will be unavailable for meetings, phone calls and email.

Southwestern Electric line crews will be responding to power outages and emergency calls on Aug. 8. If you lose power, please call us at 800-637-8667. Our after-hours call center will dispatch a line crew to restore your service.

The cooperative will resume regular business hours on Monday, Aug. 11.

"We believe cultivating a safety-first culture requires the commitment of our workforce and the support of our families. With that in mind, we've invited our employees to include their families in our Safety Day training," said Southwestern CEO Bobby Williams. "I want to thank our membership for supporting our efforts to promote a safety-first culture at Southwestern Electric Cooperative."

Redeem Southwestern Voter Registration Card on Back Cover for \$30 Bill Credit

To ensure you have the 2025 voter registration card in time to claim your \$30 bill credit for voting in this year's election, we're including a card in both the July and August issues again this year. The cards are identical. You only need one card to register and vote, and you may register and vote only one time.

To expedite voting, members are asked to bring the registration card printed on the back cover of the July issue or the August special edition of The Southwestern to one of Southwestern's voting locations. Members will earn a \$30 bill credit by presenting their preprinted registration card when they vote in this year's election of directors. A schedule with dates, times and locations appears on page 27 below the voter registration card.

Southwestern Electric Cooperative's 87th Annual Meeting of Members will be held at American Farm Heritage Museum, 1395 Museum Avenue, Greenville, IL 62246. More annual meeting information will appear in the August issue of The Southwestern and online at sweci.com. Questions may be directed to Jennifer Gillan, Manager of Member Services, at 800-637-8667. You can email Jennifer at community@sweci.com.

VOTER REGISTRATION CARD 2025 Please sign and present this card at the registration table.

87th Annual Meeting of Members

Saturday, September 6, 2025



Member Signature _____

Please enroll me in Operation Round Up

PLEASE UPDATE YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION

Home Phone # (if applicable) _____ Cell Phone #: _____

Service Address: _____ Billing Address: _____

Email Address: _____

Fill out and present this registration card to receive an additional \$10 bill credit!



SOUTHWESTERN STUDENTS EARN POWER FOR PROGRESS SCHOLARSHIPS

Since 1995, Southwestern Electric Cooperative's Power for Progress Scholarship Program has provided more than \$300,000 in academic assistance to students pursuing a college degree or vocational school certificate.

This year the cooperative awarded \$1,200 scholarships to 14 students, including 13 graduating seniors and one student who graduated prior to 2025.

Each year, dozens of applications are evaluated by Southwestern Electric Cooperative's Scholarship Committee. The committee is composed of nine judges. Each judge independently evaluates the merits of every application against an extensive list of criteria, including financial need, academic success, employment, and participation in extracurricular and volunteer activities.

Southwestern Electric scholarship recipients may use the awarded funds to attend any accredited university, college or vocational school in the U.S.

This year's Power for Progress scholarship recipients are:

Graduating Seniors

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------------------------|
| • Cara Carrillon* | Central Community High School |
| • Kylie Doll* | Greenville High School |
| • William Jansen | Highland High School |
| • Megan Ridens | Greenville High School |
| • Mia Schomber | Edwardsville Sr. High School |
| • Birgen Schlanser | Beecher City Jr./Sr. High School |
| • Ethan Sharp | Staunton High School |
| • Taylor Smith | Edwardsville Sr. High School |
| • Lane Stine | St. Elmo High School |
| • Kadence Sutter | Beecher City Jr./Sr. High School |
| • Kate Turley | Greenville High School |
| • Aubrey Wall | Greenville High School |
| • Chloe Winter | Triad High School |

Post-high school scholarship recipients

- | | |
|---------------------|---------------------------|
| • Katrina Korsmeyer | Illinois State University |
|---------------------|---------------------------|

*Cara Carrillon is the Alan G. Libbra Memorial Scholarship winner.

*Kylie Doll is the Rich Gusewelle Memorial Scholarship winner.



***Congratulations to our 2025 Power
for Progress Scholarship recipients!
It's a privilege to be part of your journey.***

87th ANNUAL MEETING OF MEMBERS

Five Candidates Currently on Ballot; Candidacy by Petition Deadline Pending

In accordance with the cooperative's bylaws, a nine-member Nominations Committee convened on May 22 to submit candidates for three open seats (one per voting district) on the board of directors.

Southwestern Electric Cooperative's directors are responsible for establishing organizational direction and policies, ensuring member needs and concerns are given fair and timely treatment, and overseeing the overall financial stability of the cooperative. The candidacy by petition deadline (June 23) was pending at press time. As of June 10, board candidates include:

- District I: Incumbent Sandy Grapperhaus, Collinsville
Challenger Kevin Kirby, Edwardsville
- District II: Michael Willman, Greenville
Amy Marcoot, Greenville
- District III: Incumbent Ann Schwarm, Loogootee

Each elected director will serve a three-year term beginning Sept. 6, 2025. A profile of each board candidate will appear in the August 2025 edition of *The Southwestern*, which serves as the Official Notice of the 87th Annual Meeting of Members and Annual Report for the Fiscal Year 2024. If USPS delivery delays prevent your August issue from arriving in a timely fashion, you can view the magazine online at sweci.com.

Our voting schedule was developed to allow ample opportunity for early voting. Dates, times and locations appear on page 27.

Southwestern Electric Cooperative's 87th Annual Meeting of Members will be held Saturday, Sept. 6, at 10 a.m. at American Farm Heritage Museum, 1395 Museum Avenue, Greenville, IL 62246.

Questions about board service and the election process should be directed to Jennifer Gillan, Manager of Member Services. You can reach her at (800) 637-8667 or by email at community@sweci.com.

Absentee Voting Guidelines

Section 4 (E): Proxy Voting, Absentee Voting and Voting by Entities: Proxy voting is prohibited. However, anything contained in the Bylaws to the contrary notwithstanding, a Member may vote by absentee ballot as follows: A Member desiring to cast his vote absentee, shall appear in person at the Cooperative's headquarters at Greenville, Illinois, during the ten weekdays preceding the election at regularly scheduled office hours, or at such other locations as may be established from time to time by the Board of Directors for the purpose of casting absentee ballots, during hours and days as directed by the Board of Directors and shall request an absentee ballot. An absentee ballot approved by the Credentials and Election Committee shall be provided and the Member shall cast such ballot secretly and seal such ballot in an envelope, which shall be provided in such sealed envelope to the Credentials and Election Committee. On the date of the Annual Meeting of the Members, the Credentials and Election Committee shall open and count such absentee ballots so provided. Any absentee ballot, which is delivered to the Credentials and Election Committee in an unsealed condition, shall be deemed invalid and shall not be counted. Notice of this Bylaw provision shall be provided to the Members of the Cooperative in the notice of Annual Meeting. Voting by Members other than Members who are Natural Persons shall be allowed only upon the presentation to the Cooperative by a duly appointed officer or agent of such Member (prior to or upon registration of such Member at each Member meeting, or when requesting an absentee ballot) of satisfactory evidence entitling such officer or agent presenting the same to cast a vote on behalf of such Member.



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.



VanillaDirect Pay

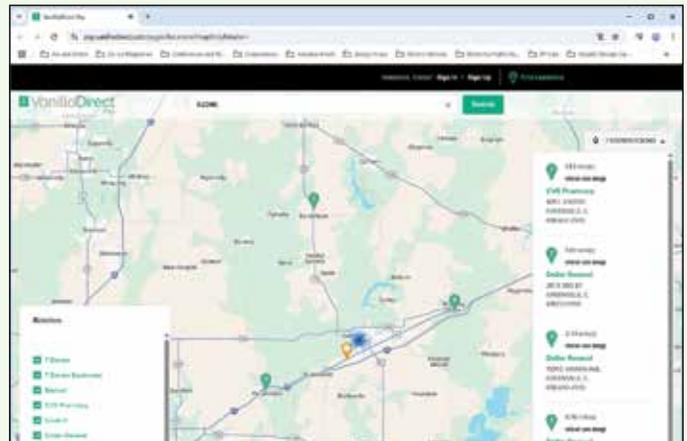
When you have cash but visiting our office isn't convenient

You may have noticed the VanillaDirect Pay logo on the back of your bill. VanillaDirect Pay is a service that allows you to pay your electric bill at participating retail locations. Instead of driving to our office, mailing a check, or making an online payment, you can visit a local store, present your payment information, and pay your electric bill with cash.

