

THE *Southwestern*

A SOUTHWESTERN ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE MEMBER MAGAZINE

MARCH 2026 • VOLUME 78 • ISSUE 3

Right of Way

RELIABILITY,
SAFETY AT
FOREFRONT

Scholarships

APPLICATION
DEADLINE
IS MARCH 13

SMARTHUB

LIHEAP

TREE PLANTING

POISON SAFETY

REFINERY
MUSEUM

CO-OP KITCHEN

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

04 News & Notes

March Madness? We don't know anything about that, but find the basketball hidden in this month's magazine and you could win a \$25 bill credit to help ease the pain of any busted brackets.

05 SmartHub

More than simply an account management portal, SmartHub offers tools and information that can help you save time and money. Sign up today.

06 Energy Assistance

Applications for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis until funds are exhausted. Here's what you need to know.

07 Co-op Voices

Take a stand on issues that impact your cooperative – and community – by joining Voices for Cooperative Power (VCP) today.

08 Power For Progress

Last call for scholarship applications for the 2026-27 school year. Apply by March 13 to have a chance at one of 14, \$1,200 scholarships we're giving out.

10 Rights of Way

Safe and reliable service is achieved through regular right of way maintenance. Find out where we'll be working in 2026.

14 Sowing Seeds

Planting a tree doesn't begin with digging a hole — it begins with forming a plan. Here's what you need to know before breaking ground on your project.

16 Poison Prevention

More than 90 percent of poison accidents happen in the home. During National Poison Prevention Week, take a few minutes to ensure you know how to avoid and respond to poison exposure.

18 History, Distilled

The Wood River Refinery History Museum has the art of showcasing the oil refinery's past down to a science.

20 Who-What-Where

A tech-savvy trio was able to solve our February challenge, but can your well-trained eye identify this month's location?

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22 Co-op Kitchen

Ranch primavera? Don't put it "pasta" us.

24 Current Events

March marks the beginning of spring, so it's only fitting that this month's calendar is marked by wildflower walks, spring concerts and ... frogs?

27 Final Frame

Bloodroot in bloom.

NEWS & NOTES

ON THE COVER

Right of way maintenance is one of the ways we work to ensure system integrity and power reliability – from transmission line corridors like this one down to local rights of way that provide a path for power to reach your home. Read our story about right of way maintenance on page 10.



CO-OP REMINDERS

March 17 Payment processing unavailable 8 - 11 p.m. while we perform maintenance.

April 3 Offices closed for Good Friday.



FIND US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

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



Reader Contest

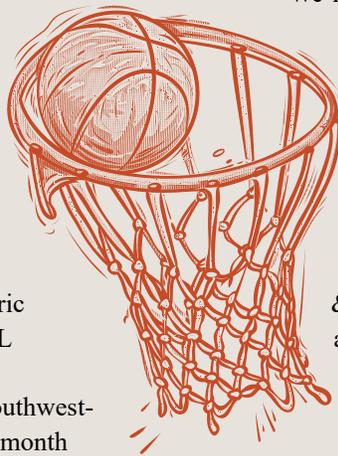
We've hidden an image of a basketball in your magazine. Your job is to find it. The actual image may be larger or smaller than what you see below. We

may change the color or reverse or alter the image we've hidden to make the contest more challenging. If you find the basketball, 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 March contest, we'll need your entries in our inbox or postmarked by April 1, 2026.

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



JANUARY WINNER

Congratulations to Ruth Ann Sparkman of Pocahontas. As the winner of our January Hide & Seek contest drawing, Ruth Ann 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 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.

- 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.

SMARTHUB IS YOUR ONE-STOP ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT PORTAL

Last year, we launched SmartHub, our online account management portal. Haven't signed up yet? There's no better time to make managing your account faster, easier, and more convenient.

- **Billing & Payments** - No more waiting for your bill to arrive in the mail. Access your bill anytime, anywhere. Save time with easy payment options to avoid late fees and service interruptions.
- **Alerts & Notifications** - Stay informed on important account events via email or text messages. Receive the information you need to make informed decisions about your account.
- **Paperless Billing** - Save some time and a tree when you activate SmartHub paperless billing, an eco-friendly way to instantly access your bill.
- **Usage Monitoring** - Worrying about usage or surprising bill amounts can be stressful. When you know what devices are using the most energy, you can make money-saving decisions about your account.
- **Outage Reporting** - Need to report a power outage? Smarthub is the fastest and easiest way to let us know when your power goes out. When widespread storms knock out power to an entire region, phone lines can become overloaded. With Smarthub, you can avoid busy signals and report outages with a few simple taps on your mobile device.



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

LIHEAP Energy Assistance

The 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. 1, 2025 to Aug. 15, 2026, or until funding is exhausted.

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 agency will make the appropriate payment to your energy provider(s) on your behalf, or in some cases, directly to you. Payments will be made by the local agency within 15 days of the application's approval.

Electric co-op members, if approved, will receive assistance in the form of a one-time payment. Members using Pay-As-You-Go (see below) may qualify for LIHEAP funds. Contact your community action agency to find out if you qualify for energy assistance. For more information visit <https://dceo.illinois.gov/communityservices/utilitybillassistance.html> or call 877-411-WARM.

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 Eligibility

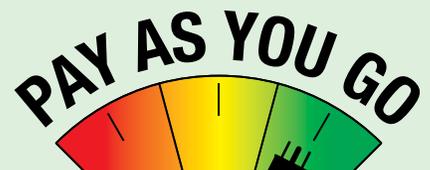
If your household's combined income for the 30 days prior to application (gross income, before taxes are deducted) is at or below the 60% state median income* as shown in the chart (right), you may be eligible to receive assistance. If you rent, and your heat is included in the rent, you may be eligible for a LIHEAP benefit.

*Program Year 2026 Income Guidelines are based on State Median Income and Federal Poverty Guidelines. The state reserves the right to adjust these levels based on the availability of federal appropriations.

Family Size	30-Day Income
1	\$3,332
2	\$4,357
3	\$5,382
4	\$6,407
5	\$7,432
6	\$8,457
7	\$8,649
8	\$8,842

- Take control of your energy usage.
- No credit checks or security deposits.
- No fees for late payment or reconnection of service.
- Say goodbye to paper bills.

For more information on our Pay-As-You-Go program, visit sweci.com or call 800-637-8667 to speak to one of our member services representatives.



