

THE *Southwestern*

A SOUTHWESTERN ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE MEMBER MAGAZINE

NOVEMBER 2025 • VOLUME 77 • ISSUE 11

**TIME OF
USE RATES**

**ENERGY
ASSISTANCE**

**SIGN UP FOR
SMARTHUB**

**VOICES FOR
COOPERATIVE
POWER**

Family First

**CO-OP BECOMES
CLASSROOM FOR
LIFE-SAVING
LESSONS**

**IEC Memorial
Scholarships**

APPLY BY DECEMBER 31



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Editor's Note: We devoted this month's puzzle pages to our Safety Day story. They'll return in December.





525 U.S. Route 40, Greenville, IL 62246.
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CEO

Bobby Williams Chief Executive Officer

The Southwestern

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

Satellite Locations:

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

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

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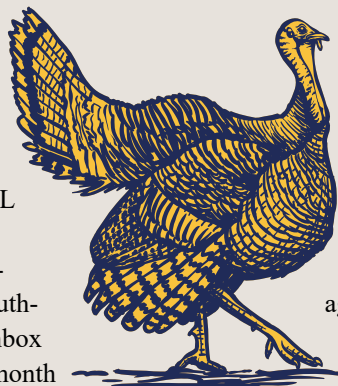
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Reader Contest

We've hidden an image of a turkey 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 turkey, 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 November contest, we'll need your entries in our inbox or postmarked by December 1, 2025.

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

SEPTEMBER WINNER

Congratulations to Carl Jason Sr. of Edwardsville. As the winner of our September Hide & Seek contest drawing, Carl will receive a \$25 credit on an upcoming electric bill. Thank you to everyone who participated in our September 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.
- November contest entries must be in our inbox or postmarked by December 1.
- We'll never hide the image on the front or back cover or on the page where we list the rules.

ON THE COVER

Twelve-year-old Elizabeth Scott attempts to move items on a crossarm using an insulated pole during family safety training at the co-op's



Greenville office on Aug. 8. Elizabeth is the daughter of Southwestern Electric Executive Assistant Brooke Scott and her husband, Zach. On the back cover, four-year-old Kash Garmon explores the interior of an Air Evac Lifeteam helicopter during the co-op's family safety event. Kash is the son of Gauge and Josie Garmon of Sorento and the grandson of Southwestern Electric Member Services Representative Becky Spratt.

CO-OP REMINDERS

November 10 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.

November 11 Offices closed in observance of Veterans Day.

November 27 & 28 Offices closed for Thanksgiving.

FIND US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

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



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

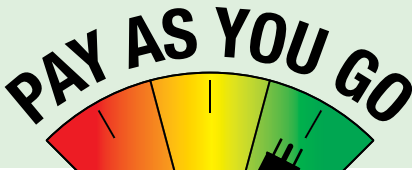
If your household's combined income for the 30 days prior to application (gross income, before taxes are deducted) is at or below the 60% state median income* as shown in the chart (right), you may be eligible to receive assistance. If you rent, and your heat is included in the rent, you may be eligible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



Southwestern Students Eligible to Apply for IEC Memorial Scholarship

Students of Southwestern Electric Cooperative members are eligible to apply for one of 16, \$3,000 scholarships offered through the Thomas H. Moore Illinois Electric Cooperatives Memorial Scholarship Fund. Developed by the board of directors of the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives (AIEC), Southwestern's statewide trade association, the fund will award \$48,000 in academic scholarships next year to students of members served by Illinois electric cooperatives.

Ten scholarships will be awarded to high school seniors enrolling full-time at a two-year or a four-year college, university, or vocational or technical school. The student must be the child of an Illinois electric cooperative consumer-member receiving service from the cooperative.

Five scholarships will be awarded to high school seniors enrolling full-time at a two-year Illinois community college. The student must be the child of Illinois electric cooperative consumer-members, employees or directors.

Students may apply for a scholarship through the AIEC web site at <https://aiec.coop/iec-scholarship>. Applications are due Dec. 31, 2025.

MEMORIAL LINEMAN'S SCHOLARSHIP

AIEC will award one LaVern and Nola McEntire Memorial Lineworker's Scholarship to a student who plans to enroll in the lineworker's school offered by AIEC in conjunction with Lincoln Land Community College, Springfield, Ill. To be eligible for the LaVern and Nola McEntire Memorial Lineworker's Scholarship, a student must be related to

a rural electric cooperative employee or director in the State of Illinois; or be the son or daughter of an electric cooperative member in Illinois; or 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 applicant must have a high school diploma or a GED at the time the scholarship is awarded in July.

Scholarships are awarded based on an essay, a biographical statement, references, and a recommendation.

Candidates may apply at <https://aiec.coop/lavern-and-nola-lineworkers-scholarship>. The submission deadline for the LaVern and Nola McEntire Memorial Lineworker's Scholarship is April 30, 2026.

IEC Scholarship Application Tips

Southwestern Electric Cooperative doesn't administer, award or provide applications for the Thomas H. Moore Illinois Electric Cooperatives Memorial Scholarship Fund. The scholarship is coordinated by our statewide trade organization, the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives (AIEC), Springfield, Ill. Students may apply for a scholarship through the AIEC web site at <https://aiec.coop>. Applications are due Dec. 31, 2025. Please review the submission guidelines thoroughly before you apply.

You won't be able to stop the application process and complete it at a later date. Your application must be completed in one sitting. Plan and prepare before you sit down to fill out your application.

INFO YOU'LL WANT TO HAVE ON HAND

- Your name, address, phone number and email address.
- The name and contact information of your parent or guardian.
- The name of your electric cooperative.
- The name of your high school.
- Your high school grade point average based on or converted to a 100-point scale. For example, if your school uses a 4-point scale, multiply your G.P.A. by 25. If your school uses a 5-point scale, multiply your G.P.A. by 20.

- Your parent's or guardian's legal consent to apply.
- *Brief Biographical Statement.* Your statement should be 250 words or less and include your educational goals, financial need and other pertinent information about yourself that you feel is important. Please do not reference your name, county or home location.
- *Financial Statement.* Your statement should be 250 words or less. List your financial responsibilities to help judges understand how this scholarship would benefit you. Include your household size, any other family members in college, scholarships applied for/awarded, and any family circumstances.
- *Cooperatives in Community Essay.* An electric cooperative operates under seven guiding principles, one of which is Concern for Community. In your own words, describe a time when you witnessed "the cooperative difference" and explain how your electric cooperative positively impacted its community.
- *Character Essay.* Recall a time when you made a positive difference in someone else's life (someone who is not a family member). What did you do? How did it make them feel? How did it make you feel? What motivated you to do this?

POWERING YOUR FUTURE

16 SCHOLARSHIPS
\$3,000 EACH

The electric cooperatives of Illinois are proud to offer scholarships to students in our co-op family. Whether you're a high school senior planning to attend college or interested in a career as a lineworker, there's a scholarship opportunity for you.

Applications are now open for 2026 Illinois Electric Cooperatives Memorial Scholarships. Apply by December 31, 2025, for an IEC Memorial scholarship, or by April 30, 2026, for the lineworker scholarship. Scan the QR code or go to <https://bit.ly/IECScholarships> for more details.

OTHER INFO YOU'LL NEED TO PROVIDE

- **Work and volunteer experience.** List positions you've held, the dates, and whether they were volunteer or for pay. Please do not reference your name, county or home location. For example, you might write: Volunteer at National Honor Society events, June 2019, volunteer. You may list up to 15 positions you've held.
- **Participation in school and community activities.** List activities, both school and non-school, in which you have participated, along with years of membership or participation and offices held. Please do not reference your name, county or home location. For example: High school soccer, 2019, 2020, team captain. You may list up to 15 activities.

Using AI or other writing assistance tools to compose your essays and responses is strongly discouraged. You're encouraged to prepare your cooperative principles essays, brief character essay, and biographical/financial statement in advance using a word processing program such as Microsoft Word, so that you may proofread your work. You may cut and paste your work into the application.

You'll find a complete list of rules and requirements on the AIEC website at <https://aiec.coop>.

Deadline for receipt of completed applications is Dec. 31, 2025. Questions? Call AIEC Member Services Manager Brooke Gross at (217) 241-7954 or email her at bgross@aiec.coop.



**IEC MEMORIAL
SCHOLARSHIPS**

Sign Up For SmartHub Today!

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

You can use SmartHub for:

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

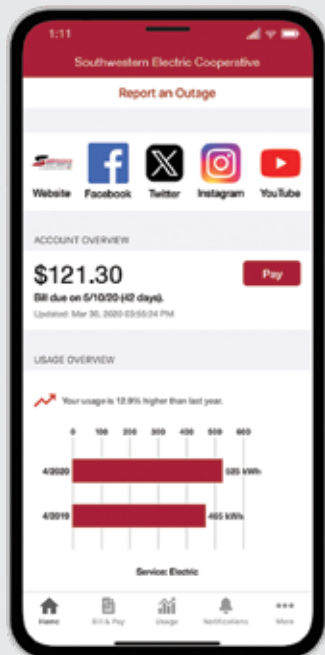
Alerts & Notifications. You can stay up to date on important account events via email or text messages, and receive the information you need to make informed decisions about your account.

