



# *THE* **Southwestern**

A SOUTHWESTERN ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE MEMBER MAGAZINE

MARCH 2024 • VOLUME 76 • ISSUE 3

## **RIGHT OF WAY**

**CLEARANCE  
HELPS SAFETY,  
RELIABILITY**

**BRS MUSEUM**

**TREE PLANTING**

**CO-OP KITCHEN**

**READER CONTEST**

**WORK ZONES**

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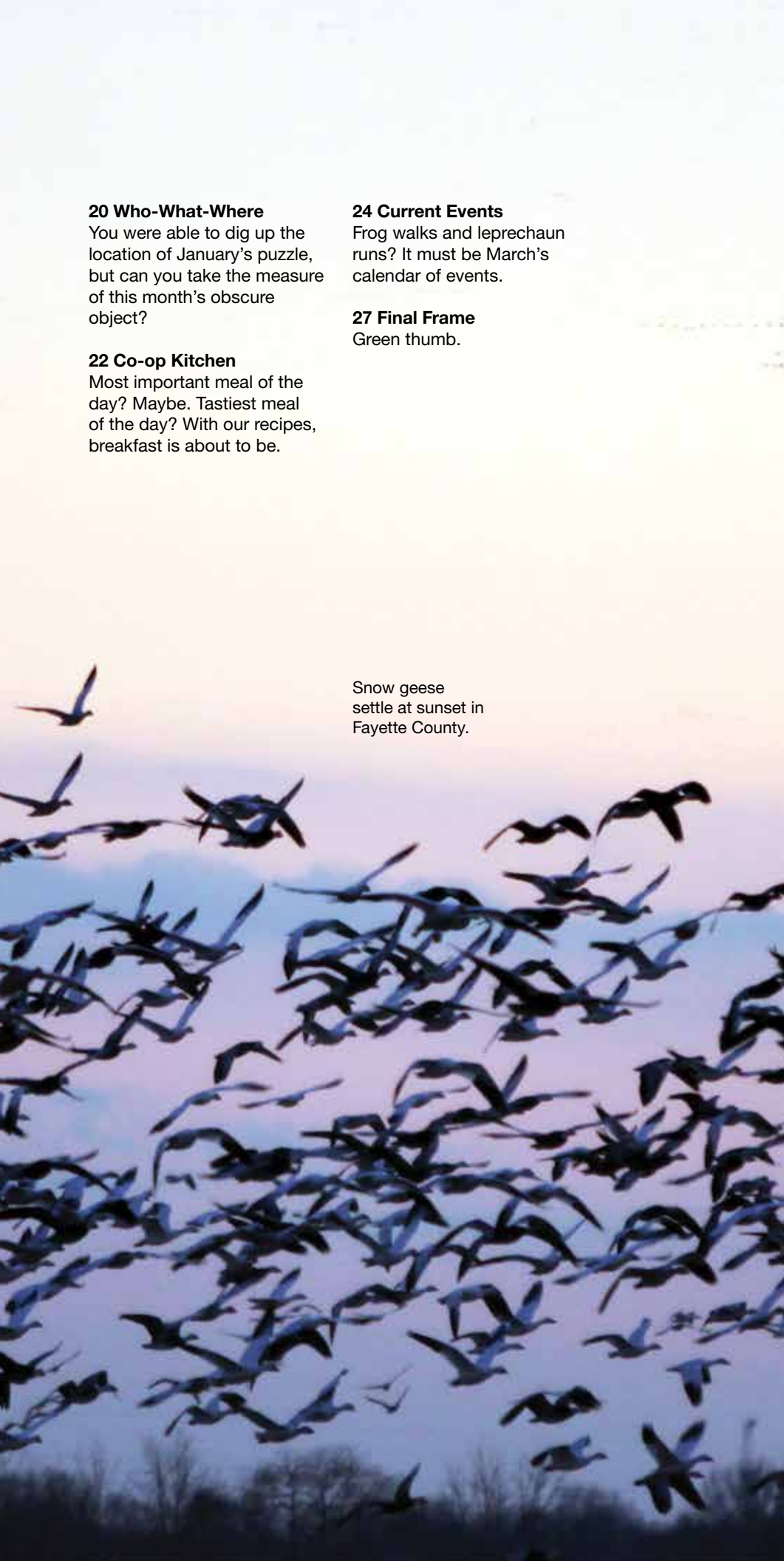
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Green thumb.

Snow geese  
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525 U.S. Route 40, Greenville, IL 62246.  
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## NEWS & NOTES

### ON THE COVER

From transmission line corridors that span states to local rights of way that provide a path for power to reach your home, right of way maintenance plays a critical role in reliability. Read our story about right of way maintenance on page 10.



### CO-OP REMINDERS

**March 11** 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.

**March 29** Offices closed for Good Friday



### FIND US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

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



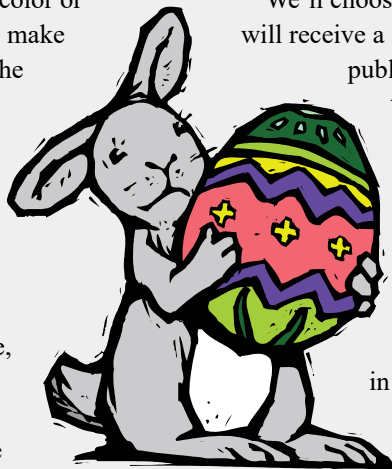
# Reader Contest

**W**e've hidden a rabbit in your magazine. Your job is to find it. The actual image may be larger or smaller than what you see here. We may change the color or reverse or alter the image we've hidden to make the contest more challenging. If you find the rabbit, 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](mailto: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](mailto:thesouthwestern@sweci.com) inbox by the

first day of the month following the month of publication. For our March contest, we'll need your entries in our inbox or postmarked by April 1, 2024.

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 May issue of The Southwestern.



### JANUARY WINNER

Congratulations to Susan Morgan of Edwardsville. As the winner of our January Hide & Seek contest drawing, Susan will receive a \$25 credit on an upcoming electric bill. Thank you to everyone who participated in our January 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](mailto: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 list and not one you care to be part of.

- March contest entries must be in our inbox or postmarked by April 1.
- We'll never hide the image on the front or back cover or on the page where we list the rules.

## LEVELIZED BILLING SIMPLIFIES BUDGET PLANNING

Southwestern Electric offers levelized billing to help you avoid substantial changes in your electric bill from one month to the next. When you sign up for levelized billing, your bill will be based on a rolling 12-month average, and your amount due will vary by a few dollars from month to month.

### PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS:

- You must have resided at your current location for at least 12 months.
- To be eligible, you need to have a zero balance and have made no more than one late payment in the last 12 months.
- All monthly payments must be made by the due date or the account may be disqualified from the program.
- If you decide to discontinue levelized billing, or if your account is removed from the program or disconnected, your actual account balance will be payable in full on the due date of your next bill.

Levelized Billing flattens out the peaks and valleys that come with seasonal shifts in your electric usage, making it easier to forecast your bills and plan your budget.

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

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

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

Rebate forms are available on our website at [sweci.com](http://sweci.com). You can email your completed application and proof of purchase to [julie.lowe@sweci.com](mailto: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.

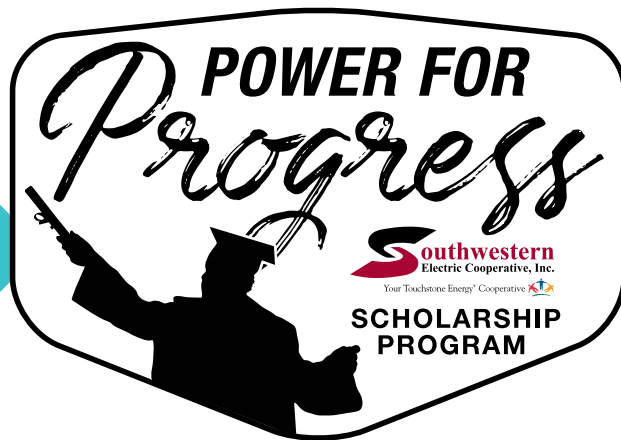
**Have questions?**  
**Call Julie Lowe**  
**at (800) 637-8667**  
**or email her at**  
**[julie.lowe@sweci.com](mailto:julie.lowe@sweci.com).**





# ***FINAL REMINDER:*** ***SCHOLARSHIP*** ***APPLICATIONS DUE*** ***MARCH 11***

***Twelve***  
***\$1,200***  
**Southwestern**  
**Electric Scholarships**  
**and one \$1,200 Alan**  
**G. Libbra Memorial**  
**Scholarship will**  
**be awarded**  
**in 2024**



## **Co-op to Award \$14,400** **in Academic Assistance**



**S**ince 1995, Southwestern Electric Cooperative's Power For Progress Scholarship Program has provided close to \$300,000 in academic assistance to students pursuing a college degree or vocational school certificate. The tradition continues this year with Southwestern's pledge to award \$14,400 in scholarship money to 12 students in spring 2024 for use in the fall 2024 semester.