Illinois Electric Co-op Trade Association Offers \$3,000 Lineworker Scholarship

The Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives (AIEC), Southwestern's statewide trade association, is encouraging students of Southwestern Electric Cooperative members to apply for the LaVern and Nola McEntire Memorial Lineworker's Scholarship. The \$3,000 scholarship will help pay for costs to attend the lineworker's school conducted by the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives (AIEC) in conjunction with Lincoln Land Community College, Springfield, Ill.

To be eligible for the LaVern and Nola McEntire Memorial Lineworker's Scholarship, a student must be the son or daughter of an electric cooperative

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

The scholarship is awarded based on an essay, a biographical statement, references, and a recommendation. Applications must be submitted online or postmarked by April 30, 2026.

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



United for Stronger Communities

You have the power to protect affordable, reliable electricity. Take a stand on issues that impact your cooperative and community.



aiec.coop/vcp

FINAL REMINDER **SCHOLARSHIP** **APPLICATIONS** **DUE MARCH 13**

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

WHAT'S AVAILABLE?

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

ARE YOU ELIGIBLE?

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

DEADLINE: Friday, March 13, 2026



HAVE QUESTIONS?

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



POWER FOR
Progress



Southwestern
 Electric Cooperative, Inc.
 Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM



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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 2026. 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 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.

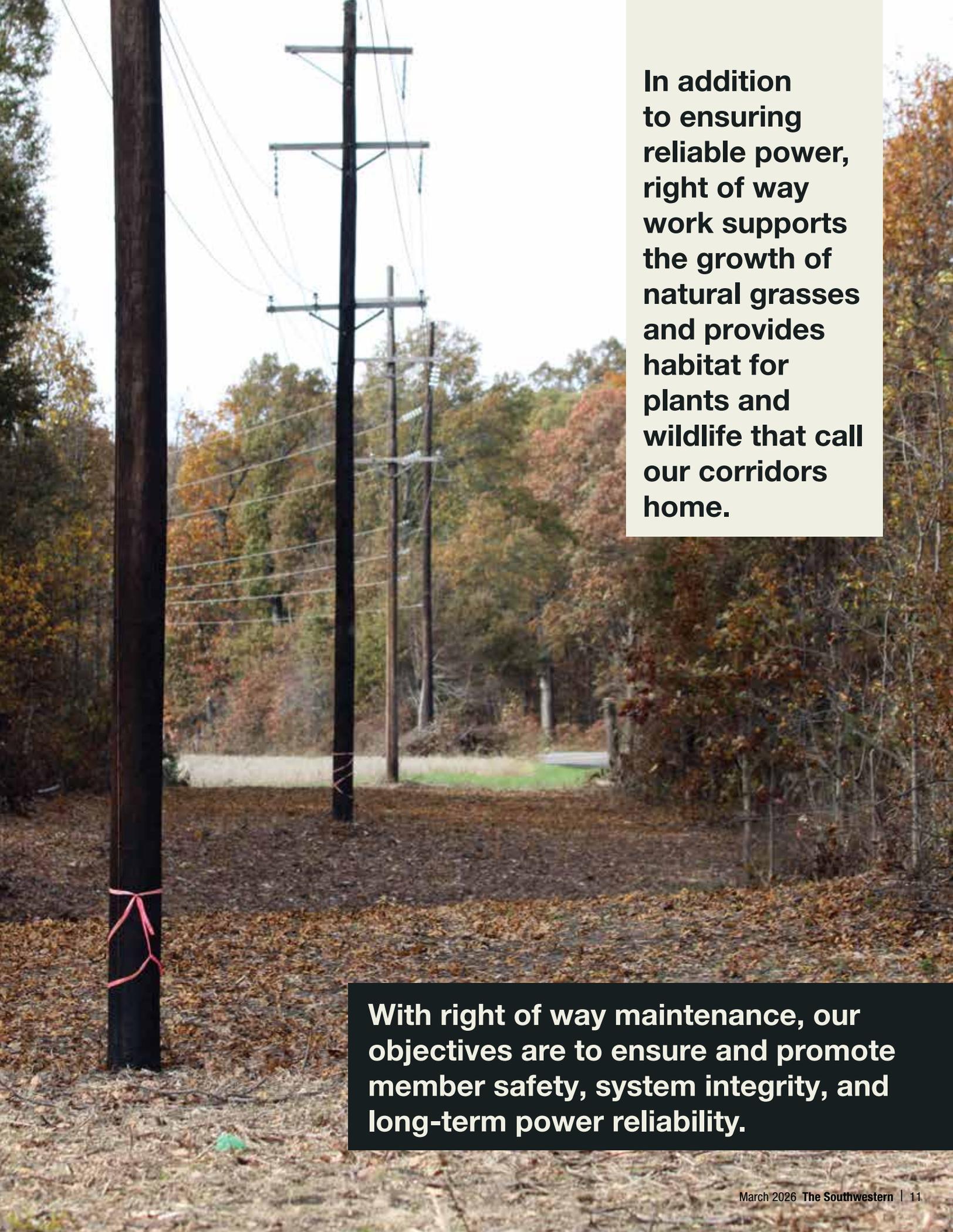
In more remote areas, where lines travel through field and timber far from roads, it's a challenge for linemen to access our infrastructure and repair damage. So it's particularly vital that we do all we can to promote line integrity near homes in areas like this.

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. Our crew's foreman will also attempt to stop by and speak with you before we begin maintenance in your area. If you believe your contact information is outdated or incorrect, call us at 800-637-8667 to ensure we've got your correct phone number in our system.

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.





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.