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

ACCOUNT DASHBOARD

From the SmartHub account dashboard you'll see:

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



AUTO PAY PROGRAM

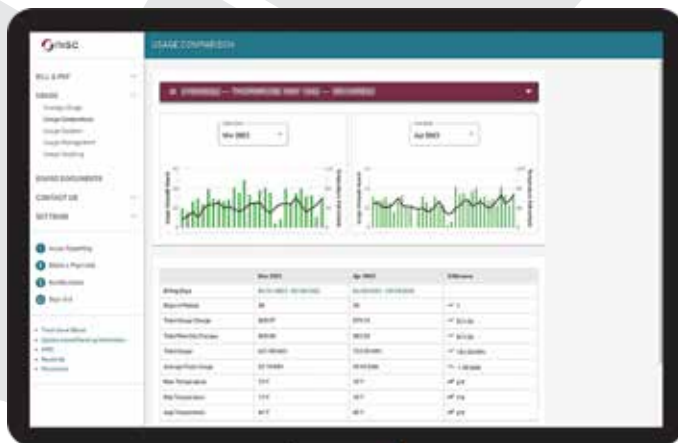
Enroll in Auto Pay and enjoy the convenience of having your bill automatically paid each month from your bank account or credit card.

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

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.

Learn more by watching or reading our tutorials at sweci.com/smarthub or by downloading and exploring the SmartHub app from Google Play or the App Store.



USAGE COMPARISON

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

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

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

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



**Voices for
Cooperative
Power**

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

Save Money With Time of Use Rate

Next year, Southwestern Electric will offer you a new way to lower your energy bill. It's called a Time of Use Rate, and it works like this:

Energy costs your co-op less during off-peak hours—early mornings, evenings and overnight—when demand on the grid is lower. By shifting your energy-intensive tasks to off-peak hours, you save the co-op money. We'll pass that savings along to you.

With our Time of Use Rate, you'll pay less for power you use during off-peak hours.

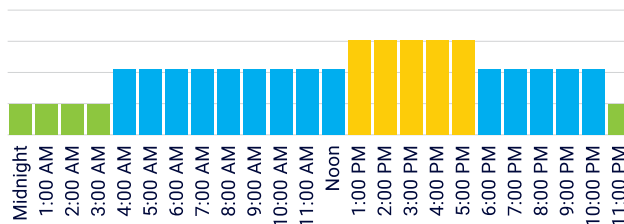
Simple changes can add up to real savings:

- Run your dishwasher after 6 p.m.
- Do laundry in the evening or overnight.
- Charge your electric vehicle while you sleep.
- Program your water heater to heat during off-peak hours.

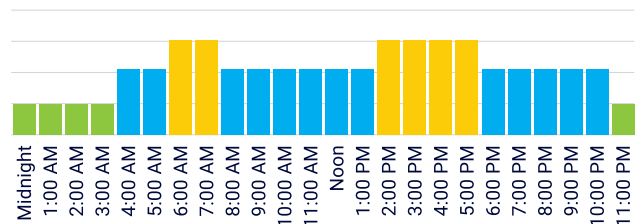
Throughout 2026, we'll host open houses, publish articles, and share videos to help you make the most of our Time of Use Rate and other money-saving programs. Watch for more information in upcoming issues of the magazine, on our social media channels, and at sweci.com.

Time of Use Rates

May - Sept.



Oct. - April



■ Afternoon Peaks Cost More ■ Evenings & Early Mornings Cost Less ■ Overnight Power is Cheapest



YOUR ACCOUNTABLE ENERGY PARTNER

Safety Day Shows Heart Behind the Cooperative Difference

Story by Joe Richardson | Photos by Joe Richardson & Mike Barns

The dominoes kept falling. Twelve-year-old Elizabeth Scott took a steadying breath and began again, standing the tiles on edge. The simple task of arranging a half-dozen dominoes in a row had been complicated by heavy, insulated linemen's gloves that engulfed her hands and dulled her touch. Nearby, another contestant in the "Beat A Lineman" competition was using a fiberglass pole to move objects from one side of a crossarm to another, eight feet overhead. With twenty spectators standing around the utility pole, all eyes were on the targets. It was a scene of quiet concentration, punctuated now and again by the clack and clatter of falling dominoes.

"Sometimes being safe means taking the harder path instead of the easier one," Elizabeth's mother, Southwestern Executive Assistant and Event Coordinator Brooke Scott, will later say.

Both exercises drove home the skill and focus required to work safely in the electric trade — a lesson shared with about 200 co-op employees and their families on Safety Day. For the last three years, on a day in early August, Southwestern Electric has closed its doors to the public and opened its campus to the families of co-op employees.



Elizabeth Scott (right) and her 11-year-old cousin, Blair Becker, race to stand dominoes during the Beat A Lineman competition, a challenge that tested their dexterity while wearing linemen's insulated gloves. Blair is the daughter of Jenny and Tyler Becker of Pocahontas.

Scott said the event began as a question: Why does safety matter? "The answer kept coming back to the same thing: So we can go home to our families."

That answer quickly grew into the idea of inviting employee families to be part of the day. "We wanted them to see what we do, get the opportunity to meet with first responders, watch our live line demonstration, and visit the cooperative," Scott said. "It became a way not just to share the importance of safety, but also to strengthen the connection between our work and the people we care about most."

Southwestern CEO Bobby Williams said the event embodies the Cooperative Difference. "Some companies might do safety training because regulations require it. We do it because we're family. We take care of family. At the end of the day, we want to send everyone home to the people who love them. That's why we train. That's what it means to work for a cooperative."

EDUCATION AS MISSION

Williams said education is about more than defining Time of Use Rates and Demand Charges. "It's about teaching our employees, our members and our community how our distribution system works, what risks exist, and

how to stay safe near power lines. It's about transparency — showing people what we do and why we do it. When you bring 200 employees and family members together for a day of safety demonstrations, you're saying, 'This is who we are. This is what we value. And we want you to understand it as deeply as we do.'"

Planning for the August event begins in February, with the Safety Day Planning Committee reviewing feedback from prior years and brainstorming new ideas. By spring, the committee is contacting vendors and first responders,

and selecting speakers who can engage children and adults.

The logistics are daunting. The committee is tasked with finding a date that works for internal teams and external partners, preparing for August heat and unpredictable weather, and ensuring Southwestern's buildings and grounds are ready for visitors.

Every department contributes. Employees direct traffic, set out food, greet guests and register attendees. Warehousemen and mechanics spend extra time making their spaces easy to navigate. It takes the entire cooperative to orchestrate the event, Scott said. "For the last two years, we've also tied in a fundraiser, which has been really successful. We spend time deciding which organizations to support and how to structure the fundraiser so it's fun and meaningful for everyone involved. It's a lot of moving parts and a little bit of madness," she said with a smile. "But seeing it come together makes it all worthwhile."

Williams agreed. "When you see employees from every department working together to make this happen, you're reminded this is how we operate every day. This event just makes it visible."

FOCUS AND FUN

Safety Day is an outdoor classroom. Exhibits and demonstrations blend instruction with entertainment, ensuring critical messages resonate with a broad audience. This year's event included two dozen stations and presentations that illustrated how our safety practices shape our lives.

"One of our committee members, Ricky Rickermann, suggested adding several games, and they turned out to be a fantastic way to get kids involved," Scott noted. "One of my favorite moments was watching Elizabeth try to stack dominoes while wearing rubber gloves," Scott recalled. "It really highlighted how challenging working with the gear can be. The games are fun," she said, "but they also carry an important lesson that sometimes being safe means taking the harder path instead of the easier one."

Linemen offered a live line presentation to a packed warehouse, demonstrating the precision and caution that ensures the safety of every member of a crew. They also performed pole-top rescues, showing families how crews respond if a coworker needs help thirty feet in the air.

Continued on next page ►



***"Sometimes
being safe means
taking the harder
path instead of
the easier one."***

*— Executive Assistant and Event
Coordinator Brooke Scott*

A lineman demonstrates pole-top rescue techniques for the crowd, emphasizing the need for speed, agility and economy of motion.



► *Continued from page 11*

“Our job is complex,” Williams said. “It’s hard work, often performed in challenging conditions. By inviting families on site to try on gear and use some of our tools, we’re demystifying our work. We’re fulfilling our objective of being transparent, building trust, and reassuring them we care deeply about the welfare of the people they love.”

The Safety Day Planning Committee extended lessons beyond cooperative operations, including the broader community of professionals who work to promote and protect public safety.

An Air Evac helicopter landed on the grounds, giving families an up-close look at emergency medical transport equipment and a chance to meet medical personnel who crew the copters.

Firefighters from the Greenville Fire Department encouraged kids to try out a fire extinguisher simulator. Officers from the Bond County Sheriff’s Department invited kids to try on tactical gear. Rural Med EMS opened the doors to an ambulance and explained how their equipment saves lives.