You can use VanillaDirect Pay to pay your Southwestern Electric bill at more than 40,000 retail locations nationwide, including CVS, Dollar General, Family Dollar, Speedway, 7-Eleven, and Circle K.

Here's how it works

1. Find the VanillaDirect Pay barcode printed on the back of your electric bill. You can also find the barcode using the SmartHub desktop or mobile app. In SmartHub, tap or click Bill & Pay and then Pay By Cash, and the View Barcode button will appear.
2. Find a retailer near you that offers VanillaDirect Pay. You can search for retailers that offer the VanillaDirect Pay service at <https://pay.vanilladirect.com> or by using SmartHub. A search bar appears below the View Barcode button.
3. Take your barcode to a participating retailer. The cashier will scan your barcode and take your payment. They'll apply a \$1.50 service charge. Your payment will post to your account within four business days.



You can search for retailers that offer VanillaDirect Pay by going to <https://pay.vanilladirect.com> and clicking Find Locations at the top of the screen.

4. Keep your receipt. Save your receipt until you confirm your payment has been credited to your account. You can check your bill payment status using SmartHub or by calling Southwestern Electric at 800-637-8667. According to their website, the VanillaDirect Pay site stores your receipt information under your billing history.

Benefits of VanillaDirect Pay

- Convenient locations. You can pay by VanillaDirect at retail locations throughout our service area.
- Pay without a bank account or payment cards. VanillaDirect offers the convenience of an electronic payment without using a bank account or credit or debit cards.
- Fast processing. Payments typically post to your account within four business days.
- Simple fee structure. Transparent service fees (\$1.50 per transaction) with no additional costs.
- Receipt confirmation. Physical proof of payment for your records.

Is VanillaDirect Pay Right for You?

VanillaDirect Pay is particularly useful if you:

- Prefer or need to pay bills with cash
- Don't have access to banking services
- Want an alternative to online payments or mail

If you have questions about VanillaDirect Pay service, you can reach their customer service number at 844-661-0115 or visit their website at <https://pay.vanilladirect.com>.

Southwestern Electric Cooperative, Inc.
 Your TrueSource Energy Corporation

Greenville Headquarters is open 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday - Friday
 1-800-637-8667 for all inquiries. Search us online at www.swesco.com
 Download SmartHub on the App Store or Google Play.

Explanation of Charges

Town Tax: A tax assessed by a municipality when applicable. All monies collected are paid to the municipality. Also referred to as municipal tax.

Sales Tax: A tax levied by the State of Illinois, when applicable, at the current rate. This tax is remitted to the state in accordance with state laws.

Power Cost Adjustment: This charge reflects the difference between the actual cost of purchased power from the wholesale supplier and the base wholesale cost of power included in the energy charge.

Service Availability: A charge that recovers the fixed costs associated with providing services to the membership regardless of any kilowatt hours sold.

Energy Charge: A charge used to recover the Cooperative's contractual price of purchased power.

Distribution Charge: A charge that recovers the cost associated with the maintenance and operations of the distribution infrastructure.

Capacity & Transmission Charge: A charge that recovers the Cooperative's contractual costs associated with transmitting power from where it was generated to the cooperative's distribution substations.

Billed Demand Charge: A charge that recovers additional costs incurred by the cooperative to maintain a constant supply of electricity and reserve capacity for each account.

Terms of Payment: Each member is responsible for sending payment for their monthly bill prior to the due date. A 5% penalty will be assessed on the current unpaid balance remaining after the due date.

Operation Round Up: Members may volunteer to round up their monthly electric bills to the next dollar to fund local community projects.

Payment Options:

- Auto Pay:** Free automatic withdrawal from checking or savings. Enroll at www.swesco.com or by phone.
- By Phone:** Free with checking or savings or using credit or debit card.
- Online:** Free with checking or savings or using credit or debit card. Visit www.swesco.com.
- Pay in Person:** Only at 525 US Route 40, Greenville, IL. Checks, cash, or credit/debit cards welcome.
- Mail:** Mail check or money order to: Southwestern Electric Cooperative, 525 US Route 40, Greenville, IL 62245.

Update Your Account Information
 Is your account information up to date? Fill out the form below to update your contact information.

Name _____
 Mailing Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____
 Email _____
 Phone _____
 Cell _____

Vanilla Direct - Pay with Cash at a Store
 Now offering cash billpay service at participating retail stores. This barcode below can be scanned at the register, allowing you to make your monthly payment. There is a \$1.50 convenience fee to use this service. To find a location near you, visit <https://pay.vanilladirect.com>

123456789000235 80000789456123

By accepting or using this barcode to make a payment, you agree to the full terms and conditions, available at www.vanilladirect.com. For successful payment using this barcode, you may receive your bill delivered e-mail at yourname@swesco.com.

The majority of participating locations will accept cash payments up to a maximum amount of \$500.00.

Participating Retailers: DOLLAR GENERAL, CVS pharmacy, FAMILY DOLLAR, Walgreens, 7-Eleven, Circle K.

The VanillaDirect Pay barcode is located on the back of your electric bill.

Changes Effective July 1

Letter to Members Who Use Our Pay As You Go Electric Service

Dear Member,

We understand that changes to your electric service impact your household budget, which is why we wanted to let you know about an upcoming adjustment to our Pay As You Go program.

Effective July 1, 2025, Southwestern Electric will require a minimum payment of \$20 each time you add money to your Pay As You Go account. Your payment will be applied directly to your usage.

What this means for you:

- Beginning July 1, when you're adding funds to your account (online, via the SmartHub app or at a payment location), the minimum amount you can add will be \$20.
- Your existing account balance won't be affected.

The new minimum payment helps us:

- Address the rising costs of payment processing fees. Southwestern pays processing fees on a per-transaction basis. The \$20 minimum payment was implemented to reduce the frequency of Pay As You Go transactions, lowering processing costs incurred by the cooperative.
- Maintain consistent payment practices. In the past, our minimum payment amounts varied by payment method and location. A uniform \$20 minimum payment will eliminate confusion by setting a standard that applies to all payment methods and locations.

You can make your \$20 minimum payment by:

- Using the SmartHub mobile app or paying online using the SmartHub web portal at <https://sweci.smarthub.coop>.
- Phone payments through our automated system at 800-637-8667.
- Paying in person at our Greenville office.
- Using VanillaDirect at participating retail stores. There's a \$1.50 fee to use this service. Find a location near you by visiting pay.vanilladirect.com/pages/retailers.

Questions & Answers

Q: Why is a minimum payment being implemented now?

A: We're continually taking steps to reduce costs and improve operational efficiency. We held off on requiring a minimum payment as long as possible, but rising payment processing fees made the adjustment necessary. A \$20 minimum payment was chosen to reduce operational costs while avoiding the more significant burden a higher minimum payment would have placed on our members.

Q: Will this affect my current account balance?

A: No. Your balance won't be affected.

Q: Can I still monitor my usage in real-time?

A: Absolutely. Your usage monitoring options remain unchanged. You have the same visibility and control over your energy use you've always had.

If you have questions or concerns about the new \$20 minimum payment, please call us at 800-637-8667. A member of our management team will be happy to speak with you!



Recycle with Southwestern

WE'RE A NATION IN LOVE WITH ELECTRONICS

According to a Connected Consumer Survey conducted in 2023:

- You probably have 21 connected electronic devices in your home.
- Half the people reading this article brought a new connected device into their home last year.
- About one out of every six of you added three or more connected electronics to your home.

Given the statistics, it's likely you own an outdated TV, PC or mobile phone. We can help you find new life for your old devices through e-cycling — electronics recycling. E-cycling is the process of refurbishing, redistributing and reusing electronic devices and components, rather than discarding them. It extends the lifecycle of electronics and lowers their overall environmental impact.

Southwestern Electric will host two e-cycling drives in autumn. You're invited to bring your obsolete electronics to our collection sites on the dates listed at right. Your electronics will be collected and recycled by an EPA-approved recycling center. All collections begin at 9 a.m. and end at noon or when the truck is filled — whichever comes first.