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

MAINTENANCE MAP

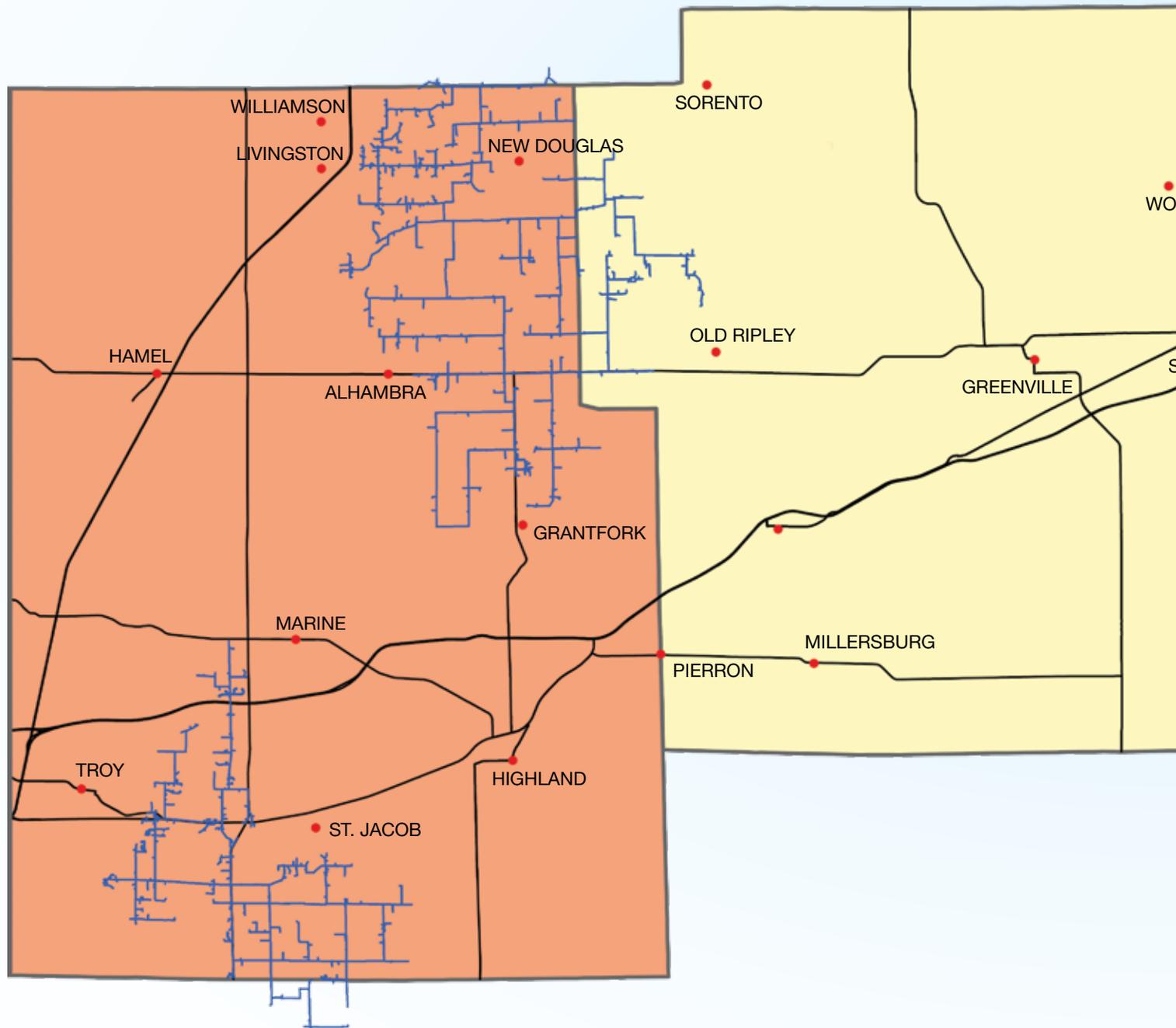
2026 RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

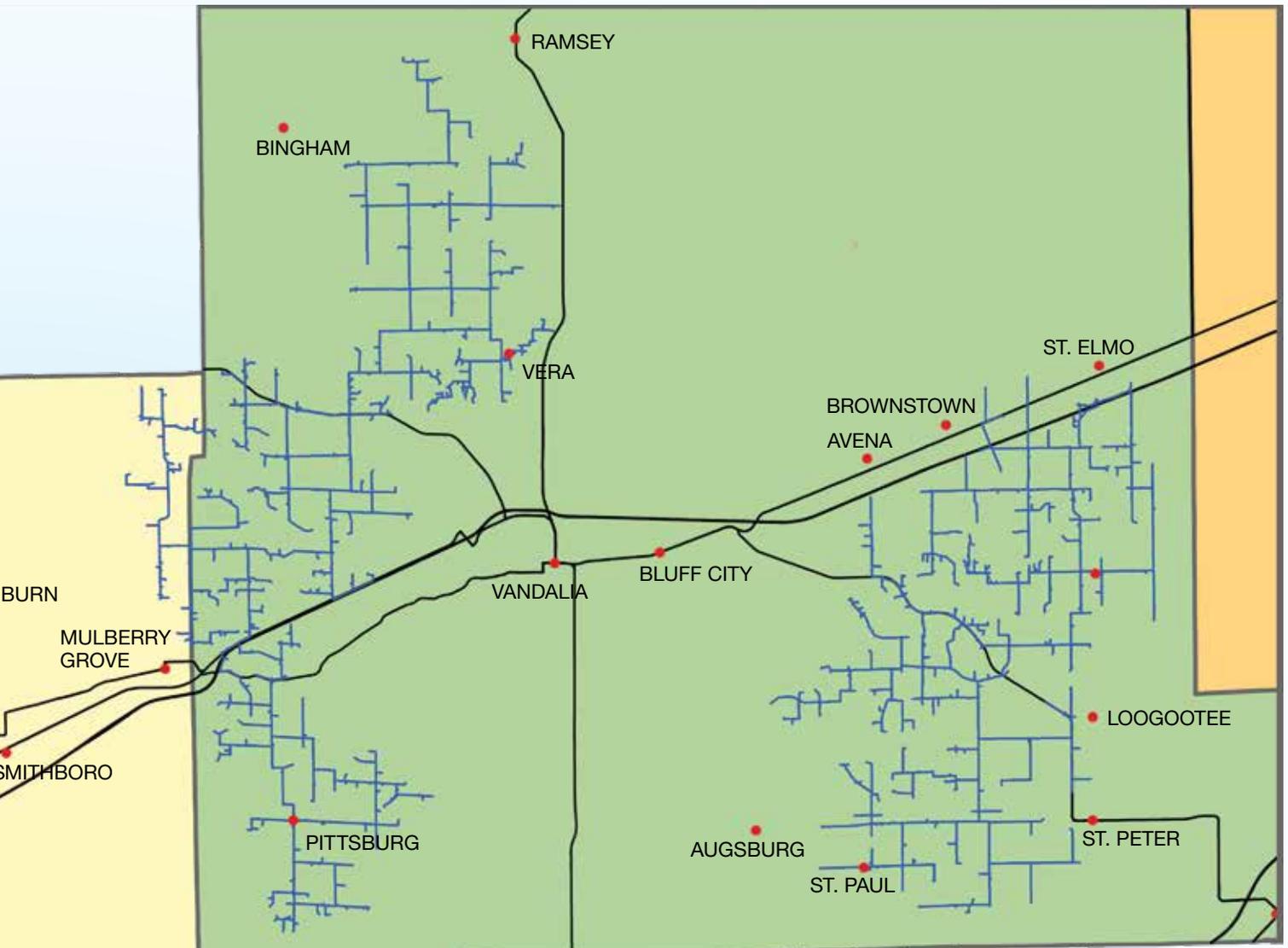
The areas highlighted in blue are scheduled for right of way maintenance in the coming months. When performing right of way maintenance, our crews clear a path that spans about 20 feet on either side of the power lines.