Advance K9 Services collected DNA samples from children — a sobering reminder that safety extends beyond the workplace — and brought their search and rescue dogs to the event.

Chestnut Health Systems distributed Narcan kits and education. The Fayette County Dive Team brought vehicles and equipment for kids to explore. Fletcher-Reinhardt, a St. Louis-based utility supply and service company, made visible some of the invisible barriers that

stand between danger and safety in the distribution system.

CISA cybersecurity, Altec equipment, Gall Fitness, the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives, Bond County Health Department, U of I Extension Services, Federated Insurance and Our American Liberty provided educational materials reinforcing the message that safety touches every aspect of our lives, and giving it due consideration empowers us all.

A DAY OF GIVING

Commitment to community is a co-op principle, and for the past two years, the Safety Day Planning Committee has included a community fundraiser as part of the event. This year’s fundraiser

Continued on page 22 ►



Forestry Journeyman Jake Cain and his son, Ross, display a raffle prize from the CASA fundraiser.



Members of the Fayette County Emergency Management Agency Dive Team prepare to greet Southwestern Electric employees and families.



Maintenance Foreman Kyle Hails discusses key safety lessons from the live line demonstration.



Representatives from Fletcher-Reinhardt, a St. Louis-based utility supply and service company, demonstrate equipment that contributes to the safety of Southwestern’s distribution system.



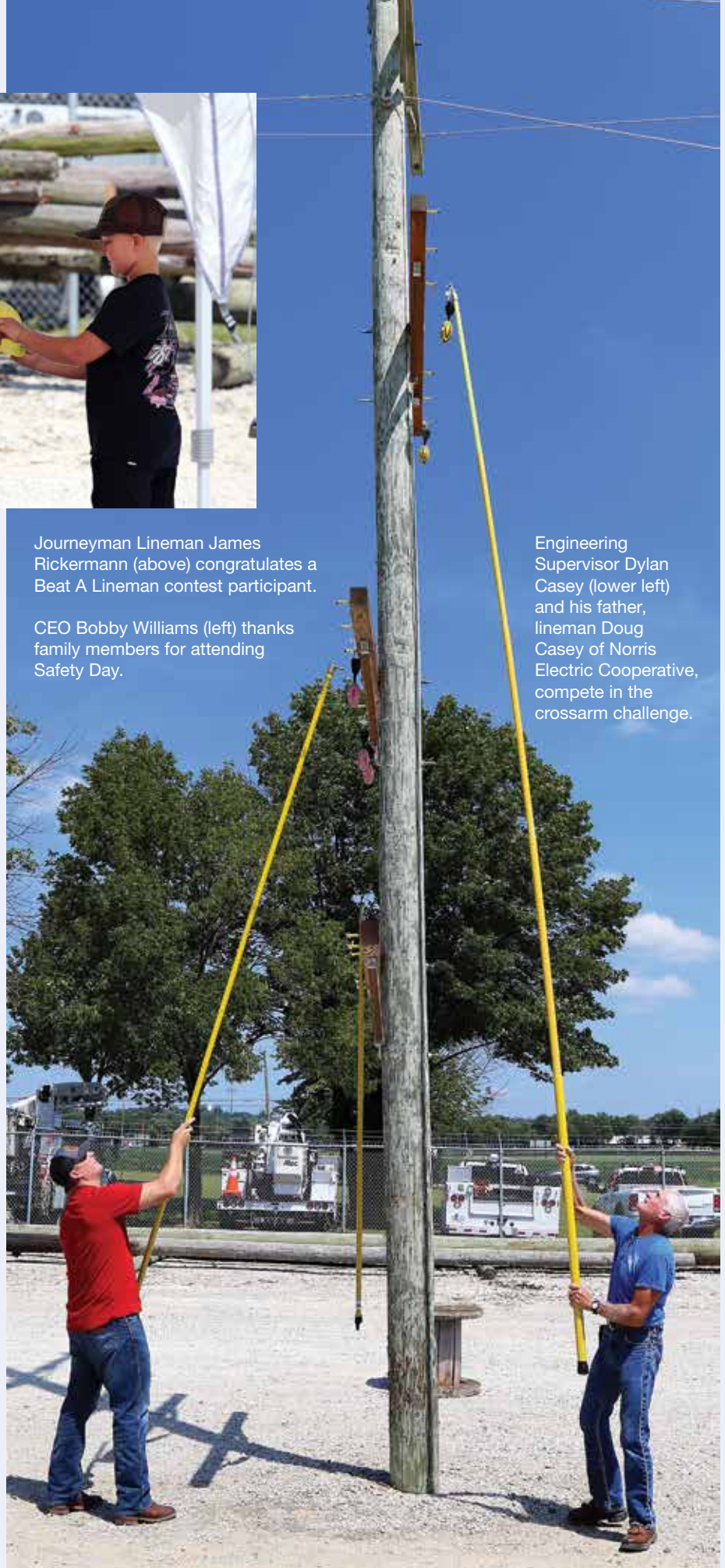
Journeyman Lineman James Rickermann (above) congratulates a Beat A Lineman contest participant.

CEO Bobby Williams (left) thanks family members for attending Safety Day.



“Some companies might do safety training because regulations require it. We do it because we’re family. We take care of family.”

— CEO Bobby Williams



Engineering Supervisor Dylan Casey (lower left) and his father, lineman Doug Casey of Norris Electric Cooperative, compete in the crossarm challenge.

SEVEN STEPS TO AN ENERGY CONSCIOUS KITCHEN

by Julie Lowe, Energy Manager

There's nothing quite like the aroma of a kitchen with a holiday dinner in the oven. If you've prepared a holiday meal, you know it takes a lot of energy to set the table with those savory dishes. In addition to taxing your personal reserves, holiday preparations take a toll on your household energy budget — but there are simple ways to keep energy in check during the holidays and throughout the year. These tips will help you get the most out of your kitchen kilowatt-hours.

KEEP YOUR COOL

Today's kitchen appliances use about half as much energy as their counterparts from a decade ago. Even so, your refrigerator has a healthy appetite, consuming up to 10% of your energy budget — or more if it's an older model. Feed it less by keeping the door closed.

One exception: When you're putting together ingredients for a big dinner you'll lose less cool air by leaving the door open. Repeatedly opening and closing the door will force cool air out.

You want air to circulate around items in your refrigerator, but a full fridge is an efficient fridge — chilled food helps to maintain the internal environment.

MINUTE MEALS

When it comes to quick and efficient heating, your microwave is your best friend. It uses about half the energy of a conventional oven. It's the go-to appliance for cooking vegetables and warming leftovers in the days to come.

PLOT WITH PANS

When you're cooking on a stovetop, find a pan that fits your element. A 6-inch pan on an 8-inch burner will send more than 40 percent of your cooking energy up in smoke. On an electric range, use flat-bottomed pans that make full contact with the element. You also want clean burners and reflectors. They direct heat more effectively.

WINDOW WATCHER

While it's tempting to open the oven door for a peek at your holiday dish, you'll save time and money if you don't. Opening your oven vents valuable heat into your kitchen. You're lowering your oven's internal temperature by as much as 25 degrees each time you open the door. Use your oven window. It may not leave you basking in the steam of a corn casserole or savoring the aroma of caramelized pumpkin pie (see our recipes on page 21), but you'll be able to eat a little sooner.

SMART STACKING

Your meal will cook more quickly and efficiently if air can circulate freely around the food. Avoid stretching sheets of foil over the oven racks. If you have room, stagger pans on the upper and low-

er racks to evenly distribute heat. When recipes permit, bake several batches of cookies at once. The same strategy works for pies.

TRUE BLUE

If you're cooking with a gas range-top burner, use moderate flame settings to conserve fuel. Your flame should be blue. A yellow-tinged flame suggests the gas is burning inefficiently and that your appliance needs an adjustment.

CLEAN-UP

A load of dishes cleaned in the dishwasher uses 75% to 80% less water than the same dishes done by hand. If you're a dish-towel and elbow grease advocate, the same load cleaned in a basin rather than under running water uses half as much water as the dishwasher.

If you opt for the dishwasher, overnight or air-dry settings can reduce your dishwashing energy costs by up to 10%.

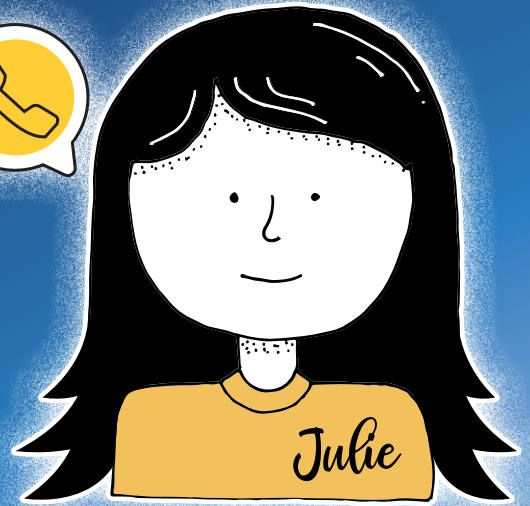


STAR PERFORMANCE

Look for the blue ENERGY STAR label when it's time to upgrade your appliances. ENERGY STAR appliances meet high-efficiency standards set by the Environmental Protection Agency and Department of Energy. ENERGY STAR appliances perform as well as other models and help you save money every month.