Scholarship recipients can apply the funding to tuition at any accredited university, college or technical school in the U.S.

Scholarship applications may be downloaded from Southwestern Electric's website at [sweci.com](http://sweci.com). You may also request an application by calling Susan File at (800) 637-8667.

Separate applications will be provided for high school seniors graduating in 2024 and students who graduated from high school in previous years.

The completed application and supplemental materials — including a cover letter, academic transcripts, attendance records and financial information — must be delivered to Southwestern Electric's headquarters (525 U.S. Route 40 in Greenville), in a single envelope, by 4:30 p.m. on **Monday, March 11, 2024**.



## ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

- 1) The applicant (or the applicant's parent/legal guardian) must be an active member of Southwestern Electric Cooperative. Southwestern Electric directors, employees, and their immediate families are not eligible.
- 2) The applicant must meet all academic requirements for admission to an accredited university, college or technical school, and be admitted to that institution as a full-time student in the fall of 2024.
- 3) The entire application must be completed in full, and received with the appropriate supplementary materials, in advance of the application deadline, March 11, 2024.

Since 1995, Southwestern Electric has provided close to \$300,000 in scholarship funding, assisting 439 students.

**For more information on the Power for Progress Scholarship Program, please contact Susan File at [susan.file@sweci.com](mailto:susan.file@sweci.com) or 800-637-8667.**

# Libbra Scholarship Will Support Future Leaders

**T**he family of Southwestern Electric director Alan Libbra has established the Alan G. Libbra Memorial Scholarship in his name. All Power for Progress applicants will be considered as candidates.

"Alan believed in leadership by example. He was a passionate advocate for pursuing the common good, and giving back to the people who helped you fulfill your potential," said Southwestern director Jared Stine, chair of the Scholarship Committee. "Students who aspire to provide community service through leadership will be particularly strong candidates for the scholarship Alan's family established in his name."

A lifelong member of Southwestern Electric, Alan Libbra served as president for 30 of his 36 years on the cooperative's board of directors. He worked throughout his life to serve the interests of farmers, rural communities and Southwestern Electric Cooperative members.

All Power for Progress eligibility requirements and criteria apply to the Alan G. Libbra Memorial Scholarship. For more information, contact Susan File at 800-637-8667 or [susan.file@sweci.com](mailto:susan.file@sweci.com).

## RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE JUDGES

- 1) Follow the instructions carefully.  
This includes selecting the appropriate application for your situation, gathering and properly assembling all of the required materials, minding the word count in the personal narrative and submitting everything in advance of the deadline.
- 2) Leave nothing blank. If any piece of required material is missing, or a single section is not completed, the application will receive a score of zero points. If a particular question is not applicable to your situation, you can mark it "N/A," but do not skip the question entirely.
- 3) Focus the personal narrative. The topic of the personal narrative is not open-ended. Keep your narrative focused on answering the question at hand: How will you use your career/education to positively impact your community?
- 4) Leverage the cover letter. Let the judges know about your achievements, aspirations and what sets you apart from other candidates. If there's something you want to say about yourself, and it doesn't fit in the personal narrative, include it in the cover letter.
- 5) Allow ample time. Don't wait until the last minute to start on your application. Each applicant will be asked to obtain several supplemental documents — including academic transcripts and attendance records — which take time to collect.

# LIHEAP Energy Assistance

**T**he State of Illinois offers assistance to low-income families who struggle to pay their energy bills. Applications for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis until funds are exhausted.

The current LIHEAP application period is Oct. 2, 2023 to Aug. 15, 2024, or until funding is exhausted.

Applications in October were limited to priority groups.

Priority groups include:

- Seniors (at least one household member is age 60 or older).
- Disabled (at least one household member receives disability benefits).
- Families with at least one child under 6 years old.

Beginning Nov. 1, 2023, members who had been disconnected or who were in imminent threat of disconnection could apply for benefits.

Beginning Dec. 1, 2023, all other eligible members could apply.

The listings below will help you determine if you're eligible for assistance. Payment amounts are determined by income, household size, fuel type, geographic location and available funding.

Use the listing to find the agency that serves the county you live in, then contact the agency and tell them you'd like to apply for assistance through LIHEAP. The customer service representative who takes your application will explain the requirements, the type of assistance available, and your rights under the program.

**When you apply for assistance, please bring the following items:**

- Proof of gross income from all household members for the 30-day period prior to application date.
- A copy of your heating and electric bills issued within the last 30 days (if energy paid for directly).
- A copy of your rental agreement (if your heating costs are included in the rent) showing the monthly rental amount, landlord's contact information, and proof that utilities are included in the rent.
- Proof of Social Security numbers for all household members.

The agency will determine your eligibility based on information you provide and will notify you within 30 days of receiving a completed application.

If your application is accepted, the local agency will make the appropriate payment to your energy provider(s) on your behalf, or in some cases, directly to you.

All client and vendor payments will be made by the local agency within 15 days of the application's approval.

Electric cooperative members, if approved, will receive assistance in the form of a one-time payment.

*Members using Pay-As-You-Go may also qualify for LIHEAP funds. Contact your local community action agency to find out if you qualify for energy assistance.*

**To apply for assistance through LIHEAP, please contact the community action agency serving your county.**

County	Community Action Agency	Phone Number
Bond	BCMw Community Services, Inc.	618-532-7388
Clay	CEFS Economic Opportunity Corp.	217-342-2193
Clinton	BCMw Community Services, Inc.	618-532-7388
Effingham	CEFS Economic Opportunity Corp.	217-342-2193
Fayette	CEFS Economic Opportunity Corp.	217-342-2193
Macoupin	Illinois Valley Economic Development Corp.	217-839-4431
Madison	Madison County Community Development	618-692-8940
Marion	BCMw Community Services, Inc.	618-532-7388
Montgomery	CEFS Economic Opportunity Corp.	217-342-2193
Shelby	CEFS Economic Opportunity Corp.	217-342-2193
St. Clair	St. Clair Community Action Agency	618-277-6790

## Income Guidelines

If your household's combined income for the 30 days prior to application (gross income for all household members, before taxes are deducted) is at or below 200% of the federal poverty level as shown in the chart at right, you may be eligible to receive assistance. If you rent, and your heat and/or electric is included in the rent, your rent must be greater than 30% of your income in order to be eligible to receive assistance.

Family Size	30-Day Income
1 .....	\$2,430
2 .....	\$3,287
3 .....	\$4,143
4 .....	\$5,000
5 .....	\$5,857
6 .....	\$6,713
7 .....	\$7,570
8 .....	\$7,775



**For more information on this program, visit [IllinoisLIHEAP.com](http://IllinoisLIHEAP.com) or call the toll-free hotline, (877) 411-WARM.**



# Purchase Power Day By Day With **Pay- As-You-Go** Option

**P**ay for the power you need as you need it — that's the idea behind Southwestern Electric Cooperative's Pay-As-You-Go program. "Most members are billed for power a month at a time. The power they've used during the last month is what they pay for," explained Susan File, vice president of member services for Southwestern Electric Cooperative. "With our Pay-As-You-Go program, you only pay for the power you need at the time, and you can add more money to the account whenever you want to."

File said the Pay-As-You-Go program is perfect for families who want to control precisely how much of their budget they put toward electricity.