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.





2026 Lines to Trim

Primary Roads

Towns



Counties

-  Bond County
-  Effingham County
-  Fayette County
-  Madison County



Sowing Seeds

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

With 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 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?

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.

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. 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.

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.

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:

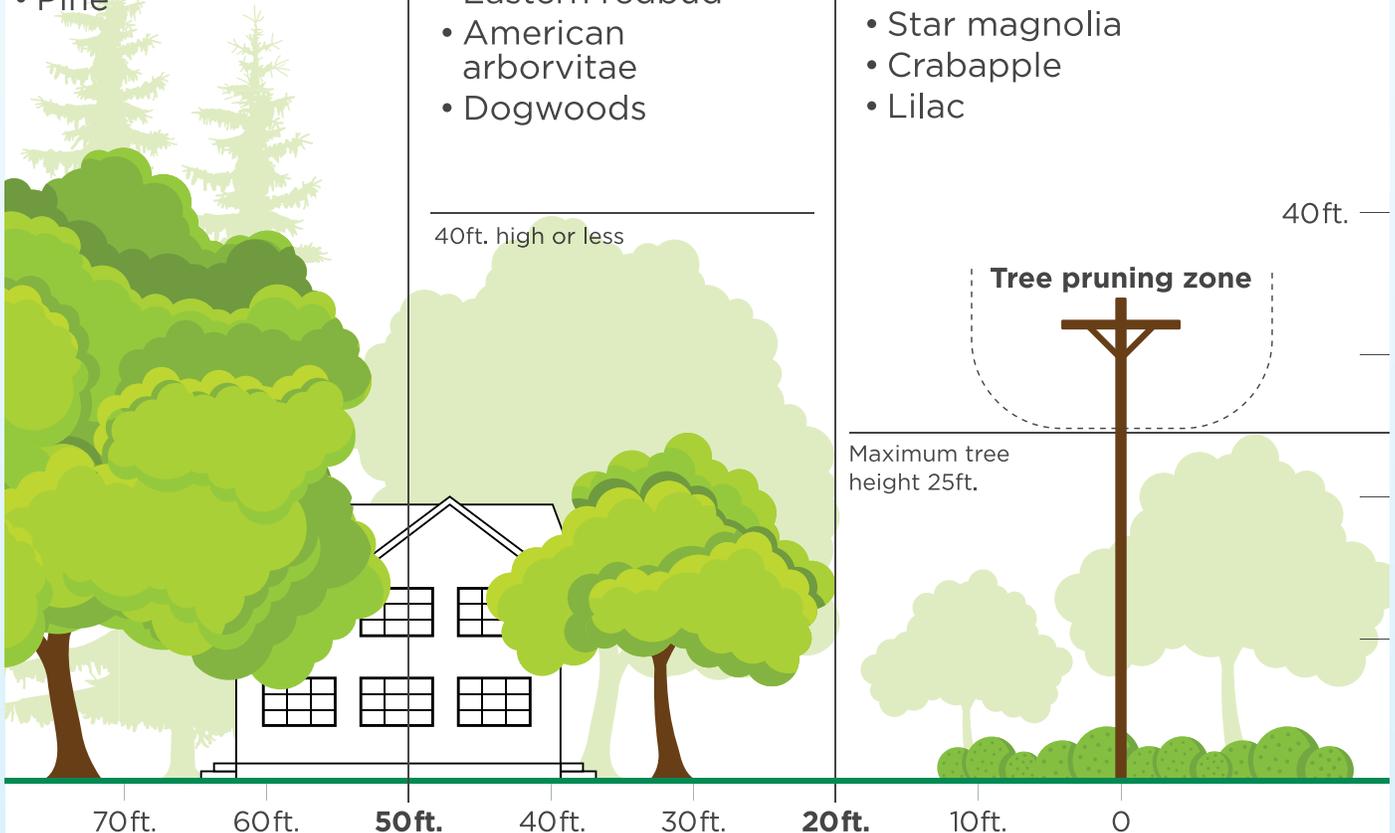
- Washington hawthorn
- Goldenraintree
- Eastern redbud
- American arborvitae
- Dogwoods

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

NATIONAL POISON PREVENTION WEEK

U.S. poison centers field a call every 15 seconds. During National Poison Prevention Week (March 15-21), poison centers spotlight practices to prevent poisonings. The following tips will help you avoid or respond to poison exposure.

BE PREPARED FOR A POISON EMERGENCY

Put the Poison Help number, 800-222-1222, in your mobile phone and display it in your home and at work in case of emergency. You can also text POISON to 301-597-7137 to save the number in your mobile phone. Calls are free, confidential, and answered by experts, 24/7/365.

PRACTICE SAFE STORAGE HABITS

The following items should be stored in their original containers, in secured cabinets or out of reach and out of sight of children.

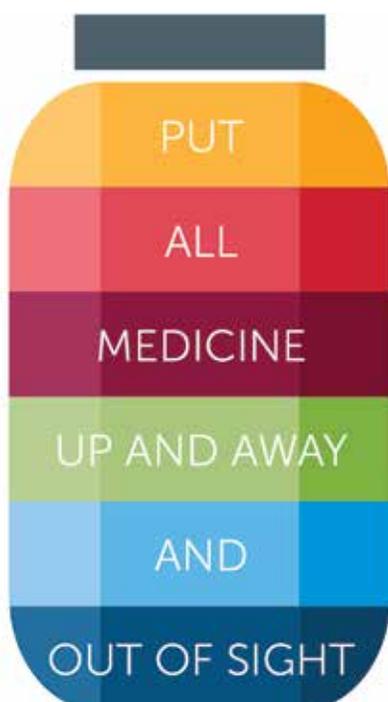
- All medicines and pharmaceuticals, including vitamins and supplements.
- Alcohol, tobacco and e-cigarette products (especially liquid nicotine).
- Laundry and cleaning supplies.
- Pesticides and insect repellents.
- Button batteries.
- Any oil or lubricant, including fragrance oils, tiki torch oils, engine oil, etc.
- Personal care products, including contact lens disinfectants and hand sanitizers.