Steps to Solar Commissioning



1 Contact Julie Lowe, energy manager, at (800) 637-8667 or julie.lowe@sweci.com for our information and commissioning packet.

2 Contact your installer and insurance agent. Ask your installer for a one-line diagram. Request a certificate of insurance from your agent. They're welcome to send those documents to Julie Lowe at Southwestern Electric. Or if you'd like to review them, they can send them to you, and you can pass them along to Julie.

3 After your one-line diagram is approved by Southwestern Electric, you'll receive a \$500 invoice to cover the installation of your new dual register electric meter, a system inspection, and your array's interconnection to the grid. If your installer will be paying this invoice on your behalf, we'll send the invoice directly to them.

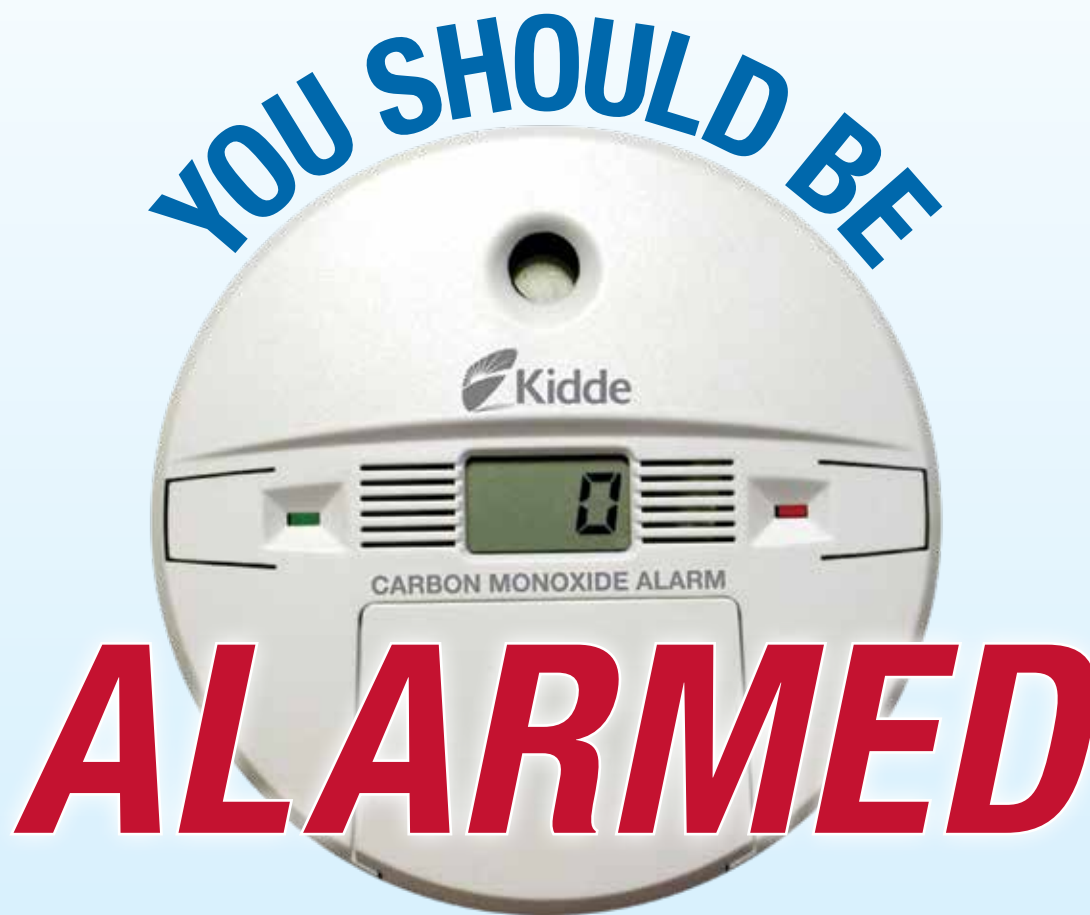
4 After installation is complete, contact us to schedule your system's on-site review and commissioning.

5 Our commissioning team will visit your site. We will inspect your system to verify it meets our safety specifications. A team member will review a memorandum of understanding with you. You'll sign this document for our files. Note: If you won't be present for commissioning, please schedule a meeting to review and sign the memorandum beforehand. After your system passes inspection, you go live! Your array is connected to Southwestern's distribution system.

6 We'll send you and your installer a certificate of completion. Your installer will submit this document for you, so you can receive your solar renewable energy credits (SRECs).

7 Each year, you'll submit documentation to confirm you've renewed your insurance. You may add us as a certificate holder on your policy so the renewal will be sent to us automatically each year.

8 Every three years, we'll visit your system to confirm it's connected properly, well-maintained, and that your safety signs are in place.



As heating season settles into Southwestern Illinois, take measures to protect your family from CO poisoning. Install detectors on every level of your home.

With winter just weeks away, many of us are firing up our furnaces for the first time since May. Before you use any fossil-fuel burning appliance, make sure your carbon monoxide (CO) detector is in working order.

Carbon monoxide, a gas produced by an incomplete burning of carbon-containing fuels, is an undetected threat in many homes. It has no color, taste or smell — and it kills more than 400 people in the United States every year. Most deaths occur during the winter heating season. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, each year more than 100,000

Americans seek medical attention or lose a day of normal activity due to carbon monoxide poisoning.

Household appliances such as space heaters, gas ovens, dryers and furnaces emit carbon monoxide during regular use. Typically, vents safely channel carbon monoxide from an appliance or furnace to the outdoors. When an appliance vent leaks, carbon monoxide can seep into the home and pose a poisoning risk.

Other common sources of carbon monoxide include generators, gasoline-powered vehicles, lawn mowers, weed-eaters, chain saws and snow blowers, as well as charcoal grills and gas lanterns.

What are the symptoms of CO poisoning?

Because carbon monoxide is odorless, colorless, and otherwise undetectable to your senses, you may not know you're being exposed. The initial symptoms of low to moderate carbon monoxide poisoning are similar to the flu (but without the fever). They include:

- Headache
- Fatigue
- Shortness of breath
- Nausea
- Dizziness

CARBON MONOXIDE (CO) POISONING



High level CO poisoning results in progressively more severe symptoms, including:

- Confusion
- Vomiting
- Loss of muscular coordination
- Loss of consciousness
- Death

Symptom severity is related to both the carbon monoxide level and duration of exposure. If you think you're experiencing symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning, step outside into fresh air immediately. Then call emergency services using a cellular phone or from a neighbor's home to report your symptoms. If you stay in your home, you could lose consciousness and die.

Prevention is key

While carbon monoxide detectors are a useful tool and provide a vital layer of protection against CO poisoning, they're not your first line of defense. Your first step toward CO poisoning prevention is

the proper use and maintenance of fuel-burning appliances.

Have your fuel-burning appliances — including oil and gas furnaces, gas water heaters, gas ranges and ovens, gas dryers, gas or kerosene space heaters, fireplaces and wood stoves — inspected by a trained professional at the beginning of every heating season. Make certain that flues and chimneys are connected, in good condition, and not blocked.

Choose appliances that vent their fumes to the outside whenever possible, have them properly installed, and maintain them according to manufacturers' instructions.

Read and follow the instructions that accompany any fuel-burning device. If you can't avoid using an unvented gas or kerosene space heater, carefully follow the precautions that come with it. Use the proper fuel and keep doors to the rest of the house open. Crack a window to ensure enough air for ventilation and proper fuel-burning.

PREVENT CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING

- Install carbon monoxide detectors on every floor of your home. You can buy carbon monoxide detectors at most discount and hardware stores.
- Have your furnace, vents and fireplace inspected each fall by a professional.
- Don't use an oven or gas stovetop to heat your home.
- Don't leave a space heater running or the stove or fireplace burning while you're sleeping.
- Never let your car run in the garage, even if the garage door is open.

PROPER USE AND MAINTENANCE

You've installed detectors on every floor of your home. That's an important step toward protecting your family from CO poisoning. But don't let it lull you into a false sense of security. Your first line of defense should be the proper use and maintenance of fuel-burning appliances. Preventing carbon monoxide from becoming a problem in your home is better than relying on an alarm.

DO THE HOMEWORK

When you shop for a CO detector, research your options and don't select a model solely by cost. Organizations such as Consumers Union (publisher of Consumer Reports), the American Gas Association, and Underwriters Laboratories (UL) can help you make an informed decision. Look for UL certification on any detector you purchase.

IF YOUR CO DETECTOR SOUNDS AN ALARM

Never ignore a carbon monoxide alarm. If your alarm triggers, don't try to identify the CO source. Move everyone outside immediately. Then call emergency services, your fire department, or 911, using your cellular phone. Forget your phone inside? Don't go back for it. Make the call from a neighbor's home.