"Our main goal is to help our members use less power, and forego paying a deposit and reconnection fees," she pointed out. "Studies have shown that households typically experience a 12 percent drop in energy use after switching to this type of program."

Pay-As-You-Go allows the accountholder to purchase electricity at his or her convenience. Payments appear as credits on the member's account. The balance, which reflects energy used and payments made over the past 24-hours, is updated daily. There's no penalty for allowing funds to run out, but electric service becomes subject to disconnection when the account balance reaches \$0.00.

The cooperative doesn't mail a monthly bill to Pay-As-You-Go accounts. Rather, participating members monitor their account balance via the cooperative's online billing system, SWEC IL app or in-home display. In

addition to checking their account balance and payment history, the member will have access to an assortment of tools for tracking their energy consumption, including a breakdown of their kilowatt-hour usage and money spent on power each day.

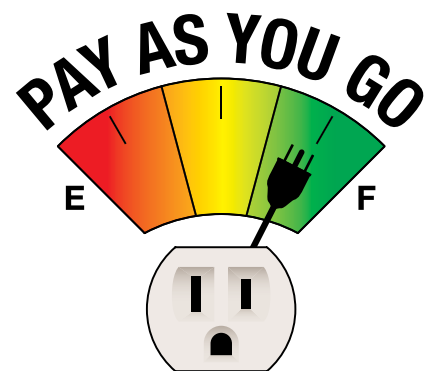
Southwestern also offers an in-home display unit (at no charge), particularly for members who don't have Internet access. The online billing system, app and in-home display allow the accountholder to view their present account balance and average daily usage.

"The member has to keep an eye on their remaining balance with this type of program, but we also have a couple of systems in place to let them know their account's status," said File. "The in-home display sounds an alarm when the account reaches a minimum dollar amount. We can also send the member a reminder message by telephone, text and e-mail if we have a valid phone number or e-mail address on file for their account."

Payments on a Pay-As-You-Go account can be made at the cooperative's Greenville office during regular business hours, at the Vandalia Farm Bureau, or deposited in the dropbox at Southwestern's St. Elmo and St. Jacob offices. Payments are also accepted 24/7 by phone, SWEC IL app and online at sweci.com. Most payments will post to the member's account within an hour. However, members should allow three day's processing time when payments are made at the St. Elmo or St. Jacob offices or Vandalia Farm Bureau.



- Take control of your energy usage.
- No credit checks or security deposits.
- No fees for late payment or reconnection of service.
- Pay with your credit card, debit card or cash (no checks, please).



To learn more about Pay-As-You-Go, call (800) 637-8667 to speak to a member services representative.

# RELIABLE RIGHTS OF WAY



## LINE CLEARANCE PROMOTES SAFETY & RELIABILITY

Every now and then, Southwestern Electric receives calls or letters from members regarding right of way maintenance work. More often than not, those members are reaching out to compliment our crews on a job well done.

But not always.

On occasion, we hear from a member who's returned home after a long day to find co-op crews have cleared right of way on their property, and the extent of the work has surprised them.

That member may have seen tree trimming — select branches being cleared from lines to eliminate blinks — but he or she wasn't familiar with the corridor clearing our crews perform when they're cutting back foliage for right of way maintenance.

Tree trimming is the work most of you are familiar with. You've probably seen our crews making small, select cuts to specific limbs that have grown near or into our lines. Our objective with tree trimming is to resolve a blink or reliability issue that's confined to a well-defined area.

On pages 12-13, you'll find a map that outlines our right of way clearance plan for 2024. The circuits we highlighted on our map are scheduled for right of way maintenance. In this work, we clear a path that spans about 20 feet on either side of the power lines.

With right of way maintenance, our objectives are to ensure and promote member safety, system integrity, and long-term power reliability.

The work demands considerable

time and resources. We currently clear right of way in an area once every five years. So if you're new to Southwestern Electric, you may not have noticed right of way maintenance in your area.

The change in landscape is dramatic, particularly in an overgrown area. But the close-cropped look is short-lived. You'll see significant and rapid change in spring and summer, when the open corridors allow grasses to take root and the canopy reaches into the edges of the corridor we cleared.

We understand the pride and affection you have for your timber and green spaces. We feel that way ourselves. As our operations and engineering teams will tell you, while trees are a tremendous asset, they're also a leading cause of outages. Consequently, sound forestry



In addition to ensuring reliable power, right of way work supports the growth of natural grasses and provides habitat for plants and wildlife that call our corridors home.



practices are vital to keeping your family cool in the summer and warm in the winter months.

The co-op's right of way maintenance program has significantly reduced the number of outages you experience. It's also offered our crews better access to power lines, improving our power restoration times after storms.

In more remote areas, where lines travel through field and timber far from roads, it's a challenge for linemen to access our infrastructure and repair damage. So it's particularly vital that we do all we can to promote line integrity near homes in areas like this.

In the past, some members have requested we not clear right of way on their property. We simply can't honor that request without compromising the

lines that serve them, their neighbors, and in some cases, many other members.

We presently notify members by phone before we begin work on a circuit. We'd prefer to stop by and speak with each of you personally before we begin maintenance in your area. These are expensive endeavors, and we're mindful of how we use the resources you entrust to us. As we review our budget for right of way maintenance, we assess the cost and opportunities included in dedicating an employee to meeting each member before right of way work begins.

Ultimately, we hope to create conditions that support growth of natural grasses in our rights of way, and provide habitat for plants and wildlife that call these corridors home.

**With right of way maintenance, our objectives are to ensure and promote member safety, system integrity, and long-term power reliability.**



# MAINTENANCE MAP

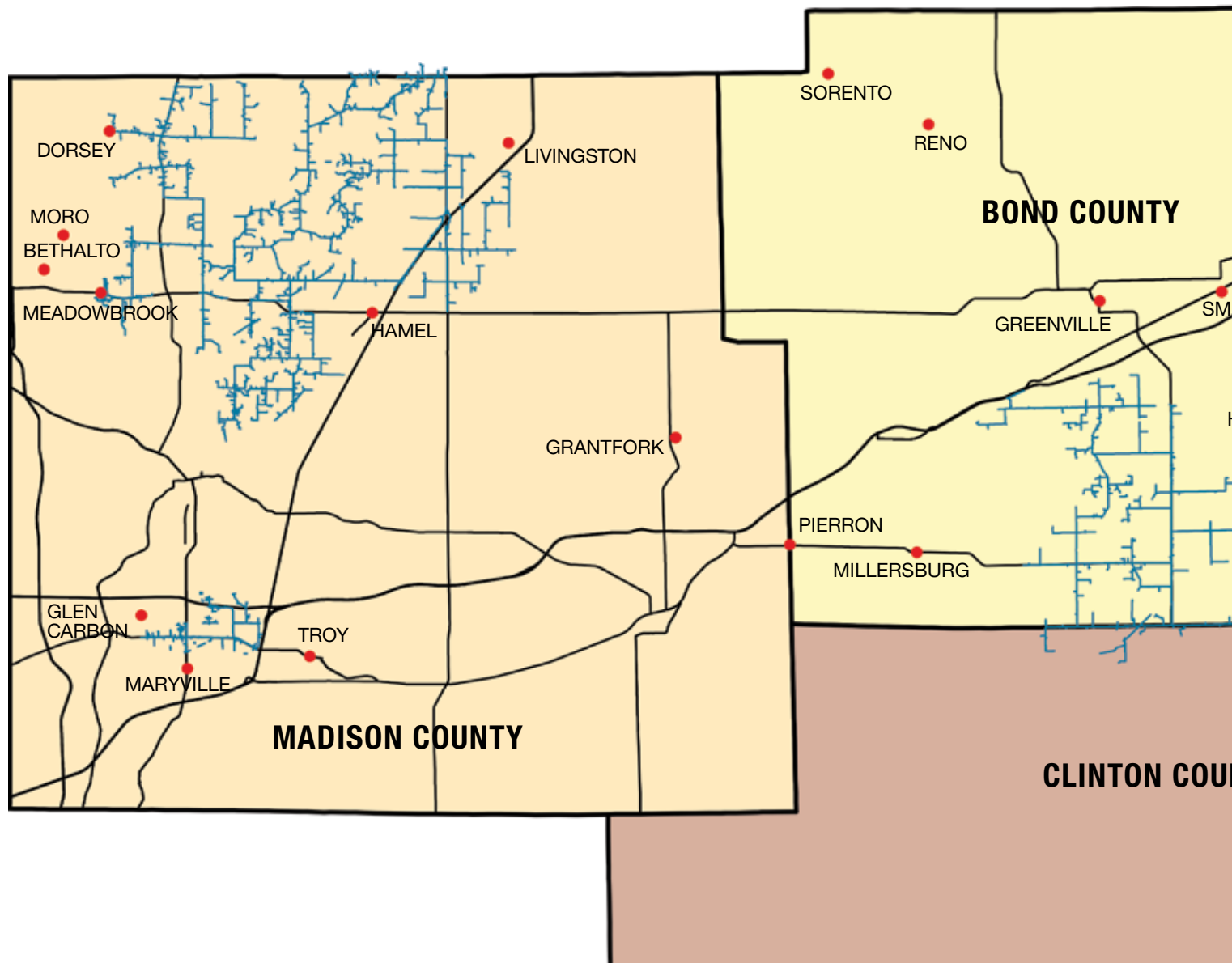
## 2024 RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