READ AND FOLLOW LABELS AND DIRECTIONS

Make a habit of reviewing the label on any potentially hazardous substance or product prior to use (especially medicines). Follow usage directions as well as instructions for safe storage and disposal. If you have any questions about the directions, call your local poison control center at 800-222-1222.

For additional information on poison prevention, visit the American Association of Poison Control Centers at www.aapcc.org.

If someone in your home is exposed to a poison, call the Poison Help Line at 800-222-1222.



WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT STORING MEDICINE

JUST ONE MINUTE

In ER visits for medicine poisonings, parents often say that they only turned their back for a minute.

CURIOUS CLIMBERS

Research indicates in about half of over-the-counter poisoning cases, the child climbed on a chair, toy or other object to reach medicine.

CHILD-RESISTANT ≠ CHILDPROOF

Research suggests about half of accidental poisonings involved child-resistant packaging.

EVERY 9 MINUTES

A young child (under age 6) goes to the ER because he/she got into medicine.

EVERY HOUR

A young child is hospitalized.

EVERY 12 DAYS

A young child dies.

THE RISK IS REAL: HOW FAMILIES CAN HELP PROTECT KIDS

- Put all medicine up and away, out of children's reach and sight. Remember to keep visitors' purses, bags and coats out of reach, as they may contain medicine.
- Remember child-resistant packaging is not childproof. So put medicine away immediately after every use, even if you need to give another dose in a few hours.

www.safekids.org

A Poison Proof Home is a Happy Home!

HRSA
Poison Help

More than 90% of poison accidents happen in the home, but many poison risks are hidden in plain sight. Learn how to identify poison risks in your home and take simple steps to keep your family safe and healthy.

KITCHEN

- **Never** use commercial cleaning products on food or packaging.
- **Turn off gas ranges** when not in use.
- Store food at the proper temperature.

BATHROOM

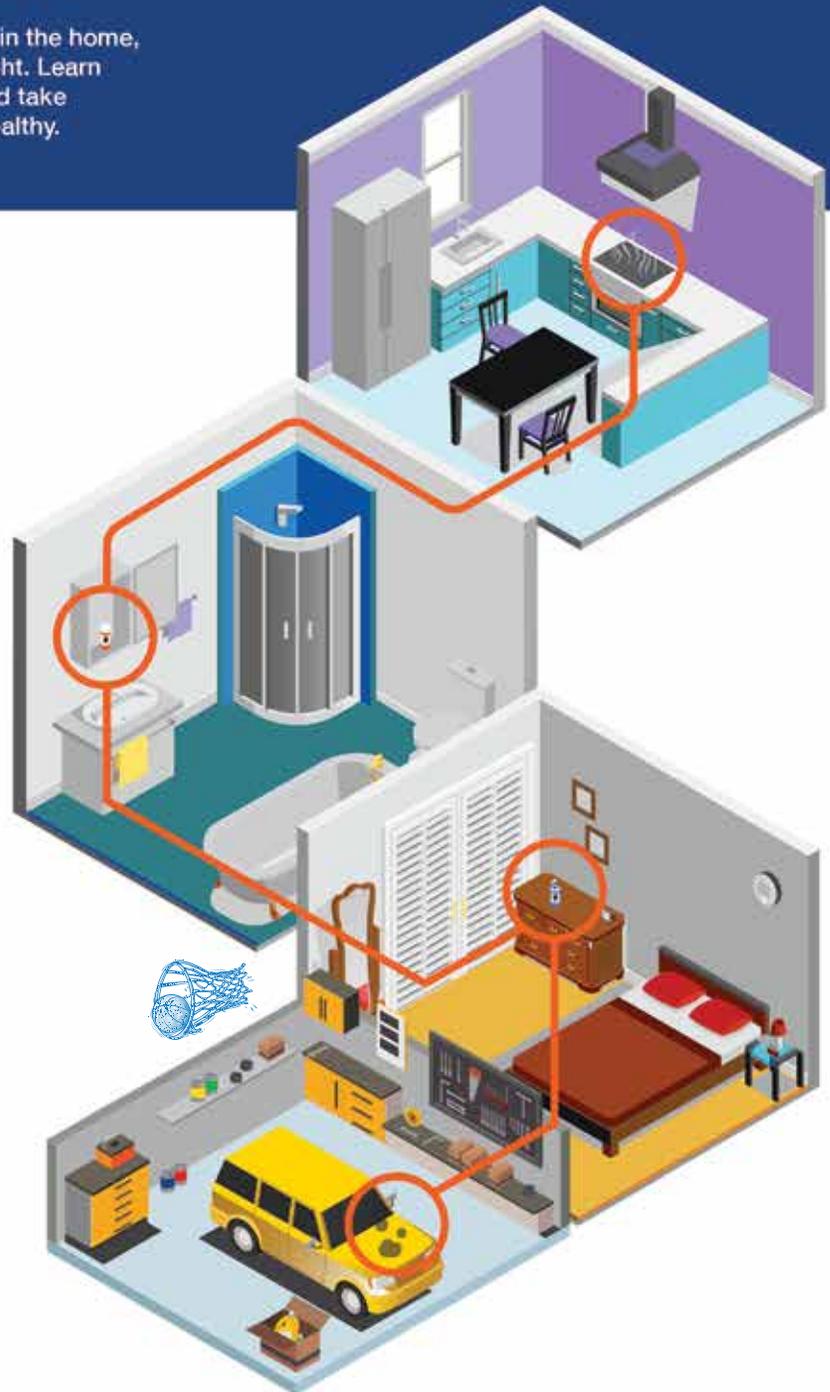
- Keep medicines **locked up and away** from children.
- Store all medicines in their original, properly labeled containers.
- Avoid using household cleaners and disinfectants **on hands or skin improperly**.

BEDROOM

- Install carbon monoxide detectors near bedrooms and furnaces.
- Keep hand sanitizer **locked up and out** of reach of children.
- Ensure houseplants are **pet safe**.

GARAGE

- **Do not** keep the car running in a closed garage.
- Store paint, antifreeze, gasoline, and other chemicals in **locked cabinets**.
- Keep detergents and other laundry products up, away, and out of reach of children.



For more information about potential poisons, or if you're experiencing a poison emergency...