We can help you recycle a variety of electronics, including:

- Computers, printers, cables and peripherals (keyboards, mice, etc.)
- Fax machines, scanners, digital converter boxes, cable receivers, satellite receivers.
- Video game consoles, digital video disc player/recorders, portable digital music players.
- Networking equipment, server, telecommunications, phones, cell phones and clocks.
- VCRs, stereos, and audio/video equipment (including cable/satellite).
- Electrical, cabling, communication machinery, and equipment.
- Home electronics, lamps, blenders, toasters, irons, etc.

Please Note

- Rechargeable batteries (NIMH, Li-ion and NICD) will be accepted for a fee of 50 cents per pound.
- CRT TVs, console TVs, projection TVs and monitors will be accepted for a fee ranging from \$5 - \$35 depending on their size and model. Please bring cash or check for payment.
- Light bulbs, DVDs, CDs and VHS and cassette tapes and hazardous materials will not be accepted.



RECYCLING DRIVE DATES & LOCATIONS

- **September 27** Southwestern Electric's St. Elmo Distribution Center, 2117 East 1850 Avenue (frontage road southwest of the St. Elmo exit off Interstate 70), St. Elmo, IL 62458
- **October 25** Southwestern Electric's St. Jacob Office, 10031 Ellis Road, St. Jacob, IL 62281
- **Collection Times** All collections will begin at 9 a.m. and end at noon or when the truck is filled — whichever comes first.

QUESTIONS & CJD E-CYCLING

Have questions regarding e-cycling or recyclable items and fees? Call CJD E-Cycling at (618) 659-9006 or email them at info@cjdrecycling.com. CJD E-Cycling is a family-owned recycling business with offices in East Alton and Edwardsville. You can learn more about CJD E-Cycling and the materials they recycle at www.cjdrecycling.com.



Building Tomorrow's Workforce

With utilities across the country competing for select job candidates, how does Southwestern Electric recruit top talent? One conversation at a time.

Words & Photos by Joe Richardson

Operating in an ever-evolving power market vexed by ongoing supply chain and regulatory issues, America's electric cooperatives are facing yet another challenge: recruitment. For Southwestern Electric, the shortfall of skilled job candidates became evident during recent efforts to hire an electrical engineer. As Carrie Knebel, Vice President of Human Resources, noted, "Engineers are in high demand, and engineers trained specifically in power are hard to find."

The experience prompted Southwestern's Human Resources Department to develop a talent acquisition strategy that combines social media awareness with in-person outreach and a renewed focus on showcasing what makes Southwestern Electric an exceptional place to build a career.

In recent months, the team's strategy has attracted member service personnel, candidates with business development and marketing expertise, and operations and engineering talent from across the country.

In short, what they're doing works.

THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF TALENT ACQUISITION

Over the past decade, traditional recruitment practices have been replaced by focused, concerted outreach efforts.

"The hiring process is in a constant state

of motion," Knebel said. "Candidate expectations have changed dramatically over the last 10 years and competition for talent is steep. What we have found recently is the candidates we need aren't necessarily looking for a new opportunity. We have to find them," Knebel said, "whereas 10 years ago, they found us."

Marissa Horn, Human Resources Administrator, said the competitive market prompted Southwestern to become more proactive and creative in its outreach efforts. "We've been doing more hiring than ever before, and we've had to think outside of the box to reach candidates. Many people don't know we exist, or that we have the great career opportunities and benefits that we do," she said.

"We've found that many candidates inquire about our culture over benefits."

—Marissa Horn, Human Resources Administrator

"This generation wants different things in an employer than generations before them," Horn noted. "I think values have shifted. We've found that many candidates inquire about our culture over benefits. COVID had a huge impact on the workforce as well."

A PROACTIVE APPROACH TO ATTRACTING TALENT

In 2024, Southwestern's Human Resources Department met with the co-op's leadership team to recommend an approach to talent acquisition that focused on early engagement and employer branding. They proposed building relationships with potential job candidates — students and experienced professionals — before they were actively searching for new positions. That's how Knebel and Horn found themselves spending two days in the Meridian Ballroom at Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville's Career Fair in March.

"We're confident educating college students on opportunities in the power industry will help our talent recruitment efforts," Knebel said. "Southwestern Electric is a great place to work, and over the last several years, it's become increasingly apparent that we've not done a great job at promoting ourselves as such. Many folks we talk to haven't heard about Southwestern Electric. They're unsure of what we do, let alone

the fantastic career opportunities we provide and the impact we have on our local communities,” she said.

“That’s why it’s important to share our story every chance we get — whether we’re connecting with college and high school students or professionals already established in their careers,” said Knebel. “We’re focused on building relationships with people who have the skills and values we’re looking for, so when the time comes, they know who we are — and we know who to call.

“Whether it’s through social media, hiring events, or campus outreach, every connection we make helps build a stronger, more prepared talent pipeline for the future.” The early-introduction approach represents a significant shift from reactive hiring to proactive talent cultivation, she said, with Southwestern investing time and resources in relationships that may not yield immediate returns but promise long-term benefits for the co-op and the industry overall.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS WITH EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

When Knebel and Horn were scouting for opportunities to promote co-op careers earlier this year, they immediately saw potential in Southern Illinois

University Edwardsville’s Engineering and Business Career Fairs. “SIUE students were awesome,” Knebel said. “They were engaged, prepared and confident. I commend the faculty at SIUE who have developed these kids and prepared them for interaction with potential employers.”

Horn said she was impressed by the quality of student interactions. “I was surprised by how many students came to our booth, asked great questions, and requested feedback,” she said. “That takes guts.”

The career fair highlighted both challenges and opportunities. Many students lacked basic knowledge about the utility industry. “I spoke with quite a few students who initially had no knowledge of Southwestern Electric or what an electric co-op is,” Knebel said. “They stopped at our booth, unsure of what positions we have that would fit into their educational training. They left looking energized about the possibility of their chosen career path fitting into our industry. It was so much fun to watch.”

DEVELOPING TOMORROW’S WORKFORCE TODAY

Building on the success of its career fair participation, Southwestern has launched a comprehensive engineering internship

program designed to provide students with hands-on experience in the electric utility industry.

“Our internship program will provide a unique opportunity for a college student to have exposure to all things engineering regarding the power sector. They’ll learn exactly how our country’s power grid works,” Knebel said. “Our intern will gain experience with everything that goes into distributing power throughout our territory, from initial system design through day-to-day maintenance,” she said. “We hope to continue the program indefinitely and build and develop the talent we need at Southwestern. We’d love to see our interns grow into employees with long term careers here.”

Horn noted the tremendous potential of the program. “Our leadership team agreed that growing someone from within would give us an opportunity to teach the skills needed and leave a lasting impression.”

SHOWCASING COOPERATIVE VALUES & CULTURE

Identity-based messaging is at the heart of Southwestern’s career outreach efforts, Knebel said. “Some of my favorite questions at the career fair revolved

Continued on next page ▶



Abbygale Koch (left) of Highland discusses career opportunities at Southwestern Electric with Marissa Horn (center), Human Resources Administrator, and Carrie Knebel, Vice President of Human Resources, during SIUE’s Career Fair on March 19.

► *Continued from page 13*

around our company culture and what we like about working at Southwestern. I like to highlight how much I enjoy working for a nonprofit organization. I love the purpose that gives to every job at the cooperative. We're here to make a difference in our communities, and every job at Southwestern does just that in different ways."

That message resonates deeply with a generation prioritizing purpose-driven work and community impact, she noted. "Working at Southwestern Electric opens many possibilities. We're a small organization, which provides lots of opportunities to reach across the aisle and learn about other areas of the organization. We like to say the sky's the limit on your learning at Southwestern," she said. "There is also a network of cooperatives throughout our country — all founded on the same principles as Southwestern — so there are other opportunities to network along the way."

Horn also pointed out the sense of fulfillment she finds in cooperative culture. "I love that we are a relatively small organization and there are so many opportunities to really make an impact. I love the people I work with and that we make a difference in our community."