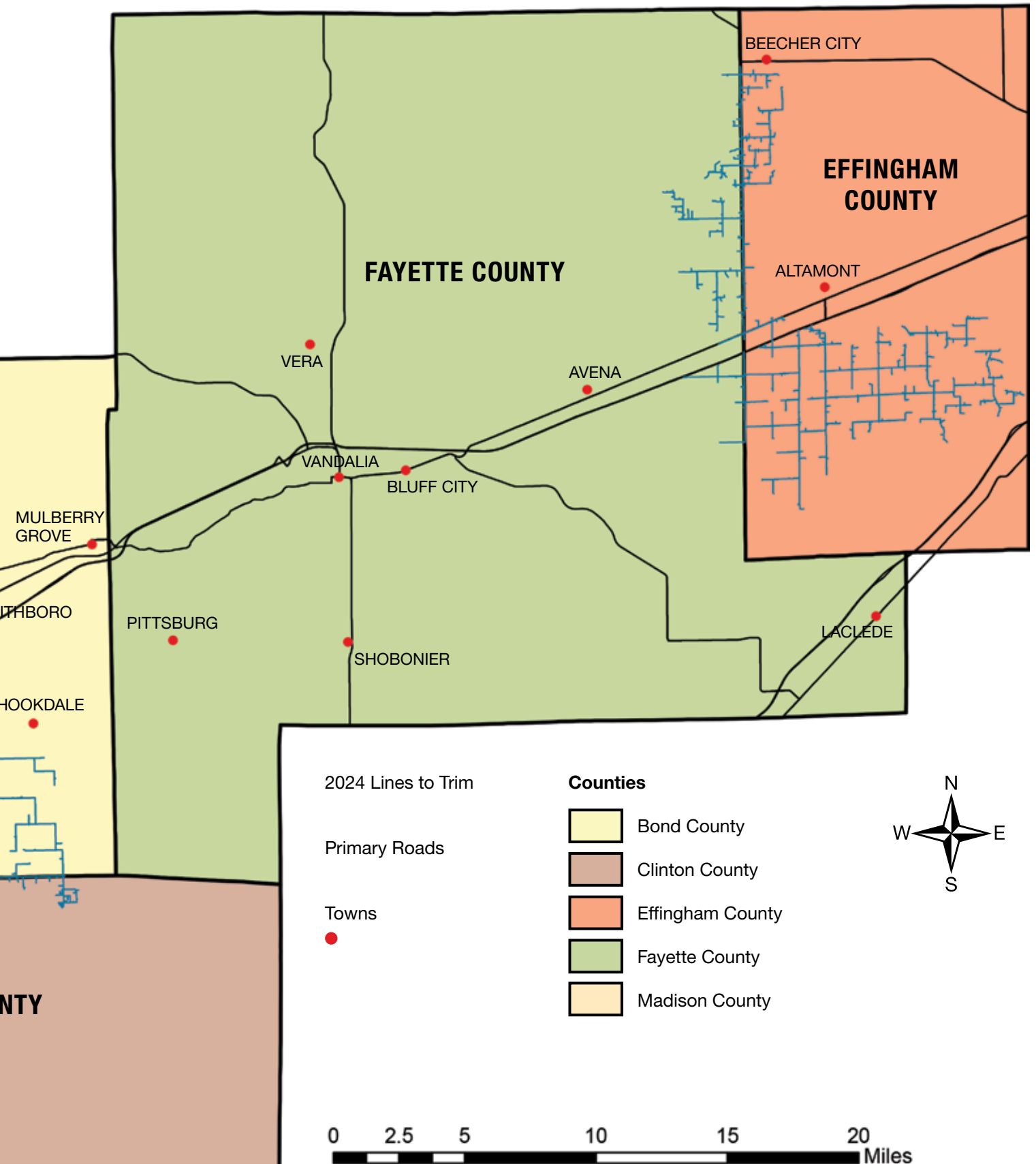
The areas highlighted in blue are scheduled for right of way maintenance in the coming months. When performing right of way maintenance, our crews clear a path that spans about 20 feet on either side of the power lines.

Southwestern's right of way maintenance program has significantly reduced the number of outages you experience. It's also offered our crews better access to power lines, improving our power restoration times after storms.

You can read more about our right of way maintenance work on page 10.

***We'll call before  
we begin right of  
way maintenance  
in your area.***





# Sowing Seeds

THE MOST IMPORTANT ITEM IN YOUR TREE PLANTING TOOL KIT ISN'T A SHOVEL OR SEEDLING—IT'S A PLAN.

**W**ith spring in bloom, many of us are eyeing our lawns, lots and acreage, and giving serious consideration to landscaping projects that were nothing more than notions a few weeks ago. If tree planting made it to your landscaping list, take time now to prepare a plan.

A little research and forethought addressing canopy size and shape, growth rates, and your tree's position relative to overhead and underground utilities, can ensure you receive the maximum benefit from the seeds or saplings you sow. Here are 10 items you'll want to consider as you build your planting plan.

**Climate.** The National Arbor Day Foundation offers a Hardiness Zone Map (<https://www.arborday.org/media/zones.cfm>) to help you select trees well suited to our area. Southwestern Electric Cooperative's service territory is located in Hardiness Zone 6. Visit the National Arbor Day Foundation's web site at [ArborDay.org](http://ArborDay.org) for a catalog of trees that typically thrive in our zone.

**Height & Canopy.** Will the tree crowd your home, outbuildings, utility lines or other trees when it's fully grown?

**Ever Green?** Is the tree deciduous or coniferous? Will it lose its leaves in the winter?

**Thick & Thin.** A columnar tree will grow in less space. Round and V-shaped species provide more shade.

**Life Span.** How long will it take your tree to reach maturity? Slow growing species typically live longer than faster growing trees.

**Bearing Fruit.** It's satisfying to pluck an apple or pear from a tree you planted yourself. But fruit trees attract insects and can make a mess of your yard. Weigh the pros and cons of contending with bugs and lawn maintenance before you plant.

**Hot & Cold.** You can use trees and shrubs to boost your home's overall energy efficiency. A properly designed landscape can help you maximize shade in the summer, channel cool summer breezes toward your home, take advantage of the sun's warmth in winter, and minimize the cooling effect of winter winds.

**Underground...** Before you dig, contact the Joint Utility Locating Information for Excavators (JULIE). JULIE will notify member utility companies. The utilities will mark their underground fa-

cilities so you can dig safely. The marking services are performed at no charge to you. To contact JULIE, call 8-1-1 or visit [www.illinois1call.com](http://www.illinois1call.com). It's simple, it saves lives, and it's the law.

**...And Overhead.** As you plant, keep right of way maintenance in mind. Avoid planting trees under or near power lines. Keep shrubs, hedges and other plants away from utility poles as well (see our distance guidelines diagram).