After you're outside, do a head count. Verify everyone is accounted for. Don't reenter your home until emergency responders have given you the all-clear. You could lose consciousness and die if you enter your home.

If the source of the CO is a malfunctioning appliance, replace it or have it repaired. Don't operate the appliance until it's been properly serviced by a qualified technician.

LIVING COLOR

Autumn is ever in season

Words & Photos by Joe Richardson

I can't recall the year I found the roadside market. I'd boarded the Brussels Ferry west of Grafton, crossing the Illinois River into Calhoun County. The road climbed from the river bottoms and wend its way up hills good for growing crisp apples, large peaches and kind people.

Odelehr's stood not quite at the top.

From a distance there wasn't much to recommend it. The building had seen better days, likely before I was born. Where the road's shoulder ended and the rock parking lot began I couldn't say. Six steps into a corral that held the plants, I forgot about the building. I'd stepped from black and white into the first color

frame in *The Wizard of Oz*. The drive through Bond, Madison and Calhoun counties had been an autumn lullaby of heather and gold, and now I was accosted by a hue and dye more suited to Mardi Gras than Harvest Season.

Ornamental peppers strung like Christmas bulbs cast in wax glowed tangerine and lemon. Behind them stood their crimson cousins, with longer, stouter arms held aloft like a constellation of hungry sea anemones. Beyond the peppers stood celosia, a miniature forest of fuchsia and gold. Bordering the forest lay column after column of magenta mums.

It was as if nature reached blindly into

the farthest corners of a crayon box, felt fine tips on seldom-used colors, then plucked them out to pigment fruits and leaves, which shopkeepers gathered and deposited here.

A few steps south brought me to a weathered wagon with steel wheels and rough-hewn wood that, best I could tell, had never known paint. It was filled with sunflower-yellow and grass-green gourds. And in the midst of this — clashing textures, violent tints, unlikely natural architecture — I felt peace.

Gone was the window to a world at my fingertips, ever out of reach.

In hand were silky fronds and smooth skin and splintered timber.





Gone were the confines of sealed windows and steel frames and cinder block walls and the demands of a day and a week and a life that can sometimes squeeze the light from my, and surely your, soul.

In its place was an enchanted wood. Endless blue sky. A taste of bloom and blossom in the air that filled my lungs and took my breath away.

No chimes. No badges. No notifications. No email alerts. No ringtones.

In this market, I am off the app.

At the counter, commerce becomes conversation and choice of food and flowers an act of communion.

I visit the market nearly every year,

in every season. Colors and textures and flavors change. But always I find stillness, silence, wonder in the simple, complex, comical cornucopia of things that bloom and grow.

I hear a whisper of the Divine.

I feel peace.

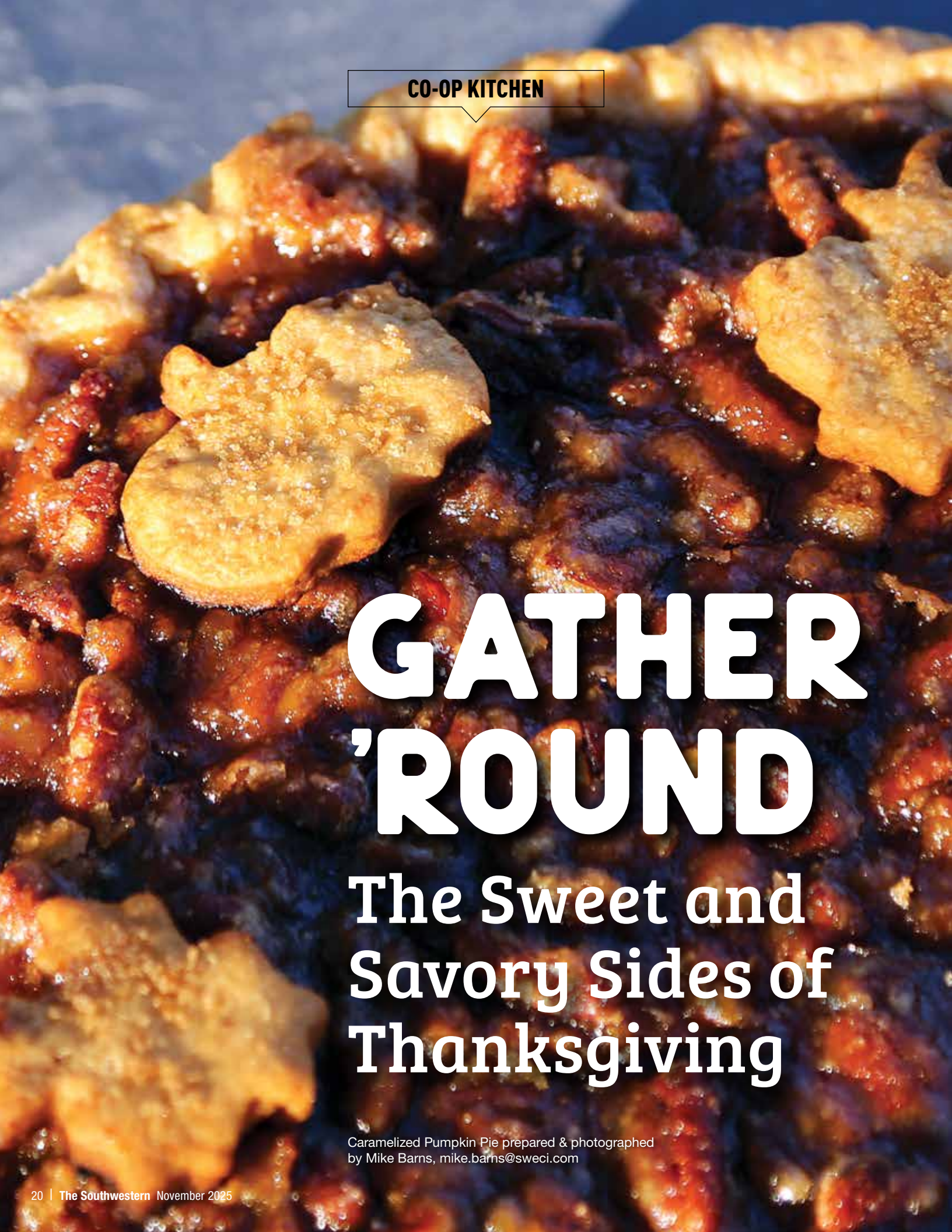
Every time.

Be it in your backyard, a park, a shop down the street, or a roadside market two counties and a ferry-cross-the-river ride away, your patch of sunflower-yellow and grass-green peace is out there. Autumn, a time of rest and reflection, is ever in season.

Why wait to find it?

Photos continued on page 25 ►





CO-OP KITCHEN

GATHER 'ROUND

The Sweet and
Savory Sides of
Thanksgiving

Caramelized Pumpkin Pie prepared & photographed
by Mike Barns, mike.barns@sweci.com

CORN CASSEROLE

Ingredients

- 1 (15 ounce) can whole kernel corn undrained
- 1 (15 ounce) can cream style corn
- 8 ounces sour cream
- 1 package Jiffy corn muffin mix
- 1 stick butter or margarine
- salt and pepper to taste

Directions

1. Combine corn, cream style corn, sour cream and corn muffin mix.
2. Slice butter stick, add to mixture and stir in.
3. Add salt and pepper to taste.
4. Pour into greased 8 x 8 inch dish and bake at 350° for 45 minutes.

CRANBERRY JELL-O SALAD

Ingredients

- 1 (8 ounce) can crushed pineapple
- 1 package raspberry Jell-O
- 1 (16 ounce can) whole cranberry sauce
- 1 teaspoon grated orange peel
- 1 (11 ounce) can mandarin orange
- 1 cup whipped cream

Directions

1. Drain pineapple and reserve syrup to side.
2. Add enough boiling water to syrup to make 1 cup of liquid.
3. Dissolve Jell-O in hot liquid.
4. Stir in cranberry sauce and orange peel.
5. Chill until partially set.
6. Fold in mandarin oranges and crushed pineapple.
7. Fold whipped cream into fruit mixture.
8. Pour into bowl or Jell-O mold and chill until set.

CARAMELIZED PUMPKIN PIE

Ingredients

- 2 cups canned pumpkin
- ¼ cup milk
- 2 slightly beaten eggs
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 tablespoon flour
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon lemon flavoring
- ½ teaspoon vanilla
- ½ tablespoon butter melted
- 1 unbaked pastry shell
- 1 cup chopped pecans
- ¼ cup melted butter
- 1 cup packed brown sugar

Directions

1. Mix together pumpkin, milk, eggs, sugar, flour, salt, lemon, vanilla and ½ tablespoon melted butter. Spread mixture into pastry shell.
2. Bake at 425° for 10 minutes, reduce heat to 350° and bake 40 more minutes.
3. Mix together pecans, butter and brown sugar. Spread over top of pie.
4. Place pie under the broiler until topping is caramelized.