FUTURE-FOCUSED SKILL DEVELOPMENT

The utility industry is rapidly evolving, Knebel said, and her team's challenge will be to recruit the skills Southwestern needs to flourish in a fluid environment. "There are many changes coming for the electric utility industry regarding the workforce, regulatory and legislative



Marissa Horn (right) and Leo Dublo (center), Madison County Operations Manager for Southwestern Electric Cooperative, discuss career paths with a student at the Triad High School Job Fair, held May 1 in Troy, Ill. Horn, Dublo and Carrie Knebel spoke with students interested in line work, electrical engineering and other fields.

issues, technology, and the national power supply. It's going to take great leadership and a lot of creativity and knowledge to navigate this new landscape, and position our organization for success," she said. "Outside of the skill set of specific industry knowledge, we are and will be looking for skilled leaders, excellent communicators, strong innovators, trade skills, customer service skills, and people who are overall a good cultural fit."

Horn emphasized the importance of cultural alignment in hiring decisions. "Experience in the utility industry is helpful, but we also prioritize cultural fit.

"Who will add value to our team? Who will give us a new perspective? Who will make us better overall?" Those questions are top of mind when we're making decisions."

EXTENDING REACH THROUGH TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

While focusing on local partnerships and community connections, Southwestern is also leveraging technology to extend its reach. Modern recruitment tools equip the co-op to cast a wider net and attract candidates who align with the cooperative's values. "We're able to market our opportunities to candidates around the

"We're focused on building relationships with people who have the skills and values we're looking for, so when the time comes, they know who we are — and we know who to call."

—Carrie Knebel, Vice President of Human Resources

country with the click of a button, which really opens up the talent pool,” Knebel said.

“Technology is a tool,” she emphasized, “not a replacement for personal connection and relationship building. We use digital platforms to extend our reach, but I feel you need to be in the room with someone, and speak with them face to face, to understand how they feel about the points you’re discussing, and how they might fit in as part of your team.”

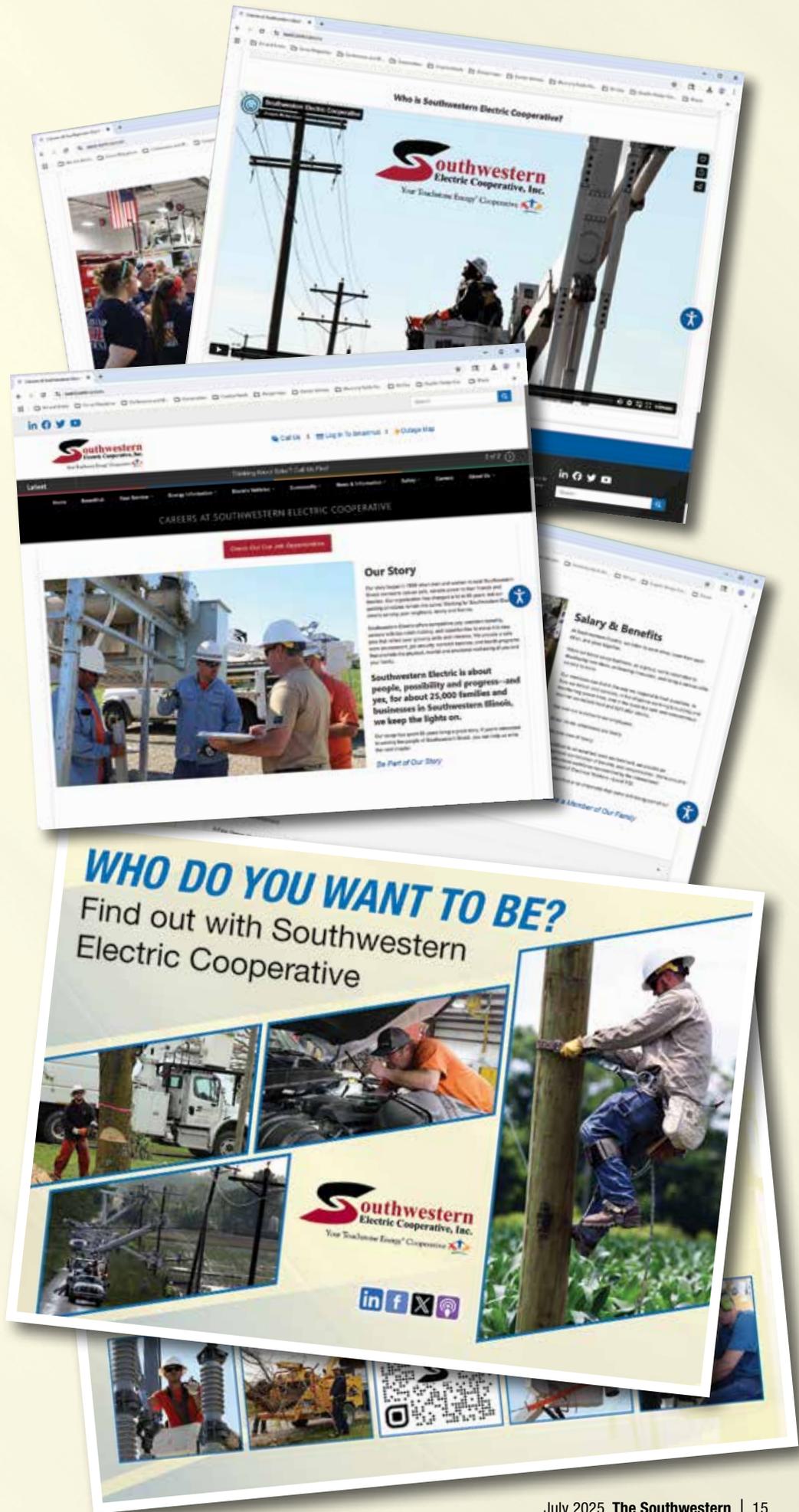
Horn expanded on the idea, noting that “the talent we’re looking for isn’t always looking for us. So, while technology opens up possibilities, it doesn’t always attract the talent we need in key roles. That’s where personal connections make the difference.”

A VISION FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

By investing in relationships with educational institutions, developing internship programs, and actively promoting the cooperative model, Southwestern’s HR team is building a foundation for relationships that will ultimately serve students and cooperative members alike. “The biggest takeaway from the SIUE Career Fair for me was that the future looks bright,” Knebel said. “There are some really amazing, talented students getting ready to enter the workforce. They have many employers to choose from. We want to position Southwestern to be at the top of their list.”

That will require continued effort and innovation, she said. “We’ll continue to reach out, highlight who we are, and tell people what it’s like to be a member of our team,” she said. “We’re going to focus on finding new ways to connect not only with students, but with all those in our community looking for an environment to grow their skills, build a career and find their forever team.” 

Learn more about careers at Southwestern Electric by going to www.sweci.com/careers and following Southwestern on LinkedIn, Facebook, X and YouTube.



Clearing the Air

KEEPING YOUR AIR CONDITIONING SYSTEM CLEAN, CLEAR AND CARED FOR CAN TAKE HEAT OFF YOUR WALLET THIS SUMMER

By Nathan Grimm

It's a hot and humid Midwestern July day. The sun is shining brightly in a cloudless sky. You alternate between pulling weeds out of your garden and wiping sweat from your brow – weed, wipe, weed, wipe. After that, it's on to spreading mulch and refilling hummingbird feeders before finally, mercifully, heading inside for a reprieve from the heat.

Think you're working hard? Imagine how your air conditioner feels.

According to the Department of Energy, 88 percent of homes in the United States have air conditioning. In those homes, air conditioners account for roughly 12 percent of the energy usage in households, adding up to about \$29 billion for American homeowners.

And those hot summer days are when your AC unit works the hardest. That

means it's also when your energy bill is highest – and when you're most at risk of an inefficient or ineffective system costing you even more money.

With that in mind, here are some best practices for air conditioner maintenance and care that will keep you and your wallet comfortable this summer.

START WITH THE FILTER

One of the easiest and most important steps to take is ensuring your air conditioner's filter is clean.

Dirty, clogged filters reduce airflow and system efficiency. When airflow is obstructed, dirt can bypass the filter and accumulate on the evaporator coil, reducing its heat-absorbing capacity. Replacing a dirty filter with a clean one helps your air conditioner operate efficiently, removes particulates from

the air, and protects your system from dirt buildup, which can cause it to fail prematurely.