If you think you may be planting a tree too close to Southwestern Electric's right of way, please call us at (800) 637-8667. Cooperative operations and engineering personnel will ask you about the trees you have in mind, discuss the space you're working with, and offer suggestions.

The conversation will help us ensure reliability by protecting the integrity of the co-op's distribution system.

Co-op crews and contractors periodically clear rights of way and routinely trim trees using methods that protect power lines while preserving the health of trees. Right of way maintenance and tree trimming may change the shape of a tree. The best way to avoid clearance and maintenance is by planting in locations that aren't near the right of way.

**Arbor Experts.** Before you plant, talk to people who are familiar with the trends and conditions unique to your area. Your community's tree board, city forestry department, and representatives from your area's cooperative extension office can offer insight into local soil, moisture, disease, and pest issues.

**Concerned you may be planting too close to our right of way?** Call us at (800) 637-8667. We'll be happy to talk with you and there's no charge for the consultation.



# Plant the Right Tree in the Right Place

For more tips on smart tree planting in your community, contact Southwestern Electric Cooperative or visit [www.ArborDay.org](http://www.ArborDay.org).

Trees beautify our neighborhoods, and when planted in the right spot, can even help lower energy bills. But the wrong tree in the wrong place can be a hazard... especially to power lines.

## LARGE TREES

**Height/spread of more than 40 feet, such as:**

- Maple
- Birch
- Oak
- Sweetgum
- Spruce
- Linden
- Pine

## MEDIUM TREES

**Height/spread of 25 to 40 feet, such as:**

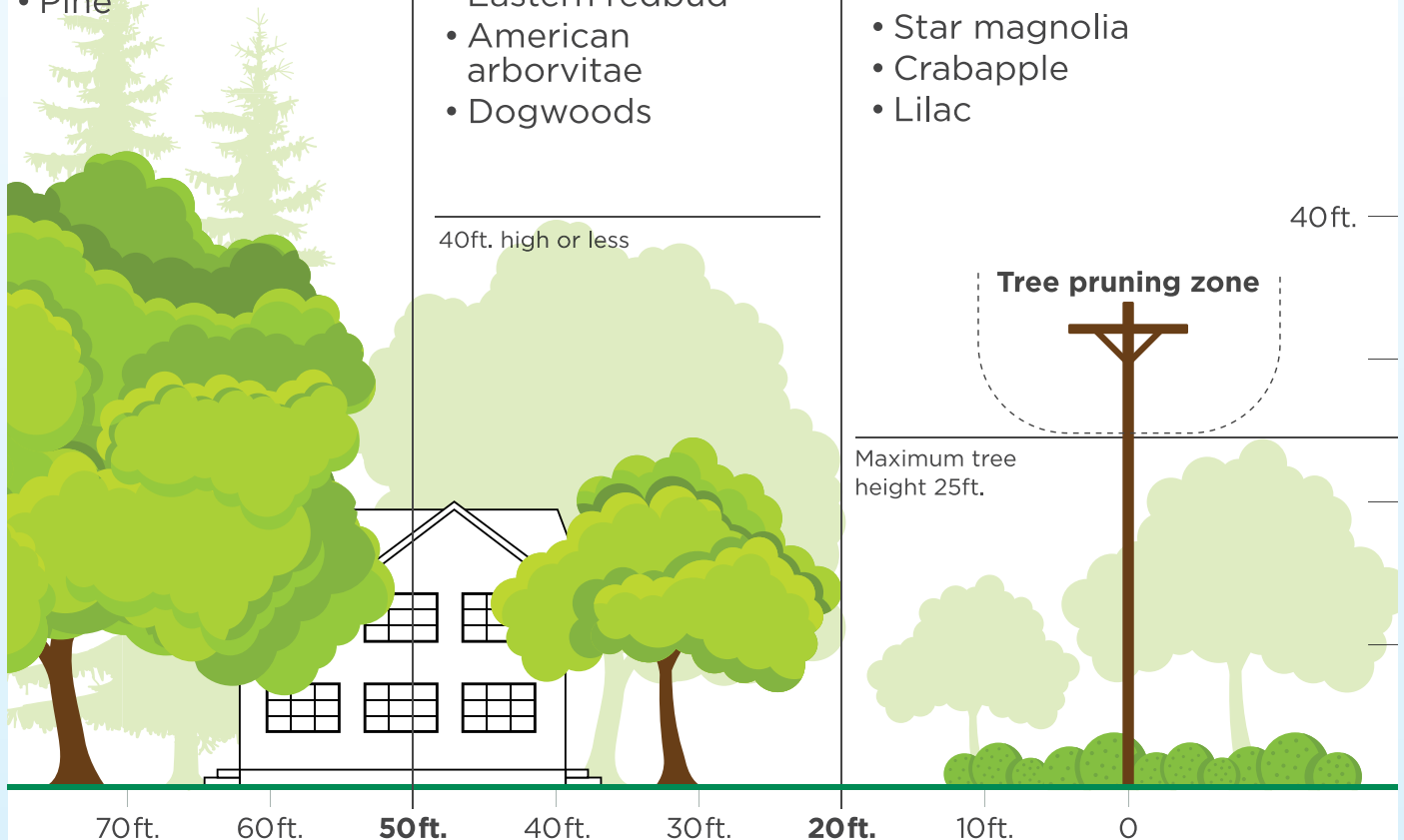
- Washington hawthorn
- Goldenraintree
- Eastern redbud
- American arborvitae
- Dogwoods

## SMALL TREES

*Avoid planting within 20 feet of power lines. When planting within 20 feet is unavoidable, use only shrubs and small trees.*

**Height/spread of no more than 25 feet such as:**

- Star magnolia
- Crabapple
- Lilac



**Be safe! Always call 811 before you dig to locate any buried utility lines.**

Source: The Arbor Day Foundation and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association

# A CONE ZONE A

## WATCH FOR CREWS AFTER THE STORM

**I**n winter, Southwestern linemen navigate multi-ton trucks down snow-slickened blacktops to reach work sites. In spring they fight 40-mph gusts to replace poles in failing light. Come summer, they'll string wire after storms, working by headlamp and floodlight in 100-degree heat. Regardless of the job or season, our linemen approach each outage with a

single concern foremost in mind: safety.

From the clothes they wear to the tools and training they use, safety is at the forefront of all they do.

But some aspects of a crew's safety aren't entirely up to them.

They're up to you.

"Most motorists our crews encounter are cautious and courteous. They make good decisions when they're approach-





ing a work site,” said Southwestern editor Joe Richardson. “But there are always a few who approach the area too fast. By failing to respect the crews, the cones, and the warning signs, they’re endangering themselves, their passengers, and our linemen.”

Richardson urged drivers to exercise caution when driving during or after bad weather.

“Storms bring down power lines and bring out work crews,” he said. “In many instances, moving a bucket truck off the road isn’t an option. Drivers need to watch for signs and cones that signal crews are in the area. They may crest a hill to find linemen working and trucks parked immediately over the rise.”

Every driver has a responsibility to exercise caution and good judgment. Leaving early, driving carefully, devoting your full attention to the road, and being attuned to the environment can help prevent accidents. “Ideally, you stay home when the weather makes roads treacherous,” Richardson said. “If you

have to get out, keep in mind you’ll be sharing the road with line crews and service trucks.”

After a storm, stay alert for debris. Storms can drop poles and power lines into roadways. The lines could be energized, and they’re very hard to see. “You may have rounded a bend a thousand

times with no trouble — but storms change the environment. Reduce your speed and pay attention to the landscape. Are lights out? Limbs down? Then there’s a good chance we have a crew working in the area.”

It’s important for drivers to recognize their limitations, especially in bad weather, Richardson said. “Some people aren’t comfortable driving in rain or snow. I know a few drivers who rely on experience, and familiar routes, to compensate for slower reflexes, and eyesight that isn’t as sharp as it used to be.”

Those strategies are less effective when conditions are poor. “Don’t risk your safety and the well-being of others. If you have to get out, call a friend or family member for a ride,” he said. “At the end of the day, we want to see our crews and the people who share the roads with them make it home safely. Our members can help us make that happen.”