SWEET POTATO CRUNCH

Ingredients

- 3 medium sweet potatoes peeled and cubed (3-4 cups)
- 1 cup sugar
- ½ cup milk
- 2 eggs
- ¼ cup butter melted
- 1 teaspoon vanilla

Topping Ingredients

- 1 cup brown sugar
- 1 cup chopped pecans
- ⅓ cup self-rising flour
- ¼ cup butter melted

Directions

1. Boil sweet potatoes for 15-20 minutes, or until they are fork-tender.
2. Drain and allow to cool for 15 minutes.
3. Use a potato masher or large fork to mash the sweet potatoes.
4. Add sugar, milk, eggs, butter and vanilla. Stir to combine.
5. Pour sweet potato mixture into 8 x 8 inch baking dish.
6. Mix together topping ingredients and sprinkle over sweet potatoes.
7. Bake at 350° for 35 minutes.

CROCK POT DRESSING

Ingredients

- 1 cup butter
- 2 cups onion chopped
- 2 cups celery chopped
- 1½ teaspoons parsley
- 2 (4 ounce) cans sliced mushrooms drained
- 13 cups dry bread cubes
- 1 teaspoon poultry seasoning
- 1½ teaspoons salt
- 1½ teaspoons sage
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 2 eggs beaten well
- 3½ - 4½ cups chicken broth or turkey broth

Directions

1. Melt butter in skillet and saute onion, celery, parsley and mushrooms.
2. Place bread cubes in large bowl, add onion mixture, poultry seasoning, salt, sage and thyme. Mix well.
3. Pour in enough broth to moisten, add eggs and mix well.
4. Transfer to greased crock pot and cover.
5. Cook on high 45 minutes, stir, reduce heat to low and cook for 4 - 8 hours.

► *Continued from page 12*

supported Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), an organization that supports children in the foster care system.

“CASA volunteers walk together with foster kids during some of the hardest moments of their lives, making sure they feel seen, heard and supported,” Scott said, “which connects strongly with what Safety Day is all about — family and making sure people feel safe.”

Safety Day Planning Committee member Ashley Towler suggested CASA after learning about the organization through her service on the Fayette County Board. She recognized CASA as an ideal candidate for the 2025 fundraiser, as their mission to advocate for abused and neglected children not only aligned with personal safety but also served the community’s most vulnerable members. Having worked in public schools, she’d witnessed firsthand the critical need for additional support and services for students in foster care — experience that deepened her commitment to CASA’s cause.

The Safety Day Planning Committee raised \$3,370 for CASA through raffle ticket sales to employees and their families. Beyond the financial contribution, Towler noted that featuring CASA at Safety Day heightened awareness of the organization’s mission, and could ultimately inspire additional forms of support, such as volunteering.

Supporting CASA through Safety Day is an expression of the values that guide Southwestern, Williams said. “When we support organizations like CASA, when we bring first responders together with families, when we teach safety to anyone who’ll listen — that’s not checking the box of corporate social responsibility. That’s neighbors helping neighbors. That’s what cooperatives were built to do.”

MOMENTS THAT MATTER

For Scott, Safety Day’s magic appears in small moments — watching her family learn and explore different safety stations, catching up with coworkers’ families and noticing how their children have grown in the last year, and seeing

coworkers from different departments work together with a shared sense of purpose. “What makes me the most proud is seeing how our co-op comes together to pull it off and create a welcoming, engaging experience for our families,” she said. “It really shows the strength, dedication and spirit of our co-op family.”

Scott said feedback from employees reinforces that sense of connection. “They appreciate that the cooperative cares enough about safety to close its doors for a day, welcoming loved ones in to understand why safety is so important,” she said. “They value the chance to show their families where they work and what they do.” In short, they recognize Safety Day as a reflection of who they are and what they stand for.

“Hearing that kind of feedback reminds me that Safety Day isn’t just an event,” she said. “It’s a time for our co-op family to come together, share, and celebrate safety. It’s a special day to pause, reflect, and focus on why safety matters in everything we do.”

For Williams, Safety Day is ultimately



Southwestern Electric employees and families raised \$3,370 for Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), a non-profit association that advocates for abused and neglected children in foster care. Pictured are (from left) Safety Day Planning Committee members (in green) Journeyman Linemen Braden Clark and James Rickermann, Accounting Clerk Ashley Towler, Executive Assistant Brooke Scott, Member Services Representative Lauren Schoen, and Human Resources Administrator Marissa Horn, with Tawny McCarty, Volunteer Advocate Coordinator for CASA of Southwestern Illinois, and Zoe Bridges, Volunteer Outreach Coordinator for CASA for Kids.

about keeping promises. “We promise our employees they’ll go home to their families. We promise our members we’ll serve them reliably and responsibly. We promise our community we’ll be good neighbors and stewards. Those promises are interconnected. You can’t keep one without keeping them all. And that’s the cooperative difference,” he said. “We see those connections. We honor them. We build our entire operation around them.”

MORE THAN MEMORIES

As Safety Day winds down and the helicopter lifts off, after families say their goodbyes and employees clear tables, pack up equipment and turn out the lights, Scott reflects on the day, saying she wants people to leave with more than memories. “I hope our employees and their families walk away feeling proud to be part of our co-op family,” she said. “I want them to have a deeper appreciation for the importance of safety and to feel connected and valued. My hope is that they leave having learned something new, and with a sense of the shared commitment that makes our cooperative more than just a workplace.”

More than a workplace. More than a utility. More than a business keeping the lights on.

Southwestern Electric Cooperative was born when people in Southwestern Illinois recognized their lives would be better if they acted together. They pooled resources, governed themselves democratically, and built an organization that put people before profit. Safety Day is the co-op philosophy put into practice — where education becomes experience, principles become relationships, we’re better together, and the job isn’t finished until everyone has ended the day safely and made it home. 

Director Bill Jennings (top) and his wife, Patty, speak with fitness trainer and personal coach Emily Gall and her daughter, Lena Gall, of Gall Fitness in St. Rose.

Air Evac Lifeteam members give Southwestern employees and families an up-close look at lifesaving emergency medical transport equipment.

The Greenville Fire Department challenges kids to put out a simulated fire.



CURRENT EVENTS

November 1-30; December 3-31 NOSTALGIC CHRISTMAS & HOLIDAY DISPLAY, Edwardsville. Wednesday - Sunday 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Closed on Thanksgiving and Christmas days. Visit cityofedwardsville.com/749/West-End-Service-Station.

November 8 ART & WINE WALK, Belleville. Stroll downtown Belleville Main Street while sampling wines and celebrating unique local artisans and their work at 30 locations. All tastings, artists and entertainment are located inside our stores and restaurants. Artists' work will be available for purchase the evening of the event. 3 - 7 p.m. Belleville Main Street, 216 East A Street. Visit bellevillemainstreet.net

November 8 CRAFT BEVERAGE FESTIVAL, Grafton. Enjoy local beer, wine, spirits, ciders, seltzers, herbal teas, and more. The festival will feature live music by Sheafor & Simes as well as special brew tastings, vendors, and multiple food options. Noon - 4 p.m. Admission is \$30 advance; \$35 at the door; \$15 for designated driver. Tickets include a commemorative glass and samples. Grafton Winery - The Vineyards, 21028 Eckert Orchard Road. For more information or tickets, visit riversandroutes.com/events/craft-beverage-festival.

November 8 SAUSAGE SUPPER, Grantfork. Dinner includes homemade pork sausage, mashed potatoes and gravy, sauerkraut, green beans, apple sauce and a piece of pie. Fresh packaged and fried sausage for purchase. Drive thru only. 2 - 7 p.m. All dinners \$14. Grantfork

UCC (United Church of Christ), 206 South Locust Street. Call (618) 675-2595.

November 14 & 15 OLDE TYME CHRISTMAS, Vandalia. A free, community holiday celebration that attracts surrounding communities, encourages the shop local movement and showcases Vandalia and local Vandalia businesses. Friday 5 - 9 p.m.; Saturday 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.; Christmas concert 6 p.m. Downtown on Gallatin Street. For full schedule of events, visit facebook.com/VandaliaOTC.

November 14-16 JURASSIC QUEST + BRICK FEST, Collinsville. This giant-sized event is also paired with Lego-themed kid zones with Brick Fest. Prepare to be wowed by the gigantic and life-sized dinosaurs. The kids can also enjoy dinosaur bounce houses, dinosaur rides and activities, dig for fossils and meet baby dinos. Brick Fest fun includes derby races, a glow zone and photo opportunities with life-sized Lego models. Friday noon - 8 p.m.; Saturday 8 a.m. - 6 p.m.; Sunday 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. Ticket fees vary. Gateway Convention Center, 1 Gateway Drive. For more information or tickets, visit jurassicquest.com.

November 14-16, 20-23 ALTON LITTLE THEATER: TWELVE ANGRY MEN, Alton. A presentation by the Alton Little Theater Company. Nov. 14, 15, 20 and 21 at 7:30 p.m.; matinees Nov. 16, 22 and 23 starting at 2 p.m. Admission is \$25. Alton Little Theater, 2450 North Henry Street. For tickets, call (618) 462-3205 or visit altonlittletheater.org.