Filters, which are located on the indoor unit's cool air return duct, should be changed at least twice a year – the first time before you turn on your air conditioning and, if you have an HVAC system, also before you flip over to heat as the weather cools. If you live in a particularly dusty area, like a rural or unincorporated part of town, consider changing it more often. And no matter how often you change it, be sure to replace the filter with one that has the same airflow rating.



Increase your cooling efficiency and save some money by cleaning the condenser coil fins of build-up.



EVAPORATOR CARE

Before we head outside, there is one more part of your indoor unit that requires attention.

The evaporator coil and evaporator drain can both get plugged up over time, so both need to be cleaned periodically to ensure peak efficiency. The evaporator coil is located behind a door on the inside unit, and the evaporator drain is a line that, as the name suggests, drains moisture from the evaporator coil enclosure. It is often a small PVC pipe or similar material that drains into a basement floor drain, utility sink or outside near the condenser unit.

To clean the evaporator coil, dust off the coils and then spray with a coil cleaner, which can be bought at hardware or home improvement stores. Once the spray foams and drips into the drain pan, clean the drain pan with hot water, soap and a little bit of bleach. Additionally, pour a 50-50 mixture of vinegar and water down the evaporator drain. If the solution drains quickly and easily, no need to clean the drain further.

If it drains slowly or not at all, the evaporator drain may be clogged. A stiff wire, drain snake or wet/dry vacuum can be used to clear the drain of debris and growth that might have collected over time.

KEEP YOUR CONDENSER CLEAN, CLEAR

The outside portion of your air conditioner is called the condenser unit, and it, too, benefits from routine cleaning.

The fan cage that sits on top of the

outdoor unit can protect against animals and large items from getting inside of the condenser, but small things like grass clippings, wet leaves and maple seeds, among other things, can still get lodged in the condenser coil fins, both inside and outside of the unit. Spraying the fins can help clean those coils and ensure the outdoor unit is working efficiently.

Along with keeping the condenser clean, keeping it clear of plants, grass and weeds that can grow up and hinder airflow to the unit is also important for your AC system's functionality. It's recommended to have your outside unit clear for at least two feet in every direction to ensure there are no possible obstructions.

PERFORM REGULAR AC MAINTENANCE

The last tip is also the most intuitive – simply, have your air conditioner serviced by a professional periodically.

While these practices can help homeowners avoid the avoidable, some things, like refrigerant leaks and any airflow issues not related to debris buildup, are best handled by a professional HVAC technician. Regular maintenance of your system can identify issues and potential issues before they're emergencies, possibly saving you thousands of dollars in the process.

For more information on air conditioning, including how air conditioners work and common air conditioner problems, visit the Department of Energy's Air Conditioning page at <https://www.energy.gov/energysaver/air-conditioning>.

Taking Efficiency One Step Further

As with most technology, air conditioner functionality has grown over the years.

These days, many air conditioners on the market can operate longer, more efficiently and are smarter – helping you save money over the life of your unit. Don't know where to start? Here are some tips for selecting the right energy-efficient air conditioner for your space.

SELECTING AN ENERGY-EFFICIENT AIR CONDITIONER

Look for ENERGY STAR®:

- Choose units with the ENERGY STAR® label to ensure high energy efficiency and lower carbon emissions.

Efficiency Rating:

- The Energy Efficiency Ratio (EER) measures efficiency. Higher EER ratings indicate more efficient air conditioners. As of January 2023, the EER2 rating is used, which is more stringent.

Proper Sizing:

- Ensure the air conditioner is correctly sized for the space. Too large a unit can lead to inefficient operation and poor dehumidification, making the room feel uncomfortable.
- Typically, an air conditioner needs 20 BTU for each square foot of living space. Consider room height, local climate, shading, and window size.

Electrical Requirements:

- Smaller units (less than 7.5 amps) can use standard household circuits, while larger units require dedicated circuits. Verify your home's electrical system meets the unit's requirements.

Additional Features:

- Directional Airflow: Look for units that can direct airflow where needed.
- Ease of Maintenance: Choose units with easily accessible filters for cleaning.
- User-Friendly Controls: Opt for digital thermostat readouts, built-in timers, and mobile app controls.

ROCK SPRINGS PARK

St. Clair County suburban green space is a quiet place to lose track of time

Words & Photos by Joe Richardson

Finding my way down trails-turned-to-mud for a clear shot of the creek at Rock Springs Park wasn't an issue. Finding my way up and out again was proving problematic.

I wandered into Rock Springs on a rainy day not expecting much. The map showed it a stone's throw from sprawling subdivisions, hillside churches, offices, restaurants and the specialty shops that line O'Fallon's downtown. The area looked too domesticated to offer anything akin to adventure.

A paved, two-lane trail was the smart bet for an easy hike and quick pictures. I could walk an unbroken blacktop, tell you about the black asphalt and broad shoulders, the tall trees and twisting vines, low light and high canopy, and the floral-sweet scent of a forest in bloom. I could shoot color and texture from the two-lane, share the flavor of the day, demonstrate this was no AI-adventure, and do it without getting my boots wet.

But it wasn't raining *that* hard and the dirt paths that snaked away from the

asphalt and into the woods promised more interesting experiences. The road less traveled is always tempting, particularly when you're armed with the notion bad decisions make good stories.

Which is why I have so many.

I set my watch to track my time and off I went.

The path was slick but flat and easy enough to cover if you watched your footing. At a break in the trees, it nosed down hard along a steep, muddy bank before cul-de-sacing at the creek. The air was cooler here, the run of water over stone lively and sedate.

There were no frogs, no snakes, no minnows or crayfish or egrets to see. Nobody home. Just conversation from the creek. I shot a few photos. Dropped to the water and shot a few more.

For a long while I stood in the tiny canyon of earth and green and listened to the water talk and felt the touch of rain, barely more than mist, on my skin.

Then ice-white lightning strobed the sky and thunder — a sound like an oak

being split root to crown — shook the ground.

Time to leave.

Momentum helped me trot down a path that creek-bank-to-bed was little more than a mud slide. Inertia was less accommodating. Slow, heavy steps at the foot of the bank found me moving in place. Three attempts, three stumbles, no ground gained. Time for new tactics.

I took a run at the bank, pushed and pressed to the top, then promptly fell — hard — and started to slide.

Amongst the graceful, panicked flailing, my hand found a tree. Truth be told, the tree found me. A gnarled root bit my wrist before I made a fist around the thing. I lie in the mud, breathing, tasting blood from a busted lip, waiting for the next sheet of lightning to slap the sky.

None came. No light. No sound. Just rain, harder now, washing blood and sweat into my mouth. No tears, of course. Midwestern males don't cry.

I hauled myself up, checked my



Rock Springs Park is at 1428 E 3rd Street, O'Fallon, IL 62269. Your favorite map app should drop you in a spacious parking lot near restrooms, trails, and a pavilion.



phone and found that it had survived yet another fall. I slogged to the tree where I'd stashed my gear (in the unlikely event I slipped), shrugged into the straps, and backtracked across water and mud and asphalt to my car and the umbrella waiting inside. I glanced at my watch to note time on the trail. There was no time.

There was no watch.

The root that bit my wrist had snapped the strap or unfastened the clasp. I imagined the watch, a gift, my ever ready running partner with whom I'd logged hundreds of miles in three states, buried in mud or at the bottom of the creek.

I started the car and drove away, never

to see it again — were it not for Sergiy.

Three weeks after I hit the trail a text lit up my phone. "Hi Joseph. Did you lose a smartwatch at Rocks Springs Park in O'Fallon recently?" Sergiy said he'd be happy to meet me and return it.

I asked how I could repay him. "Don't worry about it," he said. He was just happy to return it to the owner.

Four hours later, Sergiy and I were standing outside the O'Fallon Public Safety Building three minutes from Rock Springs, talking trails. He'd been playing with his daughter in the creek (sans lightning). On their way out, a watch caught his eye. Someone had plucked it

from the mud or water and lodged it in a tree. He took it home, charged it and messaged me.

Sergiy and I spoke briefly about kids and grandkids, the boons and banes of technology, about vintage video games and the circuitous, sometimes unlikely paths that lead from lost to found.

On my way out of O'Fallon I stopped at the trail where I'd lost my watch and found the kindness of strangers. The paths were dry, the creek bank easy to navigate, the water again conversational.