“AT THE END OF THE DAY, WE WANT TO SEE OUR CREWS AND THE PEOPLE WHO SHARE THE ROADS WITH THEM MAKE IT HOME SAFELY. OUR MEMBERS CAN HELP US MAKE THAT HAPPEN.”





# HISTORY ON DECK

Bottomley-Ruffing-Schalk Baseball Museum honors locals' impact on the game

Words by Nathan Grimm | Photos by Mike Barns

**T**he National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, a celebration of the game of baseball's rich history, is famously located in Cooperstown, New York.

Some 783 miles southwest of there, the Bottomley-Ruffing-Schalk Baseball Museum is also a celebration of the game's history, or at least of Central and Southwestern Illinois' contributions to it. Though less famous than its New York contemporary, the Nokomis-based museum champions the local heroes who help tell the story of baseball's history as America's pastime.

The BRS Museum, according to its official history, started in 1981 with a small display in a window front of a downtown Nokomis restaurant. Since that time, three other locations have been home to the museum, including its present location at 121 W. State St. on Illinois Route 16.

The museum is named after three of the area's most notable products — Jim Bottomley, Charles “Red” Ruffing and Ray Schalk. All three are also enshrined in Cooperstown after getting their start in small Illinois towns.

On the other end of the spectrum is

current Los Angeles Angels starting pitcher Reid Detmers, who hails from Nokomis. Detmers doesn't have the accolades of the museum's three namesakes but threw a no-hitter on May 10, 2022, in just his 11th major-league start.

In between is a gamut of players ranging from famous to unsung, but all of whom have a place within the four walls of the BRS gallery. Likewise, the museum's relics range in nature, from the standard old-time gear and signed memorabilia to the obscure — like the bell that hung from the neck of the cow, “Felder's Choice,” that was given to







Bottomley as a gift when he returned to St. Louis in 1937 — and everything in between.

Museum president Lisa Billingsley said the cow bell may be the most unique item currently on display in the museum but that she hopes there's something for everyone inside.

"Usually when they come in, they're like, 'Oh,'" Billingsley said of visitors' reactions to the museum. "It's getting them in the door that's the challenge."

Billingsley has been the museum's president for a handful of years now and is one of a small group of volunteers that

keeps the museum running. The museum is open every Saturday from 9 a.m. to noon and can also be viewed by appointment.

As with keeping the museum open and functional, keeping it stocked is also a community-wide effort. Many of the items on display are donated to the museum by local residents or loaned to it by collectors. What money the museum does take in to purchase memorabilia or make improvements is by way of donations or support from local fundraisers.

*Continued on page 26* ▶



Bottomley-Ruffing-Schalk Baseball Museum president Lisa Billingsley, shown below, said most of the memorabilia on display in the Nokomis exhibit — including the above cowbell that once belonged to Jim Bottomley's cow "Fielder's Choice" — was either donated to the museum or loaned to them by collectors.



## WHO • WHAT • WHERE

**C**ongratulations to Bill Malec, puzzle sleuth extraordinaire, for identifying the location in our January challenge.

The sculpture that served as our first puzzle of the year is one of many outdoor works of art you'll find on area college and university campuses.

While photos can illustrate the form and personality of a given work, they fail to deliver the emotion you experience by viewing art in person. As winter softens to spring, consider taking an art walk on a campus near you.

Come to think of it, someone should offer a guide to outdoor art on college campuses in our area. Likely as not, later in the year, someone will.

On to our next challenge: Can you identify the item at right? It was lurking in Southwestern's Greenville warehouse. We dusted it off and pulled it into the light for this month's puzzle. We'll share

your responses in our May magazine. Meanwhile, here's Bill's solution to our January puzzle.

The location for the January 2024 "Where are we?" can be found on the campus of Southern Illinois University – Edwardsville.

The metal and mortar sculpture entitled, "Age of the Extinguished," is located just off Circle Drive in front of the School of Engineering building. The piece was created by then student-artist Alex Jacobs and was one of 10 large-scale sculptures installed across campus in 2017 and unveiled during the 17th Annual Sculpture Walk attended by over 300 faculty and art enthusiasts.

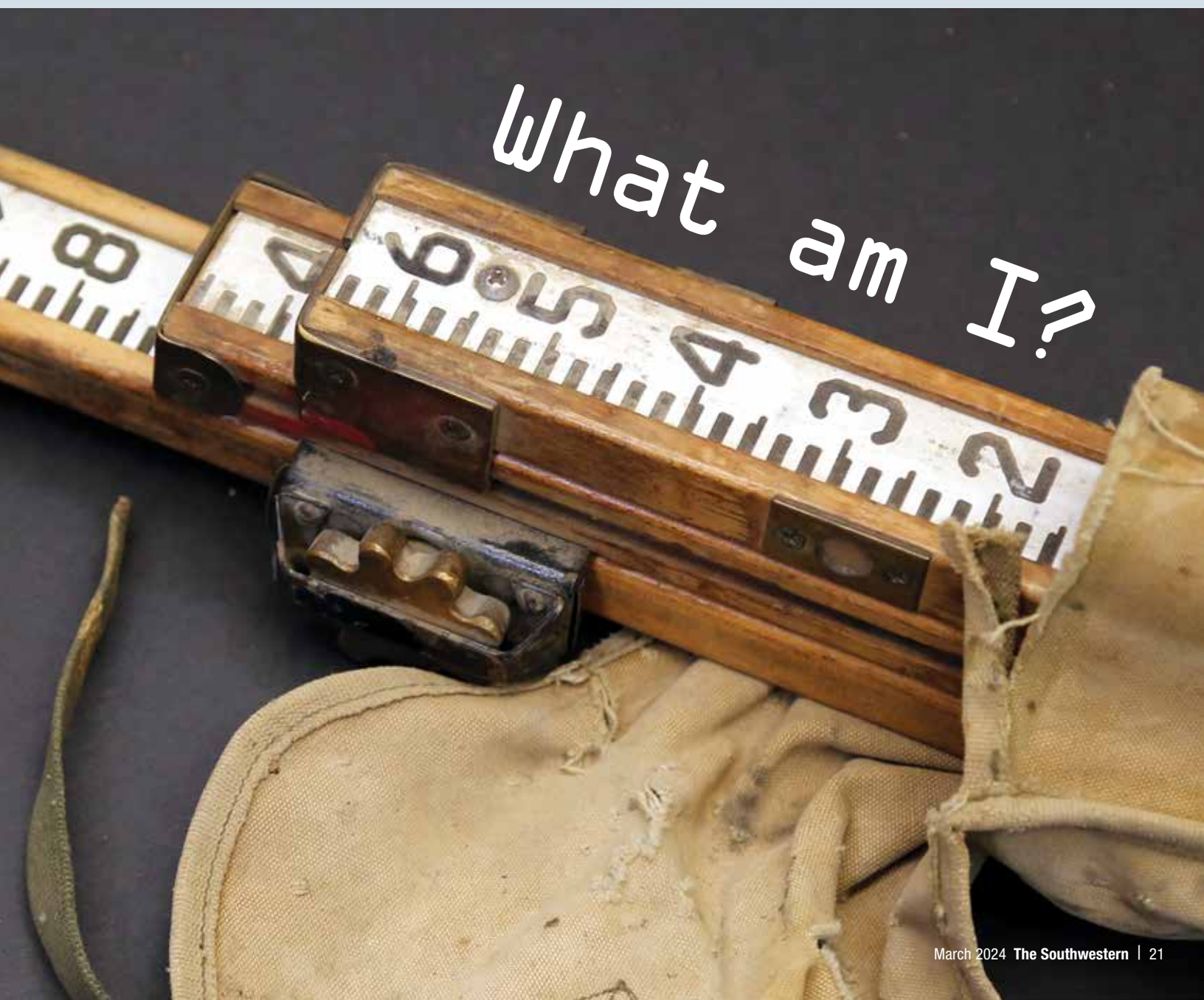
Special thanks to my friend Frank Tempia of Belleville for providing me with a "life line" which culminated in a successful search.