**Don't Guess.
Make the Call.**

- 1 Call **9-1-1** if the person is unconscious or has trouble breathing.
- 2 Call **Poison Help (1-800-222-1222)** to connect to your local poison center.
- 3 Stay calm—most poisoning emergencies can be resolved quickly.

History, Distilled

Wood River Refinery History Museum in Madison County is anything but crude

Story by Nathan Grimm | Photos by Mike Barns

Oil refining is the conversion of crude oil into petroleum products for use as fuels for transportation, heating, paving roads, and generating electricity, among other uses. The process involves breaking crude oil down into its various components, which are then selectively reconfigured into new products – essentially, taking a large amount of something, distilling it down to only the best parts and creating something entirely new.

It's only fitting, then, that one of the most prominent oil refineries in North America, the Wood River Refinery in Roxana, Illinois, has an equally outstanding museum next door that documents the refinery's 100-plus-year history. Like the refinery that it honors, the Wood River Refinery History Museum isn't

simply a century's worth of stuff hastily put on display – it's a thoroughly curated collection of artifacts that tells a cohesive story about the people, places and things that make up not just the refinery, but the region as a whole.

Explore the museum's three buildings alone or with the guidance of one of the knowledgeable volunteers who staff the museum from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. every Wednesday and Thursday. If you're unable to make it during those times, you can call 618-255-3718 or email the museum at wrrmu@p66.com to make arrangements to visit at another time. The Wood River Refinery History Museum is also on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/WRRMuseum/>.

Photos continued on page 26 ▶

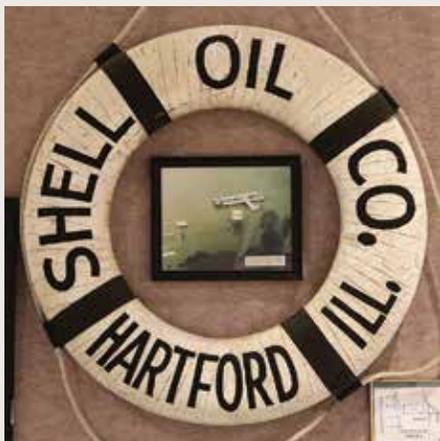


Volunteers, from left, Dave Peterson, Glenn Breuklander, Mary Robert and Dennis Goode stand in the middle of the Wood River Refinery History Museum. It's volunteers like Goode, who retired from the refinery after more than 40 years in the business, that help bring the museum to life. Volunteer John Mangoff is not pictured



GETTING THERE

The Wood River Refinery History Museum is located on the east frontage road of Illinois Route 111, just north of the Wood River Refinery main entrance. To get there, head west on I-70 and take Illinois Route 255 north toward Alton. From Route 255, take Exit 5 toward South Roxana. Turn left onto Madison Avenue, then right onto South Central Avenue. From there, the museum is on the right, accessible by way of the frontage road.



WHO • WHAT • WHERE

Congratulations to Scott Fischer of Staunton, Robert Diesbach of Maryville, and Bill Malec of O’Fallon, the tech-savvy trio who solved our February challenge. Here were the clues they used to solve the puzzle:

I’m technology that never needs a plug or a battery. I’m powered by the energy I was made to measure.

My heart is made of selenium.

I have a swinging needle and an analog scale, but I won’t tell you how fast you’re going — only how well you may see the world around you.

I don’t deal in inches, pounds, or degrees. My field is foot-candles.

I’m a piece of mid-century Americana, manufactured by General Electric from the 1930s through the 1960s.

My cousins go by names like the DW-40, DW-58, and the Type 214.

The vintage device, which photographed beautifully in January light, came to us courtesy of longtime Southwestern member Dale Griffith of New Douglas. Thanks again, Dale, for sharing a piece of your collection for our contest.

Now it’s your turn. For our March puzzle, we’re challenging you to tell us where we took the photo at right. We look forward to hearing from you.

Meanwhile, here’s what Scott, Robert, and Bill had to say about February’s antique.

You have a vintage, possibly 1935, General Electric light meter. It’s an early electrical instrument built in the era when foot-candles were the standard for measuring illumination.

At the time foot-candles were the dominant U.S. standard for lighting design, especially in factories, offices and photography. This one has an analog needle moved by a light sensitive cell that generates a small electrical current proportional to the light level. The dial reads foot-candles.

A foot-candle is the amount of light cast by one candle at a distance of one

foot.

Because GE had one of the largest lighting laboratories in the world, they helped create the standard lighting levels that were used. Their work helped shape what became the official recommendations of the Illuminating Engineering Society (IES).

—Scott Fischer, Staunton

It looks like a vintage 1935 GE light meter, which measures light in foot candles. A foot candle is defined as the illuminance of one lumen on a one square foot. It is used by architects to measure adequate light levels. It is often used in museums and galleries where light levels must be controlled to conserve light sensitive objects such as prints, photographs and paintings.

In the motion picture industry, they are used to calculate the intensity of lights allowing cinematographers to set up proper light contrast ratios when filming. They’re also used by horticulturists in setting up lighting for plants.

—Robert Diesbach, Maryville

Millions of Americans routinely use their smartphones to take spur-of-the-moment photographs. What could be easier and more convenient? Just point and shoot.

“Back in the day” it wasn’t as simple. That’s where the February 2026 “What am I?” comes in. Photographers carried a device in their camera bag to measure the light level. The resultant calculation from this light meter was used to set the appropriate shutter speed and aperture to prepare for that masterpiece photograph.

The puzzler shows General Electric’s popular version of a light meter, circa 1930s. The term “footcandles” displayed across the face is not some kind of lighted footwear. It’s the measurement of the amount of light that falls on a one-square-foot surface from a distance of one foot. Thus “footcandles,” one of which equals approximately 10.764 lux...whatever that means.

Give me back my smartphone!

—Bill Malec, O’Fallon



WHERE ARE WE?



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 nathan.grimm@sweci.com or send it by mail to Nathan Grimm, 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*.

Easy Pasta Creations

Linguine with Tomatoes & Basil ingredients
prepared & photographed by Mike Barns,
mike.barns@sweci.com

RANCH PASTA PRIMAVERA

Ingredients

- 6 ounces rotini pasta
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 envelope dry ranch dressing seasoning
- 1 (16 ounce) bag frozen California blend vegetables thawed

Directions

1. Cook pasta according to package directions and drain.
2. Stir in olive oil, ranch seasoning and vegetables.
3. Cook on low to medium, stirring often until heated through.
4. Serve topped with Parmesan cheese.