From where you're reading, Rock Springs may be a bit of a drive. Even so, I'd say give it a try.

The experience is worth your time.



WHO • WHAT • WHERE

My first look at the monument that served as our June mystery location came on a gray and sightless day. The morning had shifted from fog to rain and back again, and I couldn't clearly see the pillars. Or maybe it wasn't the clouds. Maybe it was me, moody and low. Either atmosphere,

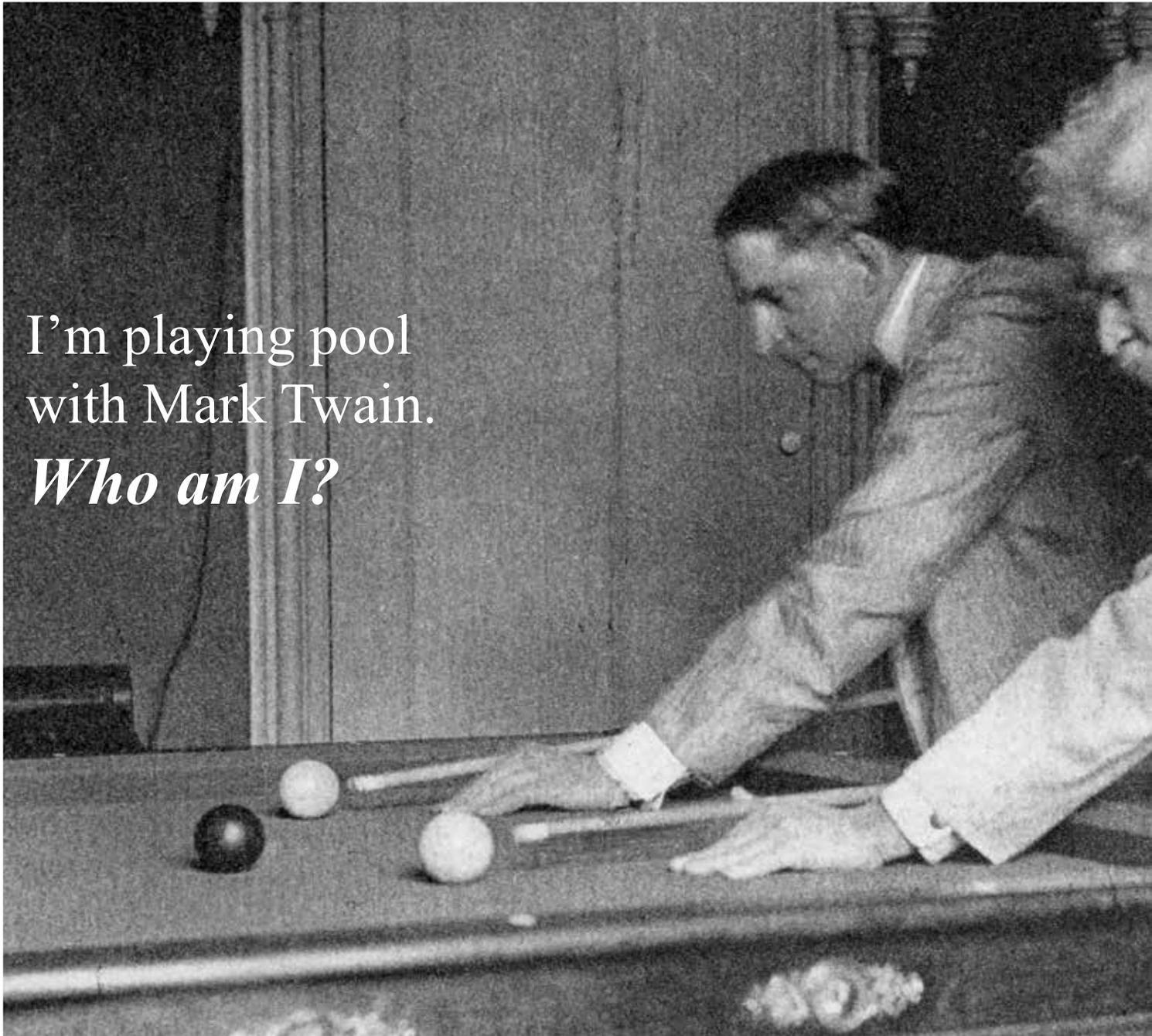
inside or out, will keep you from seeing what's in front of you.

My second visit came under a brilliant April sky. The air was cool and sharp with the scent of grass freshly clipped short. So freshly clipped, in fact, that the grounds crew was still at it. Two zero-turn mowers zipped in and out of my frame, moving in astonishing

synchronization, buzzing around the monument like bumblebees orbiting clover.

The shot you saw last month came at the end of an all-day training session in St. Louis (Don't be misled, I've yet to be trained.). I'd seen the lights sleeping through the day and assumed they woke at night.

I'm playing pool
with Mark Twain.
Who am I?



Light fell. I waited. The sky darkened. I waited. Waited.

Waited more.

I interrogated innocent passersby, out for their evening stroll, all of whom lived nearby, all of whom assured me the monument was lit at night, none of whom remembered seeing the light.

I was planning my fourth visit when the lights came on. I made photos from different locations, different focal points, different distances, paused to shoo away someone showing undue interest in my car, then came back to the frame.

Last erg of sky light spent, twilight turned to full dark, I packed away my gear and stood in silence.

No evening dog walkers, no grounds crew, no sadly mistaken folks wondering if there was anything of value in my car.

Just the night, our flag, the names of those who served, and their commitment to the values they embodied and embody still, etched in pillars of stone and light. I gave thanks, knowing I was privileged to stand in the presence of rare company.

On a related note, we're proud to share the photo below from Southwestern

reader and solution sleuth Bill Malec of O'Fallon, whose name appears on the monument's Liberty pillar. To Bill and all of our veterans — thank you for your service. We are in your debt.

Who-What-Where is a contest that challenges your knowledge of people, places and objects in and around our 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.



The solution to the June 2025 “Where are we?” puzzler struck close to home. Pictured is a striking night view of the Veterans’ Monument on Wesley Drive in O’Fallon, Illinois.

Construction of the 15 stone pillar star-shaped monument, located on a beautifully landscaped acre, was completed in 2006. It is the largest monument of its kind in the area.

The names of over 2,000 veterans have been engraved on the pillars. Weather permitting, ceremonies are conducted at the monument on Memorial Day and Veterans Day to recognize newly inscribed veterans who either lived within the O’Fallon Township High School District 203 or in O’Fallon Township and were

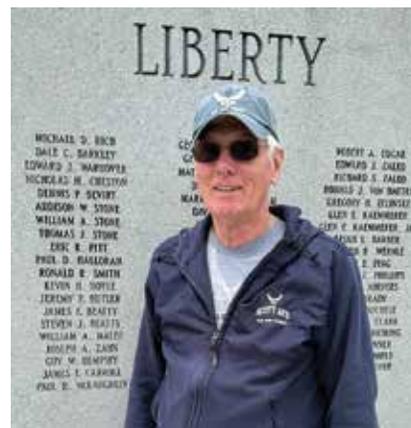


PHOTO COURTESY BILL MALEC

honorably separated. Further information on the monument and an application for inscription can be obtained at www.ofallonveteransmonument.org. —Bill Malec, O’Fallon

CO-OP KITCHEN

Cool Summer Salads

ANTIPASTO TORTELLINI SALAD

Ingredients

- 1 (16 ounce) package fresh or frozen cheese tortellini
- 1 cup salami chopped
- 4 ounces provolone cheese cut into 2 inch x ¼ inch strips
- 1 (11 ounce) can sweet corn drained
- 1 (9 ounce) package frozen spinach thawed and drained
- 1 (6 ounce) jar marinated artichoke hearts drained and sliced
- 1 (6 ounce) can ripe pitted olives drained and sliced
- 1½ cups creamy Italian dressing
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- ½ cup grated Parmesan cheese

Directions

1. Cook tortellini as according to package directions.
2. Drain and rinse with cold water.
3. In large bowl mix together tortellini, salami, cheese, corn, spinach, artichokes and olives.
4. In small bowl combine dressing, mustard and Parmesan cheese. Blend well.
5. Pour dressing mixture over salad, toss gently, cover and refrigerate 2 hours before serving.