—Bill Malec, O'Fallon



**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](mailto: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.







CO-OP KITCHEN

# Breakfast AND Beyond

Egg & Hash Brown Skillet | Prepared & photographed by Mike Barns





## EGGS PARRAMORE

### Ingredients

- 12 eggs
- 1¼ cups milk
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 4 tablespoons butter
- 2 tablespoons green pepper diced
- 3 tablespoons green onion minced
- 1 (4 ounce) can mushrooms
- 8 ounces cream cheese diced

### Directions

1. In 350° oven melt butter in 9 x 13 inch baking dish and tilt to coat.
2. Beat together eggs, milk and salt. Pour into baking dish.
3. Bake for 15 minutes and remove from oven.
4. Add green peppers, onion, mushrooms and cream cheese. Mix well.
5. Return to oven and bake for 20 minutes.

## HAM & SWISS OMELET SQUARES

### Ingredients

- 18 large eggs
- ¾ cup whole milk
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 1 (26 - 32 ounce) package hash brown potatoes thawed
- 8 ounces cooked ham cubed
- 10 ounces shredded Swiss cheese
- 1 small onion chopped

### Directions

1. Beat together thoroughly eggs, milk, salt and pepper.
2. In separate bowl combine hash browns, ham, cheese and onion.
3. Distribute hash brown mixture evenly in a greased 9 x 13 inch baking dish.
4. Pour egg mixture evenly over hash browns.
5. Bake at 350° for 30 - 45 minutes until golden brown and center is firm.

## EGG & HASH BROWN SKILLET

### Ingredients

- 4 slices bacon cooked and crumbled
- 16 ounces frozen, shredded hash browns thawed
- ½ cup shredded colby-jack cheese
- 3 eggs
- butter, olive or canola oil as needed
- salt and pepper to taste
- parsley for garnish

### Directions

1. Cook bacon in cast-iron skillet over medium heat until crispy.
2. Transfer bacon to paper towel-lined plate reserving the drippings in skillet.
3. Turn heat up to medium-high.
4. Add a tablespoon or less of butter or oil as needed and allow to dissolve.
5. Spread hash browns evenly in skillet.
6. Cook hash browns until golden brown on both sides (add small amount of butter or oil if needed after flipping).
7. Turn off heat, sprinkle cheese and crumbled bacon over the hash browns.
8. Create 3 wells in potatoes and crack 1 egg into each well.
8. Place skillet in pre-heated 400° oven and bake 8-10 minutes or until egg whites are set. Salt and pepper to taste, garnish with parsley and enjoy.



## CURRENT EVENTS

**March 2, 16, 30; April 13 & 27** VINE STREET MICRO MARKETS, O'Fallon. Micro Markets are an abbreviated version of the regular season farmers market. 9 a.m. - noon. Indoors at the O'Fallon Station, 212 East 1st Street. Visit [ofallonstation.com](http://ofallonstation.com).

**March 6, 8-10, 13, 15-17, 20, 22-24** UNFILTERED LENS PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBIT, Alton. Civil rights and the Vietnam War through the eyes of Robert J. Ellison. This exhibit mimics a journey through time in 100 photographs captured by the young photographer,



**March 15-17** ILLINOIS PREHISTORIC ARTIFACT SHOW, Collinsville. Only authentic prehistoric or pre-1900 historic Native American artifacts may be displayed or sold. Friday 3 - 7 p.m.; Saturday 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. Sunday 8 a.m. - 2 p.m. Admission \$5. Gateway Center, One Gateway Drive. Call (800) 289-2388 or visit [gatewaycenter.com](http://gatewaycenter.com).

**March 16 & 17** AMERICAN INDIAN & ETHNOGRAPHIC SHOW, Collinsville. Saturday 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. Sunday 8 a.m. - 2 p.m. Admission is free. Gateway Center, One Gateway Drive. Call (800) 289-2388 or visit [gatewaycenter.com](http://gatewaycenter.com).

who was killed in action at age twenty-three when a plane he was on was hit by enemy gunfire in Vietnam in March 1968. Ellison's great-grandfather founded the Western Military Academy in Alton, Illinois. Robert followed in his footsteps, graduating in 1963. Wednesday, Friday and Sunday noon - 4 p.m.; Saturday 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Admission is free. Jacoby Arts Center, 627 East Broadway. Call (618) 462-5222 or visit [jacobyartscenter.org](http://jacobyartscenter.org).

**March 7-10, 14-17** THE EFFECTS OF GAMMA RAYS ON MAN IN THE MOON MARIGOLDS, 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. \$10 on Thursday and \$12 Friday - Sunday for adults; \$9 on Thursday and \$11 Friday - Sunday for students, senior citizens and active military personnel (with valid identification). Looking Glass Playhouse, 301 West Saint Louis Street. Call (618) 537-4962 or visit [lookingglassplayhouse.com](http://lookingglassplayhouse.com).

**March 10** BROADWAY POPS AT THE MOVIES! WITH THE MASTERWORKS CHORALE, Lebanon. A revue of Broadway and pops favorites from the Silver Screen, including The Sound of Music, Guys and Dolls and West Side Story. Featuring Masterworks Chorale, Children's Chorus and Jazz Ensemble, with Steve Jankowski, master of ceremonies. The Masterworks

Chorale is an ensemble of auditioned singers who enrich the cultural environment of the Metro East with outstanding performances of significant choral literature. 3 p.m. Admission fees vary. The Hett Center for the Arts, 400 North Alton Street. For tickets, visit [thehett.com](http://thehett.com).

**March 10** CHICKEN DINNER, Edwardsville. Dinner includes fried chicken, mashed potatoes and gravy, green beans, slaw and applesauce. Purchase raffle tickets for a quilt, smart TV and \$50 gift card. Drive-thru carryout only. 11:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. All meals are \$12. Hamel Immanuel UCC, 5838 Staunton Road, 1.5 miles South of Hamel. Call (618) 633-2277.

**March 15-17, 20-24** ALTON LITTLE THEATER: ALABAMA STORY, Alton. A theatrical presentation by the Alton Little Theater Company. 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](http://altonlittletheater.org).

**March 16** FROG WALK, Godfrey. Join guest naturalist, Paul Shetley, to search for frogs and toads on the preserve. The program will begin with an indoor presentation on frogs and toads of southern Illinois, followed by an outdoor portion to search for amphibians out at the pond. Flashlights and waterproof boots are encouraged. 6:30 - 8 p.m. \$5 for members; \$15 for non-members. Space is limited, registration required. The Nature Institute, 2213 South

Levis Lane. To register, visit [thenatureinstitute.org](http://thenatureinstitute.org).

**March 16** LUCKY LEPRE-CHAUN 5K RUN/WALK, Belleville. Kick off your St. Patrick's Day celebrations with our 5K run/walk and the new 50 yard Rainbow Dash for kids 8 years of age and younger. 9 - 11 a.m. Registration fees vary. Union United Methodist Church, 721 East Main Street. Visit [bellevillemainstreet.net/events](http://bellevillemainstreet.net/events).

**March 17** SPRING FIREMEN'S BREAKFAST, New Douglas. The New Douglas firemen will be serving sausage, scrambled eggs, pancakes, donuts and biscuits and gravy. Drive-thru only. 7 a.m. - 1 p.m. \$12 per meal. 5 pound bags of sausage available for purchase, call (618) 779-8939 before March 4th to place an order. New Douglas Volunteer Fire Department, 105 Allen Street.

**March 23** GIORDANO DANCE CHICAGO, Lebanon. Considered jazz dance royalty, the electrifying performers of America's original jazz dance company invariably run on high-octane fuel and generate a similarly high-powered response from their audience. 7:30 p.m. Admission fees vary. The Hett Center for the Arts, 400 North Alton Street. For tickets, visit [thehett.com](http://thehett.com).

**March 24; April 10; May 7** TELESCOPE NIGHT, Godfrey. Want to look at the universe through a telescope, but don't own one? Come out to the Talahi Lodge on the night after a full moon and we will have

### 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](mailto: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.

some set up. Bring your own telescope and we can help you use it. We will talk about how telescopes work and look at the moon and other night sky objects. March 7 - 9 p.m.; April 8 - 10 p.m.; May 8:30 - 10:30 p.m. Free for members; \$5 for non-members. Space is limited, registration required. The Nature Institute, 2213 South Levis Lane. To register, visit [thenatureinstitute.org](http://thenatureinstitute.org).