November 14 - January 1 FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS, Vandalia. Enjoy a stroll through Christmas lights at Rogier Park, 940 West Filmore Street. 5 - 11 p.m. Visit facebook.com/OTCFestivalofLights.

November 15 FAYETTE COUNTY CEO 5K, Vandalia. Join us for a festive evening of fun and holiday cheer at the Lights and Strides 5K through Rogier Park, hosted by the Fayette County CEO Program. This holiday-themed walk/run invites participants of all ages to enjoy Christmas lights, music, and appearances from your favorite holiday characters along the route through Rogier Park — perfect for photos and festive memories. After you finish your 5k, warm up with food from local food trucks and a cozy cup of hot chocolate. Medals will be awarded to the top male and female finishers in each age group. The race will be chip timed to ensure accurate results. Celebrate the season with us at this merry and bright community event. Race begins at 4:45 p.m. Register through our link at facebook.com/fayettecountyceo. Rogier Park, 940 West Filmore Street. For more information, contact facilitator@fayettecountyceo.com.

November 15 TURKEY TROT 5K/1M, Maryville. 9 - 11 a.m. Admission \$10 - \$30. Drost Park, East Division Street. For more information, visit vil.maryville.il.us or email parksandrec@maryville-il.us

November 21 & 22 VICTORIAN HOLIDAY, Lebanon. Join us on the brick street to kick off the holiday season with shopping,

live performances, carolling, photos with Santa, live reindeer, and carriage rides. Friday 4 - 8 p.m.; Saturday 1 - 8 p.m. 221 West St. Louis Street. Visit facebook.com/LebanonVictorianHoliday.

November 21 - December 28 FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS, Shelbyville. Take the last entryway into the park to start your journey through the lights. Stop by the Chautauqua building and enjoy the 30 plus decorated trees until 9 p.m. Donations are accepted at the end of the tour. 5 - 10 p.m. Forest Park, 324 East North 9th Street. Visit lakeshelbyville.com.

November 21 - December 31 WINTER WONDERLAND OF LIGHTS, Lebanon. Drive through holiday light display, donations welcome and appreciated at the gate. 5 - 10 p.m. Horner Park, 11113 Widicus Road. Visit lebanonswinterwonderland.org.

November 27 TURKEY TROT AND TURKEY CHASE, Belleville. Annual Thanksgiving 5K run and kids turkey chase. All proceeds go to support Belleville High School Hockey Club. 7 - 10 a.m. Downtown public square at the intersection of Main and Illinois Streets. For more information or to register, visit bellevillethanksgiving5krunturkeychase.itsyourrace.com/.

November 28 - December 27 TINSEL & TAILS, Effingham. This new holiday event will take patrons on a short golf cart ride to enjoy festive light exhibits, sip on hot chocolate, roast s'mores and get in plenty of

Continued on page 26 ►

Call to Confirm

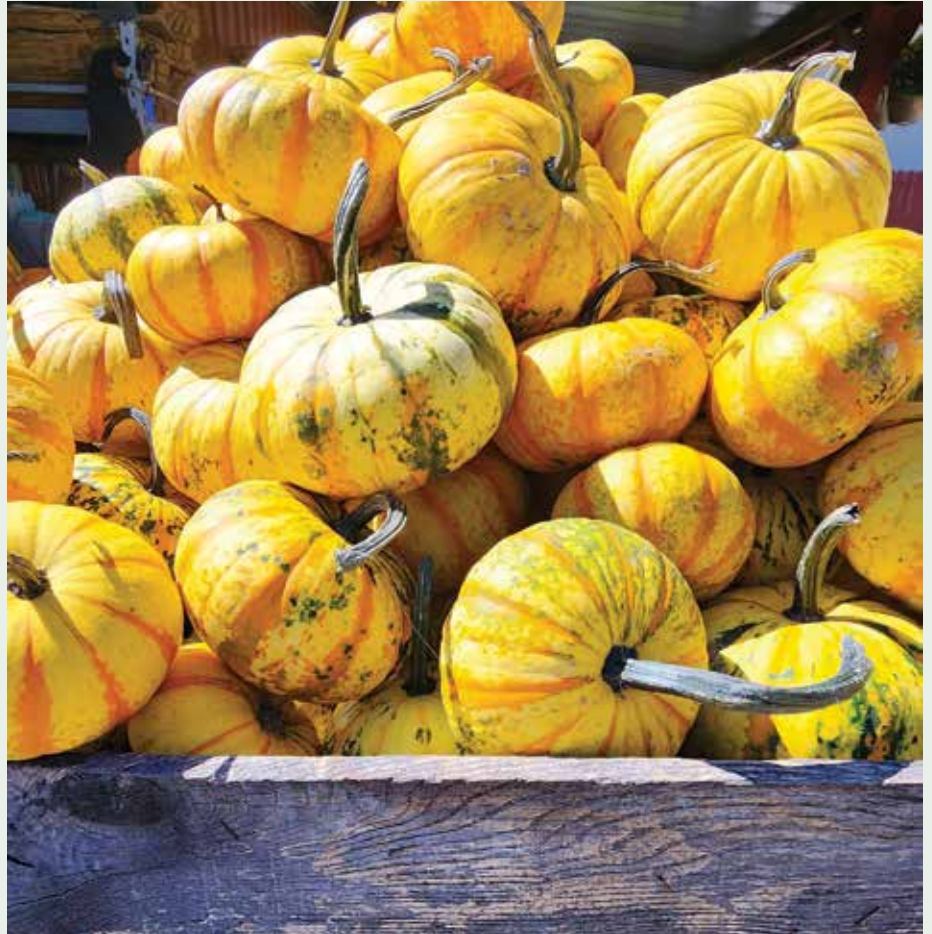
Listings are provided by event organizers or taken from community websites. We recommend calling to confirm dates, times and details before you make plans. All are subject to change.

Submissions

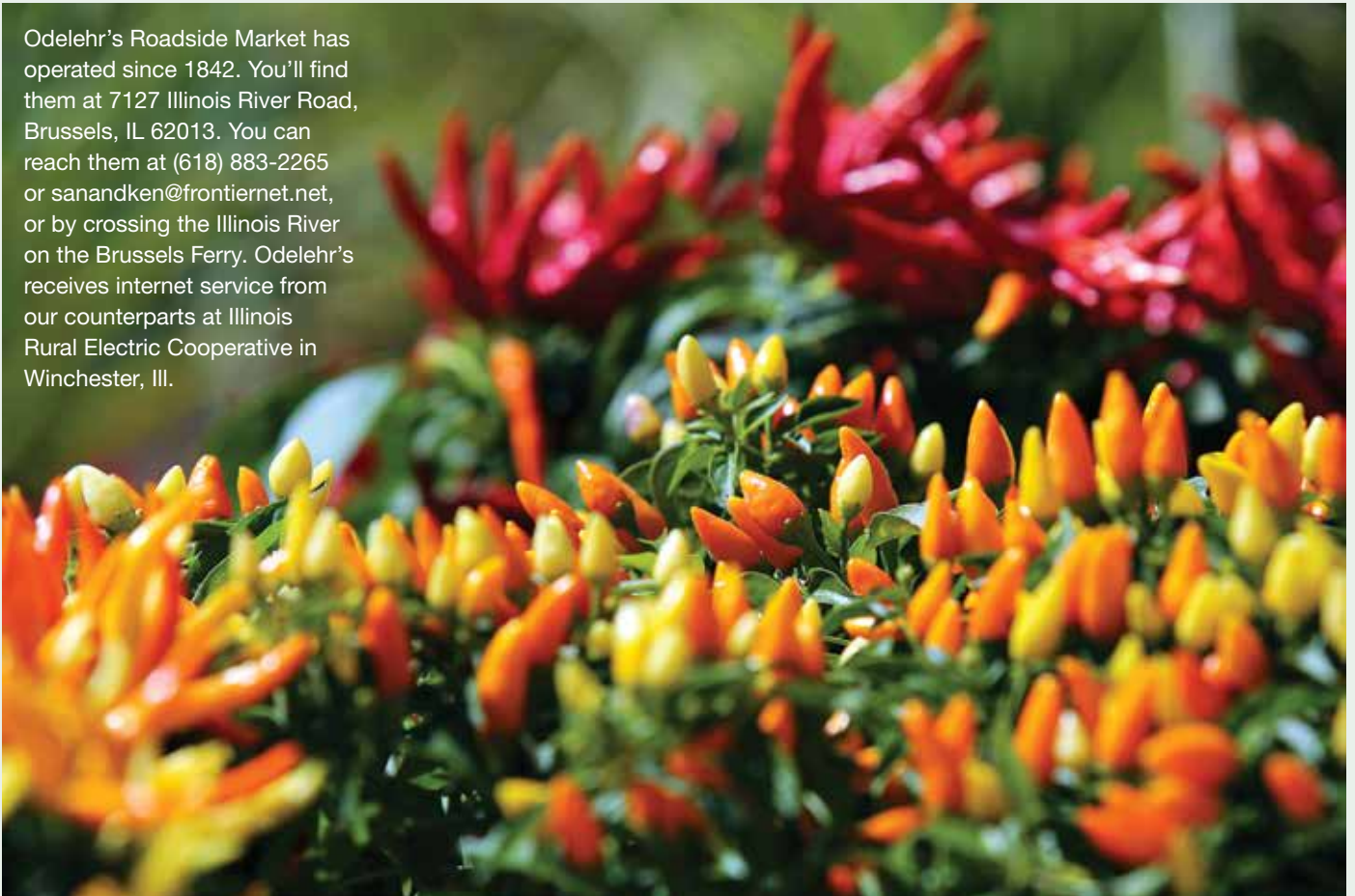
To submit an event for consideration in our calendar, email your event information to joe.richardson@sweci.com. Please use our Current Events format (as seen on these pages) to write your submission. Include a contact number or email and submit your listing at least two months prior to your event.