TOMATO, BASIL & FETA SALAD

Bread Ingredients

- 6 Roma tomatoes diced
- 1 small cucumber peeled, quartered lengthwise and chopped
- 3 green onions chopped
- ¼ cup fresh basil leaves cut into thin strips
- 3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- 3 tablespoons crumbled feta cheese
- salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Directions

1. In a large bowl toss together all ingredients and serve.

Salad will wilt if made too far in advance.

GREEN PEA & CRISP CORN SALAD

Ingredients

- 1 pound frozen peas thawed and drained
- ¾ cup frozen whole kernel corn thawed and drained
- ½ cup red onion minced
- ½ cup red bell pepper diced
- 1 cup shredded sharp cheddar cheese
- ½ cup cooked bacon crumbled
- ⅓ cup sour cream
- ⅓ cup mayonnaise
- ¾ teaspoon salt
- ¾ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

Directions

1. In large mixing bowl combine peas, corn, onion, pepper, cheese and bacon.
2. Stir in the sour cream and mayonnaise.
3. Season with salt and pepper.
4. Mix well and refrigerate at least 2 hours.

Can be made the day before serving.

Antipasto Tortellini Salad prepared and photographed by Mike Barns
mike.barns@sweci.com

CURRENT EVENTS

July 2 - August 31 ROUTE 66 DISPLAY, Edwardsville. The history of Edwardsville will be brought to life through Edwardsville-centric items and photos from Route 66 and learn about the town's role on the Mother Road. Wednesday - Friday 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.

July 3 - August 28 MUSIC IN THE PARK, Grafton. Free concert every Thursday featuring area bands of all genres from 7 p.m. - 9 p.m. Opening act by Grafton's Nickie Brooks at 6:30 p.m. Bring your lawn chairs and coolers for a great evening of musical talent along the Mississippi River. Admission is free. The Grove Memorial Park, Corner of Market & Main Street. Visit facebook.com/Graftons-musicinthepark.

July 3 - September 18 LIVE CONCERT SERIES, Highland. Join the Highland community for nights filled with fun and live music. 6 - 9 p.m. July 10 show starts at 7 p.m. Free to the public every Thursday on the beautiful Highland Square at 914 Main Street. Performers, dates and times subject to change. Call (618) 654-6071 or visit highlandil.gov.

July 4 & 5 BOND COUNTY FOURTH FEST, Greenville. Event will feature fireworks, food, beverages, live music and youth play area/bounce houses. The Boys in the Band (Alabama Tribute) will perform on July 4 and The Ozark Mountain Daredevils July 5. 5 p.m. - midnight. Downtown Greenville, Main and Second

Street. Visit facebook.com/BondCountyFourthFest or call (618) 322-2216.

July 6 FIRECRACKER KAYAK, CANOE & SUP Race, Grafton - Alton. This fundraiser for Mississippi River Water Trail Association will be held on the Mississippi River. Paddlers will race on a 15-mile down river course from Grafton access to the Alton riverfront, ending at the Alton marina. After the race, participants are invited to come to Old Bakery Beer Company for a free meal, courtesy of MRWTA. 7 a.m. - 3:45 p.m. For more information or to register, visit mississippiriverwatertrail.org/firecracker-race/.

July 10, 24 PUBLIC SQUARE CONCERT SERIES, Belleville. 7 - 9:30 p.m. Downtown Public Square, Main Street and Illinois Street. Call (618) 233-1416.

July 11 & 12 ARTISAN FAIR, Effingham. A weekend for visitors to enjoy fine art and one of a kind crafts for purchase, artisan demonstrations, food and drink and live music. Friday 5 - 9 p.m.; Saturday 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. Tuscan Hills Winery, 2200 Historic Hills Drive. Visit effinghamartisanfair.org.

July 11, 18, 25 CONCERTS IN THE PARK, Edwardsville. Free concerts highlighting local artists of various music genres. 8 p.m. Bandstand at City Park, 101 S. Buchanan Street. Visit cityofedwardsville.com

July 12 CLASSIC FLICKS FOR CONSERVATION, Godfrey. Watch a classic movie on our giant inflatable screen. 2025 will be the year of classic horror films at TNI. All movies this

year will feature an episode of the 1935 movie serial "The Phantom Empire" as a pre-film short. Bring your own lawn chairs or blankets, as well as your own snacks. No alcohol is permitted. No pre-registration required. Limited parking is available, so arrive early. 9 p.m. Event is free but donations are welcome. The Nature Institute, 2213 South Levis Lane. Call (618) 466-9930 or visit thenatureinstitute.org.

July 12 OLD FASHIONED ICE CREAM SOCIAL, Edwardsville. Enjoy an old-school ice cream social with free frozen treats. 1 - 3 p.m. West End Service Station, 620 St. Louis Street. Visit cityofedwardsville.com/749/west-end-service-station.

July 12 TOUR DE DONUT, Staunton. The "Tour de Donut" bicycle race is a spoof on the "Tour de France." The 34 mile route follows lightly traveled roads over rolling terrain with some moderate hills toward the end of the long route. Riders can stop at two rest stops (donut stops). While donut consumption is not mandatory, the rider is awarded a five minute time credit for each donut eaten. A shorter ride is also available. Registration at 7 a.m.; race 9 a.m. - noon. Staunton City Park at the corner of East Pennsylvania Street and Ash Street. To register, visit tourdedonut.org.

July 13; August 10; September 14; October 12 PICKERS MARKET, Litchfield. An open-air market with vintage collectibles, live music and food. 8 a.m. - 2 p.m. 400 North State Street. Visit visitlitchfield.com.

July 16, 30 BELLEVUE PARK CONCERT SERIES, Belleville. Bring your lawn chairs and snacks and enjoy great music. Different band every evening. 7 - 9:30 p.m. Admission is free. Bellevue Park, 401 Bellevue Park Drive. Call (618) 233-1416.

July 18 EffingHAM-JAM, Effingham. The Hometown Throwdown amateur BBQ competition fires up an evening of mouth watering BBQ, live music, family fun, and food trucks and beverage tent. Gather your team of backyard BBQ enthusiasts and compete for category trophies. Net proceeds directly support the Chamber Foundation of Effingham County scholarship program. Visit effinghamjam.com.

July 19, 26 MOVIE IN THE PARK, Maryville. Bring a lawn chair and come out to see Moana 2 on July 19 and Inside Out 2 on July 26. 7 p.m. Admission is free. Firemen's Park, 300 North Donk Avenue. Visit vil.maryville.il.us, email parksandrec@maryville-il.us or message us (618) 223-8965.

July 25 & 26 RAILROAD PROTOTYPE MODELERS MEET, Collinsville. High-quality models, displays, visiting prototype layouts, and hands-on learning centers. Presentations by historians and modelers, over 20 railroad historical societies and tables of hand-picked scale model vendors—no swap meet stuff. Friday 9 a.m. - 8:30 p.m.; Saturday 9 a.m. - 6 p.m. Admission is \$35 for Friday and Saturday; \$25 for Saturday only; children under 13 years of age are free with paid adult admission. Gateway Center,

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.

One Gateway Drive. For more information, visit stlrpm.com.

July 25-27 HERITAGE DAYS, Greenville. Tractor Pulls, field demonstrations, gas engine display, live music, grandscale railroad, food, vendors, activities, steam engine, Baker fan, sawmill, threshing, car cruise, train rides, The Lil' Red Barn Museum and pedal pulls daily. Friday and Saturday 8 a.m. - dark; Sunday 8 a.m. - 3 p.m. \$10 arm band for all three days; Sunday only \$5; children under 12 years of age free. American Farm Heritage Museum, 1395 Museum Avenue. Call (618) 664-9733 or visit american-farmheritagemuseum.org.

July 26 LIEVERS HUMMINGBIRD FESTIVAL, Worden. The Lincoln Land Association of Bird Banders will catch and band hummingbirds. Experts will discuss hummingbirds, the banding process and how to encourage these gorgeous birds to visit your yard. Opportunities to "adopt" and release banded hummingbirds are on a first-come basis. A \$5 donation is suggested for each adoption. The adopters will receive updates when their banded hummingbird is found somewhere else. Visitors are encouraged to bring lawn chairs, water and sunblock. 1:30 - 4:30 p.m. Paula & Jeff Lievers Residence, 8203 Brickyard Hill Road. Follow Route 4 to Wieseman Road. Follow Wieseman Road about 2.5 miles west to Brickyard Hill Road. Follow Brickyard Hill Road about a half mile west to the Lievers home. Watch for signs—your GPS may not be on the mark. Email paula@gomadison.com.