**March 30 SPRING DUATHLON**, Litchfield. USAT sanctioned. First-time duathletes are welcome. Run 2 miles, bike 12 miles and run 2 miles. The run is dead flat. The bike has one challenging hill. Starts at 10 a.m. Registration fees vary. Begins north of the Litchfield High School track. 1705 North State Street. Visit [active.com/orgs/m-m-multisport-club](http://active.com/orgs/m-m-multisport-club).

**March 30 TRAIN SHOW**, Glen Carbon. The Metro East Model Railroad Club will be hosting their spring open house. Visitors are welcome to view trains running on the club's 18 x 27 foot HO scale model railroad. Snacks provided. 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. Admission is free. 180 Summit Street (the old Glen Carbon Fire House / Village Hall). For more information, call Bob at (618) 476-9228, Bill at (618) 531-1589 or visit [train-web.org/memrc](http://train-web.org/memrc).

**April 5 ARCADIA DANCE ORCHESTRA**, Lebanon. The Arcadia Dance Orchestra is an authentic, 11-piece 1920s-style jazz band based in St. Louis. Named after the once-famous

Arcadia Ballroom, the group consists of incredible musicians playing era-correct instruments with red-hot energy and keen historical accuracy. Hear the exact same sort of music and repertoire you could expect to hear in St. Louis if you were to travel back in time. 7:30 p.m. Admission fees vary. The Hett Center for the Arts, 400 North Alton Street. For tickets, visit [thehett.com](http://thehett.com).

**April 5 & 6 CREATING KEEPSAKES SCRAPBOOKING CONVENTION**, Collinsville. Join us for scrapbooking, paper crafting, creative inspiration, classes and cropping. A wide variety of vendor booths where you'll find everything from the latest products to savings on items you need to stock upon. Watch for make and takes sponsored by exhibitors that will show you how to use their products and give you ideas for enhancing your projects. Friday 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. (9 a.m. exclusive early entrance for show special attendees or purchase an early entrance ticket add on); Saturday 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. Gateway Center, One Gateway Drive. For tickets, visit [ckscrap-bookevents.com](http://ckscrap-bookevents.com).

**April 6 LAKE SARA DAM RUN**, Effingham. A Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics Illinois. Choose from half marathon, 8-mile run, 5K run or 5K walk, and virtual. Half marathon starts at 7 a.m.; 8-mile at 8 a.m.; 5K run and walk at 9 a.m. Lake Sara Dam Run raises money for Special Olympics. Racerooster will donate \$1 for each registrant.

Lake Sara Dam, 9352 East Park Avenue. For more information or to register, visit [lakesaradamrun.com](http://lakesaradamrun.com).

**April 6 NONSENSE NATURE HIKE**, Godfrey. This hike is not what it seems. This tricky, family friendly hike will have you identifying some interesting phenomena in nature. Bring your dad jokes and your sense of humor to this unusual, April Fool's Day themed hike. 1 p.m. Free for members; \$5 for non-members. Pre-registration is required. The Nature Institute, 2213 South Levis Lane. To register, visit [thenatureinstitute.org](http://thenatureinstitute.org).

**April 6 SPRING BIRD WALK**, Hillsboro. The walk will be followed by refreshments. 7 a.m. Admission is free. Bremer Sanctuary, 194 Bremer Lane. Visit [bremersanctuary.com](http://bremersanctuary.com).

**April 9 WHAT'S YOUR MVP? WITH DONNIE CAMPBELL**, Lebanon. Coach Donnie Campbell is not just an inspirational coach, but also in part, the impetus for the wise and ever so cheerful lead character of the Emmy Award Winning show, Ted Lasso. His colorful keynote provides valuable leadership lessons that can be seen on the court, but more importantly applied in the workplace. At a time when embracing your uniqueness is a rare quality, he shows how to define your core values while forming your mission, values, and plan. 7 p.m. Admission fees vary. The Hett Center for the Arts, 400 North Alton Street. For tickets, visit [thehett.com](http://thehett.com).

**April 27 WOODLAND WILDFLOWER WALK**, Hillsboro. The walk will be followed by refreshments. 10 a.m. Admission is free. Bremer Sanctuary, 194 Bremer Lane. Visit [bremersanctuary.com](http://bremersanctuary.com).



**April 20 HOMEBREW & MUSIC WALK**, Belleville. Ticket holders will be able to sample home brewed beers, judge who is the Best in Belleville and enjoy live music throughout Main Street. There will be music at several locations during and after the walk. 3 - 7 p.m. Starts at Shoehorn Brewing, 225 East Main Street. Visit [bellevillemainstreet.net/events](http://bellevillemainstreet.net/events).

**April 23 SHELBY COUNTY ART SHOW**, Shelbyville. The Special Exhibit this year will feature the works of Robert Marshall Root (1863-1937) Midwestern tonalist and impressionist artist from Shelbyville. 3 - 7 p.m. Lake Shelbyville Corps of Engineers Visitor Center, U.S. 1989 State Highway 16. Call Carol Kessler at (217) 827-5690 or email [carolkessler1948@gmail.com](mailto:carolkessler1948@gmail.com).

**April 28 ST. LOUIS BRASS BAND AND ACADEMY BRASS BAND**, Lebanon. The Saint Louis Brass Band consists of thirty professional brass and percussion performers whose mission is to spread the repertoire of the traditional brass band through high-quality performances in the Greater St. Louis Metropolitan area. 3 p.m. Admission fees vary. The Hett Center for the Arts, 400 North Alton Street. For tickets, visit [thehett.com](http://thehett.com).



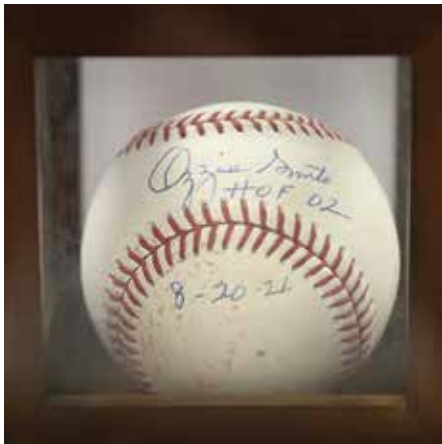
**April 21 MUSHROOM FESTIVAL**, Grafton. Come join us for live music, unique craft vendors, lunch in the restaurant, locally made wines, and all there is to know about morel mushrooms. The Great Morel Hunt will be held at 1 p.m. (weather and morel permitting). Join fellow hunters as you scan the ground for these delicious delicacies. If you're new to mushroom hunting the lodge will have 2 seasoned hunters out in the woods with you for help. Once the hunt is over, see if you found the smallest, biggest, or most morels to win a free night stay to our lodge. Wear sturdy shoes. 11 a.m. - 3 p.m. This event is free and open to the public and great for all ages. Pere Marquette Lodge & Conference Center, 13653 Lodge Blvd. For more information, call Arielle at (618) 786-2331, extension 338 or visit [pmlodge.net](http://pmlodge.net).



► *Continued from page 19*

As far as what's on the horizon for the museum, Billingsley said a facelift for the exterior — commemorative bricks adorn the sidewalk outside the exhibition's front doors, but the signboard hasn't been up-dated recently — is at the top of the list. "We're trying to get some better signage," she said, adding, "and we've been looking into some kind of statue for out front."

What won't change — what hasn't changed in the four-plus decades since it opened — is the museum's pride in its local baseball heritage and its dedication to telling those stories. In that way, it's not that far from Cooperstown after all.



The museum has relics ranging from baseball cards nearly a century old, like those seen above and below, to images from Nokomis native Reid Detmers' no-hitter that he threw for the Los Angeles Angels on May 10, 2022, top. Some of the items may be new, but the museum itself is not — it was opened in 1981 and, though it's changed addresses a few times, it has been a Montgomery County mainstay ever since.





A spring peeper  
hitches a ride  
at Ballard  
Nature Center  
in Effingham  
County.



**THE FINAL FRAME**