WHERE'S YOUR AUTUMN OASIS?

Have a favorite farmers market or roadside stand? We'd love to hear what makes it special and why it's yours. Share your stories and photos with Joe Richardson at The Southwestern, Southwestern Electric Cooperative, 525 US Route 40, Greenville, IL 62246, or email joe.richardson@sweci.com. Selected letters and pictures will appear in future issues of the magazine.



Odelehr's Roadside Market has operated since 1842. You'll find them at 7127 Illinois River Road, Brussels, IL 62013. You can reach them at (618) 883-2265 or sanandken@frontiernet.net, or by crossing the Illinois River on the Brussels Ferry. Odelehr's receives internet service from our counterparts at Illinois Rural Electric Cooperative in Winchester, Ill.



► *Continued from page 24*

snuggles by the fire pit. Every Friday and Saturday from 5:30 - 8:15 p.m. Admission is \$5. Proceeds benefit EARS (Effingham Animal Rescue Sanctuary). Cardinal Golf Course, 15737 North Beach Road. Visit effinghmanimalrescue.com.

November 28 - December 28 CHRISTMAS WONDERLAND, Alton. Drive through to view more than 4 million lights decorating the park. Take your own free photos with Santa. Monday - Friday 6 - 9 p.m.; Saturday & Sunday 5 - 9 p.m. The suggested donation is \$10 for cars and small vans or \$1 per person for vehicles holding more than 10 people. Rock Spring Park, 2100 College Avenue. Call (800) 258-6645.

November 28-30; December 5-7, 12-14, 18-21 FREE HORSE-DRAWN TROLLEY RIDES, Belleville. Hop aboard a 26-passenger, horse-drawn trolley that takes you through Belleville's historic and beautifully decorated public square, unique downtown shopping and dining district, and Christkindlmarkt, an open-air German Christmas market. Fridays 5 - 8 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays noon - 6 p.m. The trolley starts and stops at the 1st block of East Main Street. Visit belleville.net/586/holiday-events.

November 28 - December 31 CHRISTMAS LIGHTS WONDERLAND, Greenville. See our extensive collection of light boxes, Christmas displays and holiday scenes. Hill's Fort 1800s Christmas open Fridays

and Saturdays. North Pole Express train rides Friday - Sunday. 5 - 9 p.m. Admission to display is free-will donation. Train rides \$5. American Farm Heritage Museum, 1395 Museum Avenue. Visit american-farmheritagemuseum.org.

November 28 - January 4 CHRISTMAS IN CARLYLE LIGHTS, Carlyle. Take a drive through City Park to view the lights, animated features, and dancing trees. Tune your radio to 90.1 FM for dancing trees music. 5 - 11 p.m. 1090 Lake Road. Visit carlylelake.com.

November 29 CHRISTMAS CANDLELIGHT TOURS, Edwardsville. The historic home will be aglow in candlelight and bedecked in early 19th century decorations, immersing visitors in a truly interactive historical experience. The first tour starts at 5 p.m. with the last tour at 7:40 p.m. Tickets must be purchased online in advance for a specific time. Admission is \$15. Check in at the gift shop 10 minutes before your time slot. Tours begin promptly in the courtyard every 20 minutes. Colonel Benjamin Stephenson House, 409 South Buchanan Street. For tickets, visit stephensonhouse.org.

November 29 GREAT RIVER ROAD RUN, Alton. Choose the 10 mile race or the 5k. The flat-course race features amazing bluffs on one side and the Mississippi river on the other. Races start at 9 a.m. Starting and ending near Ardent Mills on W Broadway. There are

several parking lots and some parking along the street. Packet pickup and race day registration is 7 - 8:30 a.m. at Mac's in downtown Alton, 315 Belle Street. Registration fees vary. To register, visit altonroadrunners.org.

November 29 HOMETOWN CHRISTMAS, Effingham. Enjoy the traditions of Christmas with horse drawn carriage rides, tractor train rides, live reindeer, entertainment, hot drinks, kettle corn and fun in Santa's workshop. 3 - 6 p.m.; Santa House open 5:45 - 8 p.m.; FACE Christmas Concert at 6:15 p.m.; FACE Community Orchestra 6:45 p.m. Downtown on Jefferson Avenue. Visit effinghamcountychamber.com.

November 30 ALL I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS CRAFT & VENDOR SHOW, Effingham. Shop from more than 80 booths. Free pictures with Santa Claus and gift card giveaways. 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Admission is free. Thelma Keller Convention Center, North Keller Drive. For more information, email baentertainment21@gmail.com.

December 5 SNOWFLAKE FESTIVAL, Godfrey. Join Godfrey in celebrating the holiday season. Get your picture taken with Santa in the gazebo. There will be s'mores roasting on an open fire, carriage rides, hot cocoa and cookies, and more. This is a free event, but in honor of the giving season, we will be collecting toys for the United States Marine Corps

of Alton Toys for Tots campaign. 6 - 8:30 p.m. Robert E. Glazebrook Community Park, 1401 Stamper Lane. Go to visitgodfrey.com/events/.

December 6 GINGERBREAD RUN, Belleville. Join us for the Gingerbread 5k run/walk and the Kids Ginger Loop 1-mile fun run through the festive streets of downtown. The fun run is for kids 3 - 12 years of age. Proceeds will be used towards the purchase of new playground equipment pieces at our Nichols Community Center. 5k starts at 8:30 a.m.; fun run at 8 a.m. Registration fees vary. Day of race registration opens at 7 a.m. Start and finish at Belleville Parks & Recreation, 510 West Main Street. To register, visit gingerbreadrun.com.

December 6 HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS TOUR, Elsah. Enjoy a walk through the historic Village of Elsah while touring selected homes decorated for the holidays. Tour also includes Farley Music Hall, Elsah Museum, the historic two-room school house, bed and breakfast inns, churches, and the village shops. 1 - 5 p.m. Admission is \$20 in advance; \$25 day of event (cash only). Tickets will be available at Farley Music Hall starting at 12:30 p.m. Admission is free for children 12 years of age and younger. Ticket includes a self-guided tour and music at the two Elsah churches. Tour starts at Farley Music Hall, 37 Mill Street. Visit historicelsah.org/tour/ or email historicelsah@gmail.com.

Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation

The Southwestern (publication #612-500) is published 12 times per year by Southwestern Electric Cooperative, Inc (SWECI). Publisher & owner: SWECI. General business offices of the owner/publisher are located at 525 US Route 40; Greenville, IL 62246-3358. Editor: Joe Richardson. Annual subscription rate: \$11.53 (included in Southwestern Electric's service availability cost). Contact person: Joe Richardson, (800) 637-8667. Known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding one percent or more of the total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities: CoBank; 5500 S. Quebec St.; Greenwood Village, CO 80111.

The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization, and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes, have not changed during the preceding twelve months. Extent and nature of circulation: the 24,500 members of SWECI. Issue date for circulation data below: September 2025.

For paid circulation (by mail and outside the mail), the following information pertains to the single issue published nearest to the filing date. Mailed outside-county paid subscriptions on PS Form 3541: 17660. Mailed in-county paid subscriptions stated on PS Form 3541: 1803. Paid distribution outside the mails, including sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors, counter sales, and other paid distribution outside USPS: 0 copies. Paid distribution by other classes of mail through the USPS: 0. Total paid distribution of this kind: 19463 copies.

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carriers, street vendors, counter sales, and other paid distribution outside USPS: 0 copies. Paid distribution by other classes of mail through the USPS: 0 copies. Total paid distribution of this kind: 20009 copies.

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A close-up photograph of autumn leaves, primarily in shades of brown and gold, with some vibrant red leaves interspersed. Numerous small, clear raindrops are scattered across the surfaces of the leaves, reflecting the light. The lighting is warm and directional, creating strong highlights and deep shadows that emphasize the textures of the foliage.

Evening sun
illuminates the
day's rain as
autumn turns to
winter on Hunter
Barns Trail at
Lake Sara in
Effingham, Ill.

THE FINAL FRAME