RADIATORE PASTA

Ingredients

- 8 ounces radiatore pasta
- 2 cups mayonnaise
- 2 tablespoons vinegar
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 3 slices bacon cooked and crumbled
- ¼ cup onion diced
- ½ cup broccoli chopped

Directions

1. Cook pasta according to package directions and drain.
2. Combine mayonnaise, vinegar and sugar and let sit for 3 minutes.
4. Stir all ingredients together.
5. Refrigerate 2 hours.
6. Serve cold topped with Parmesan cheese.

LINGUINE WITH TOMATOES & BASIL

Ingredients

- 4 large tomatoes cubed
- ½ cup feta cheese
- 1 cup basil leave cut into strips
- 3 garlic cloves minced
- ½ cup olive oil
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- 16 ounces linguine

Directions

1. Combine tomatoes, feta, basil, garlic, olive oil, salt and pepper.
2. Let sit at room temperature for 2 hours.
3. Cook linguine until al dente, drain and stir into sauce.
4. Serve topped with Parmesan cheese (optional).



CURRENT EVENTS

March 6 BALD EAGLE DAYS, Grafton. Learn to distinguish between immature and mature bald eagles and why they winter in our area. Programs begin at the park's visitor center at 8:30 a.m. (reservations required). There will be a video presentation and program followed by a drive to view bald eagles. Dress warmly, have a full tank of gas and bring binoculars. Pere Marquette Lodge & Conference Center, 13653 Lodge Blvd. For reservations, call 618-786-3323 ext. 1.

March 6-8, 12-15 ALTON LITTLE THEATER: FOUR OLD BROADS, Alton. Laugh out loud with this hilarious comedy about four sassy senior citizens planning the ultimate girls' trip while uncovering a few wild secrets along the way. Admission is \$25. March 6, 7, 12 and 13 shows at 7:30 p.m.; March 8, 14 and 15 shows at 2 p.m. Alton Little Theater, 2450 North Henry Street. For tickets, call 618-462-3205 or visit alton-littletheater.org.

March 7 FROGWATCH TRAINING, Godfrey. Do you want to help scientists learn about frogs and toads? Learn how to become a Frogwatch Community Scientist and monitor the frogs and toads in your local ponds. Jessica Mohlman with Frogwatch will lead a training and give you the knowledge and tools needed to be a participant in this long running survey. Registration required. 5 - 7 p.m. The Nature Institute, 2213 South Levis Lane. To register, visit thenatureinstitute.org.

March 12-15, 19-22 RADIUM GIRLS, Lebanon. A theatrical performance by the Looking

Glass Playhouse. In 1926, radium was a miracle cure and luminous watches the latest rage — until the girls who painted them began to fall ill with a mysterious disease. Inspired by a true story, Radium Girls traces the efforts of Grace Fryer, a dial painter, as she fights for her day in court. Her chief adversary is her former employer, Arthur Roeder, an idealistic man who cannot bring himself to believe that the same element that shrinks tumors could have anything to do with the terrifying rash of illnesses among his employees. Show times and admission fees vary. Looking Glass Playhouse, 301 West Saint Louis Street. For more information, visit lookingglassplayhouse.com.

March 13 GLOBINGO, Troy. Turn Friday the 13th into your lucky night. Bring your own food and drinks. Event will include cash prizes and raffles. Doors open at 6 p.m.; bingo 7 - 10:30 p.m. \$30 advance ticket; \$40 at the door; \$200 for table of 8. Paid admission includes 6 bingo cards for 10 games, glow hat and dauber. Must be 21 years of age or older to attend. Tri-Township Activity Center, 284 Riggan Road. For tickets, call 618-667-8769, email emily@troymaryvillecoc.com or visit troymaryvillecoc.com.

March 14 LUCKY LEPRECHAUN 5K RUN/WALK & KID'S RAINBOW DASH, Belleville. Kick off your St. Patrick's Day with our 5K run/walk and the 50 yard Rainbow Dash for kids 12 and under. Then stay for the block party. Run/walk and Rainbow Dash 9 - 11 a.m. Block party following run/walk 11 a.m. - 6 p.m. Union

United Methodist Church
721 East Main Street. Visit bellevillemainstreet.net/events.

March 15 SAUSAGE & KRAUT DINNER, Troy. The menu includes grilled pork sausage, mashed potatoes and gravy, green beans, sauerkraut and dessert. Drive-thru only. 11:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. All dinners are \$15. Friedens United Church of Christ, 207 East Center Street. Call 618-667-6535.

March 21 WILDFLOWER WALK, Godfrey. Spring is here which means it is time to look for some wildflowers. Our earliest wildflowers are the ones that bloom in the forest before the trees get their leaves. They don't last long so join us for a hike to identify some common spring ephemeral wildflowers. 10 - 11:30 a.m. Registration required. Members are free; nonmembers \$5. The Nature Institute, 2213 South Levis Lane. To register, visit thenatureinstitute.org.

March 21 & 22 SPRING AWAKENING CONCERT, Highland. Heartland Community Chorus will perform in collaboration with the Highland Youth Orchestra. Saturday 7 - 8:30 p.m.; Sunday 3 - 4:30 p.m. General admission is \$15. St. Paul's Catholic Church, 1411 Main Street. For tickets, visit heartlandcommunitychorus.org.

March 22 CHICKEN DINNER, Hamel. Menu includes fried chicken, mashed potatoes and gravy, green beans, slaw, applesauce and dessert. Walk in carry-out only. 11:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. \$14 per meal. Quilt and basket raffle. Immanuel

UCC 5838 Staunton Road.
Edwardsville. Call 618-633-2277.

March 25, April 1, 8, 15, 22 ADULT CLAY HANDBUILDING CLASS, Highland, IL. Join seasoned art teacher, Courtney Sellers, as she leads you through the process of hand building clay using slab construction. You will work with her to make 2 - 3 projects that will be fired upon completion of class. All materials, tools and supplies will be provided. Cost is \$100. Come join us on Wednesdays from 6 - 8 p.m. Class size is limited. Ages 14+. Highland Middle School, 2813 IL-160. Email burnskathy11@gmail.com for questions or visit highlandartscouncil.org for easy sign-up.

March 27-29 ILLINOIS ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY SHOW, Collinsville. The show will display authentic Native American artifacts dating from the pre-1900s. No contemporary Native American material will be at the show. Presenters/exhibitors must have authorization before event. Friday 3 - 7 p.m.; Saturday 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.; Sunday 8 a.m. - 2 p.m. Admission is \$5. Gateway Center, One Gateway Drive. Visit illinoisstatearchaeological-society.com.