July 26 & 27 SMOKIN' ON MAIN BBQ COMPETITION & FESTIVAL, Collinsville. There will be some of the top BBQ food and drink vendors from near and far and great live entertainment. The event will also have a vendor's row and on-site BBQ supply. Meet BBQ legends in the pro circuit and industry. All proceeds will ben-

efit the Collinsville food pantry and the U.S. Veterans Foundation. Saturday 11 a.m. - 10 p.m.; Sunday 11 a.m. - 5 p.m. Uptown on Main Street. Visit smokinonmain.com.

July 27; August 24; September 21 SYMPHONY CONCERT SERIES, Edwardsville. Family-friendly free concerts performed by the Edwardsville Symphony. Free children's activities during each concert. Bring your own lawn chair or blanket. Our events kick off with a pre-concert performance at 6:30 p.m. with the Symphony's program beginning at 7 p.m. Edwardsville City Park at the Cleaon Etzkorn bandstand, 112 South Kansas Street. Visit edwardsvillecommunitysymphony.com.

July 31 - August 3 HELLO, DOLLY!, Breese. A theatrical presentation by Clinton County Showcase. All performances begin at 8 p.m. Admission is \$15. Showcase Stage at Breese Northside Park, North 10th Street. For tickets, visit clintoncountyshowcase.com.

August 2 GATEWAY HARVEST & HANDMADE CRAFT MARKET, Collinsville. Our market combines the best of both worlds: a bustling farmers' market filled with fresh, seasonal fruits and veggies, along with a vibrant craft fair showcasing talented local artisans and their unique creations. Family-friendly activities will keep the little ones entertained, and there will be themed drinks for all to enjoy. 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Admission is free. Visit gatewaycenter.com

August 2, 16 CONCERTS IN THE PARK, Maryville. Bring a lawn chair and enjoy live music in the park. Trilogy Band will play August 2 and Dueling Pianos will play August 16. 7:30 - 9 p.m. Admission is free. Firemen's Park, 300 North Donk Avenue. Visit vil.maryville.il.us, email parksandrec@maryville-il.us or message us (618) 223-8965.

August 3 PEACH FESTIVAL, Grafton. Local peach growers from all over the area will be presenting their peaches for visitors to sample and purchase. Festival will also feature live music, fresh produce, unique vendors, kids activities, locally made wine, and the peach pitting contest. 11 a.m. - 3 p.m. Admission is free. Pere Marquette Lodge & Conference Center, 13653 Lodge Blvd. Visit pmlodge.net.

August 7-10 MILL ROAD THRESHERMAN'S SHOW, Altamont. Explore a century of farming. Using antique farm equipment from the past. Demonstrating it in the present. Preserving it for the future. The four-day event will take you back to country life on the central Illinois prairies. Farming and tractor events, horse farming, bluegrass music, women's activities, children's events and more. Camping is available on the grounds. Admission is \$8; children 12 years of age and younger are free. Effingham County Fairgrounds, 722 East Cumberland Road. For more information, visit millroadthresherman.org or facebook.com/millroadthresherman.

August 8-10, 14-17 ALTON LITTLE THEATER: 9 TO 5 THE MUSICAL, Alton. A musical presentation by the Alton Little Theater Company. Thursday - Saturday at 7:30 p.m.; Sunday at 2 p.m. Admission is \$25. Alton Little Theater, 2450 North Henry Street. For tickets, visit altonlittletheater.org.

August 9 ROCK THE HOPS, Alton. Enjoy craft beer samplings with a commemorative tasting glass, live music from several genres, visual artists, makers, and vendors. 2 - 8 p.m. Downtown Alton, 200 Piassa Street. For more information, visit rockthehopsalton.com.

August 15-17 BALLOON FEST, Centralia. Annual hot air balloon festival featuring live entertainment, craft booths,

family activities, evening balloon glows, car and motorcycle show. Friday 3:30 - 10 p.m.; Saturday 3:30 - 10 p.m.; Sunday noon - 6 p.m. \$10 weekend wristband (available at event gates or online); children under 2 years of age are free. \$10 parking at north entrance. Foundation Park, 1490 Gragg Street. For more information, visit centraliachamber.com/balloon-fest

August 16 ROTARY CRITERIUM BICYCLE RACES, Edwardsville. A series of high-speed professional and amateur bicycle races complemented by a running event, free kid's races, a kid's zone with an art tent, and entertainment zone complete with live music, food and beverages. Hundreds of cyclists from over 10 states will compete for \$10,000. This event is hosted by the Rotary Club of Edwardsville as a fundraiser for their service projects, grants and scholarships. 2 - 11 p.m. For more information, visit edwardsvillecriterium.page.

August 22-24 KIRCHENFEST, Highland. Festival offers food (including a Bavarian skillet dish prepared on a 500-pound skillet and a sit-down chicken dinner), live music, games, live auction, flea market, competitive run, bingo, raffles, and more. Admission is free. Friday 5 p.m. - midnight; Saturday 7:30 a.m. - midnight; Sunday 8 a.m. - 10 p.m. St. Paul Catholic Church, 1412 Ninth Street. Visit stpaulkirchenfest.com.

August 22-24 MIDWEST SALUTE TO THE ARTS, Fairview Heights. Event features local and national artists, artist demonstrations, live entertainment, children's gallery and food trucks. Friday 6 - 9 p.m.; Saturday 10 - 4 p.m.; Sunday 11 - 5 p.m. Admission is free. Moody Park, 525 South Ruby Lane. Visit midwestsalute.com.

A toad hops
to a stop on
Cherokee Trail
at Eldon Hazlet
State Park in
Carlyle.



THE FINAL FRAME

VOTER REGISTRATION CARD 2025 *Please sign and present this card at the registration table.*

87th Annual Meeting of Members

Saturday, September 6, 2025



Member Signature _____

Please enroll me in Operation Round Up

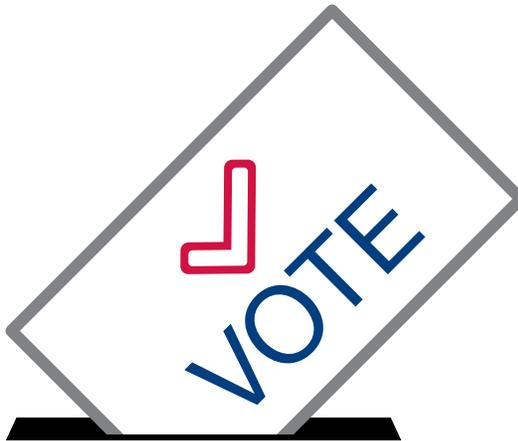
PLEASE UPDATE YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION

Home Phone # (if applicable): _____ Cell Phone #: _____

Service Address: _____ Billing Address: _____

Email Address: _____

Fill out and present this registration card to receive an additional \$10 bill credit!



2025 Annual Meeting Voting Schedule

\$30 bill credit with your pre-printed registration card, \$20 bill credit without your pre-printed registration card.
Bill credit to be applied on the October bill — same credit amounts offered for early and day-of-meeting voting.

Greenville office, 525 US Route 40, Greenville	Aug. 27 remains open to 7 p.m. Sept. 4 remains open to 7 p.m.
St. Jacob warehouse, 10031 Ellis Road, St. Jacob	Aug. 26 from 4 to 7 p.m. Sept. 3 from 4 to 7 p.m.
St. Elmo warehouse, 2117 East 1850 Avenue, St. Elmo	Aug. 28 from 4 to 7 p.m. Sept. 2 from 4 to 7 p.m.
American Farm Heritage Museum, 1395 Museum Avenue, Greenville, IL 62246	Sept. 6 from 8 to 10 a.m.

In addition to the above times, any member of the cooperative can vote during normal business hours at our Greenville office beginning at 8 a.m. on Friday, Aug. 22 through 4:30 p.m. on Friday, Sept. 5. We are closed on Monday, Sept. 1 in observance of Labor Day.