March 28 & 29 AMERICAN INDIAN & ETHNOGRAPHIC SHOW, Collinsville. See native art, tools, and cultural items and learn about the different cultures and tribes of the Native American people. Items featured at this show will include beadwork, Native American artifacts, fossils, pottery, antique guns and knives, native

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 mike.barns@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.

Ongoing SEGREGATION VIDEO DISPLAY, Collinsville.

Collinsville Historical Museum is proud to announce the availability of two digital displays on segregation and integration of Collinsville schools. Each of the videos is about six minutes long. One discusses the segregated Lincoln School on Goethe Street which closed in 1958. The other video discusses the integration of Collinsville Township High School, which occurred in the 1939-40 school year. Open Wednesday through Saturday noon - 4 p.m. Collinsville Historical Museum, 406 West Main Street. Call 618-344-1834 or visit collinsvillemuseum.org.



At left, Lincoln School students in 1925. Above, Lincoln School.

PHOTOS COURTESY COLLINSVILLE HISTORICAL MUSEUM

rugs and blankets, paintings, modern art, turquoise jewelry, Civil War items, old west artifacts, and artifacts from around the world. Saturday 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.; Sunday 8 a.m. - 2 p.m. Admission is free. Gateway Center, One Gateway Drive. Visit gatewaycenter.com.

March 29 YOUTH & YOUNG ADULT EGG HUNT, Livingston. Join us for a day of hunting fun with thousands of eggs, lots of candy and prizes. Free hunt for youth 12 years of age and younger at 3 p.m.; free hunt for accessible disabled at 3 p.m.; \$5 (plus tax) for teens and young adults ages 13 - 20 at 3:30 p.m. Limited 300 tickets sold. Twistee Treat Diner, 908 Veterans Memorial Drive. For tickets, visit twisteeteenyaegghunt2026.hytx.com.

April 4 ADULTS ONLY EASTER EGG HUNT, Livingston. Event is for adults 21 years of age and older. Enjoy live music with food, drinks, dancing and prizes. Be sure to bring a flashlight and lawn chair. 6:30 - 10 p.m.; hunt starts at 8 p.m. Admission is \$10 (plus tax). Limited 300 tickets sold. Tickets must be purchased by April 2. Twistee Treat Diner, 908 Veterans Memorial Drive. For tickets, visit twisteetreatadultegghunt2026.hytx.com.

April 4 LAKE SARA DAM RUN, Effingham. Get ready for another amazing year at the best dam run in 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. Admission fees vary. Main proceeds benefit Effingham County, Neoga, Sigel and Arcola athletes with intellectual disabilities & \$100 will be given to five local families dealing with cancer related illnesses. Raceroster will donate \$1 for each registrant. Lake Sara Dam, 9352 East Park Avenue. For more information or to register, visit lakesaradamrun.com.

April 11 PLANT BINGO, Edwardsville. Come enjoy an afternoon filled with laughter, friendly competition and the opportunity to win beautiful plants. Doors open at 1 p.m.; bingo starts at 1:30 p.m. Suggested donation is \$20 online or at the door. Presented by the Madison County Extension Education Foundation. Proceeds support University of Illinois Extension programming which includes 4-H, master gardeners, master naturalists and nutrition education. Farm Bureau Auditorium, 900 Hillsboro Avenue. To register, call 618-344-4230 or visit givebuter.com/MCEEF2026Bingo.

April 11 QUILT SHOW AND RAFFLE, Bethalto. Over 200 Quilts will be displayed, plus "Quilts of Valor" will be presenting quilts to local Veterans. There will be lectures on antique quilting and up-cycling feed sacks. 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. This event is free to attend, but donations are appreciated. All proceeds benefit the Community Hope Center. Sponsored by Sew Sisters of First Baptist Church, 201 South Moreland Road. For more information, call First Baptist Church (618) 377-6472 and leave Message for Sew Sisters Debbie or Mary.

April 17-19, 24-26 EXIT LAUGHING, Breese. A theatrical presentation by Clinton County Showcase. All performances begin at 8 p.m. except for the last Sunday showing, which is at 2 p.m. General admission \$15. Historic Avon Theatre, 535 North 2nd Street. For tickets, visit clintoncountyshowcase.com.

April 19 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 (618) 786-2331, extension 338 or visit pmlodge.net.

April 23, 30; May 7, 14, 21 ADULT DRAWING/PRINTS CLASS, Highland. Enjoy learning basic drawing skills or improving existing skills as you apply these to do innova-

tive printing techniques. The class is designed to meet the needs of beginners as well as experienced artists. This will be a highly creative experience at which anyone can succeed. Leah Sutton, MFA, will teach and lead you through the process. Thursdays from 6 - 8 p.m. All supplies will be provided. Cost is \$100. Class size is limited and is for people 14 years of age and older. Korte Recreation Center, 1 Nagel Drive. Email burnskathy11@gmail.com for questions or visit highlandartscouncil.org for details and easy sign-up.

April 24 SPRING MARKET, Collinsville. Over 30 Native American artists from various affiliations and across the country will be here selling Native American-made arts and crafts, including pottery, jewelry, embroidery, textiles, paintings, and more. Friday noon - 5 p.m.; Saturday 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.; Sunday 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. Admission is free. Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site, 30 Ramey Street. Visit cahokiamounts.org.

April 25 BABY SHOWER DONATION DRIVE, Dow. Join us at Treehouse Wildlife Center for our 2026 baby shower donation drive. Celebrate the arrival of the new season with fun activities and the chance to see some adorable baby animals. Your donations help us care for these precious creatures and protect their future. Event will feature vendor fair, raffles, bake sale, food truck, educational presentations and animal encounters. The items we need are no-shut-off heating pads, flavored and unflavored Pedialyte, fleece blankets, bleach and fresh and frozen produce. We also have a link to an Amazon wish list on our website. 11 a.m. - 4 p.m. Treehouse Wildlife Center, 23956 Green Acres Road. Call 618-466-2990 or visit treehousewildlifecenter.com.

▶ Continued from page 18



Vintage photographs and relics from a bygone era — and, yes, the vehicle that once held the record for most miles per gallon — make up the Roxana-based museum.

A bloodroot
plant flowers on
the floor of Rock
Cave Nature
Preserve in
Altamont.



THE FINAL FRAME

