

THE *Southwestern*

A SOUTHWESTERN ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE MEMBER MAGAZINE

APRIL 2026 • VOLUME 78 • ISSUE 4

GET YOUR KICKS

ROUTE 66 TURNS 100

BOARD NOMINATIONS

E-CYCLING

GRAIN BIN SAFETY

INSULATION

SAFE DIGGING



Cogeneration
CALL BEFORE YOU INSTALL

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525 U.S. Route 40, Greenville, IL 62246.
Phone: 800-637-8667. Office Hours:
Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Visit us on the Web at www.sweci.com.

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Spring is in bloom—and with these colorful, asparagus-centered recipes, the grass isn't the only thing that's green.

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Whether you're more of a Frog Walk person or a Lake Sara Dam Run type, there's something for everyone in this month's calendar of events.

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Stamps of approval.

ON THE COVER

The West End Service Station in Edwardsville stands as a relic of a bygone era—and has now been transformed into an homage to historic Route 66. Read our story on the Mother Road on page 18.



CO-OP REMINDERS

April 3 Offices closed for Good Friday.

April 21 Payment processing unavailable 8 - 11 p.m. while we perform maintenance.



FIND US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

For the latest news and notes, follow us on Facebook and x (formerly Twitter). You'll find us at facebook.com/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 robin 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 robin, 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 May 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 June issue of The Southwestern.

FEBRUARY WINNER

Congratulations to Alan Callovini of Staunton. As the winner of our February Hide & Seek contest drawing, Alan will receive a \$25 credit on an upcoming electric bill. Thank you to everyone who participated in our February 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 May 1.
- We'll never hide the image on the front or back cover or on the page where we list the rules.

Recycle with Southwestern

WE'RE A NATION IN LOVE WITH ELECTRONICS

According to a Connected Consumer Survey conducted in 2023:

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



Given the statistics, it's likely you own an outdated TV, PC or mobile phone.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

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

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

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

Please Note

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

RECYCLING DRIVE DATES & LOCATIONS

- **May 16** Southwestern Electric's St. Elmo Distribution Center, 2117 East 1850 Avenue (frontage road southwest of the St. Elmo exit off Interstate 70), St. Elmo, IL 62458
- **June 6** Southwestern Electric Cooperative's headquarters, 525 US Route 40, Greenville, IL 62246
- **Collection Times** All collections will begin at 9 a.m. and end at noon or when the truck is filled — whichever comes first.

QUESTIONS & CJD E-CYCLING

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

FINAL REMINDER

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>.

Help Lead Our Co-op: How to Run for the Board

by Jennifer Gillan, Manager of Member Services

Southwestern Electric is a not-for-profit cooperative. This means we are owned and governed by our members—the very people who use our electricity. Instead of outside investors, a Board of Directors oversees our finances and general strategy. This board consists of nine members who are democratically elected by their peers.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR DISTRICTS

Our service area is divided into three voting districts. Each year, three of the nine board seats (one from each district) are up for election.

- District I: Macoupin, Madison, and St. Clair counties.
- District II: Bond, Clinton, and Montgomery counties.
- District III: Clay, Effingham, Fayette, Marion, and Shelby counties.

The current directors whose terms end in 2026 are Marvin Warner (Dist. I), Brad Lurkins (Dist. II), and Annette Hartlieb (Dist. III).

Any Southwestern Electric member interested in running for a seat on the board, or who would like to submit another member's name for consideration, must notify a Nominations Committee member from the appropriate district prior to 4:30 p.m. on Thursday, May 21.

HOW TO BECOME A CANDIDATE

If you're interested in running for the board or would like to nominate a candidate:

- 1. Contact the Committee.** Notify a member of the Nominations Committee for your district by 4:30 p.m. on Thursday, May 21. Committee contact information will appear in the May issue of The Southwestern.
- 2. File by Petition.** If you miss the May deadline, you can still run by filing a petition. Your petition needs be signed by at least 15 members and be submitted at Southwestern Electric's headquarters at 525 US Route 40, Greenville, Ill., by Monday, June 29.

Note: Anyone who doesn't file by June 29, 2026, will not be eligible to run until the following year.

REQUIREMENTS & RESULTS

To serve on the board, you must be at least 18 years old, be a member in good financial standing, and meet the specific qualifications found in the co-op's bylaws (Section 5(B)).

Winners will be announced at the 88th Annual Meeting of Members on Saturday, September 12. Each elected director will serve a three-year term ending in 2029.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions about the election process, please contact Jennifer Gillan, Manager of Member Services at 800-637-8667 or jennifer.gillan@sweci.com.

SOUTHWESTERN ELECTRIC 2026

Verify your voting eligibility today. In a joint membership, either person who signed the membership application may vote. With an individual membership, voting rights are granted solely to the person who signed the application.

Names of Nominations Committee members appear in the May issue of The Southwestern.

Board candidates should express their interest in running for a seat on the board by contacting a Nominations Committee member from the appropriate district by 4:30 p.m., Thursday, May 21.

Board candidates who missed the nomination deadline may file for candidacy by petition. The petition for candidacy, with required signatures and residency information, must be filed by June 29.

Candidates for the Board of Directors: Qualification & Nomination Guidelines

Section 5 (B): Qualifications

To be eligible to become or remain a Director of the Cooperative, such person:

1. Shall not be a Close Relative of an incumbent Director;
2. Shall not be an employee or agent of the Cooperative;
3. Shall not be, directly or indirectly, employed by or financially interested in a competing enterprise, business selling electric energy or supplies to the Cooperative, or a business primarily engaged in selling electrical or plumbing appliances, fixtures or supplies to, among others, the Members of the Cooperative;
4. Shall not be, directly or indirectly, interested in any contract, permit, franchise or other similar agreement or authorization to which the Cooperative is or may be a party;
5. Shall be a Member in good standing with the Cooperative and receiving energy or service from the Cooperative at his primary place of abode;
6. Shall be a Natural Person;
7. Shall be at least eighteen (18) years of age; provided, however, that a duly elected officer or duly appointed agent of any Member which is not a Natural Person shall be exempt from the qualifications stated in Section 5(B)(6) and Section 5(B)(7) if such Member is in good standing with the Cooperative and receiving energy or service from the Cooperative.

Section 4 (D): Election of Directors

At each annual meeting of the Members of the Cooperative, Directors shall be elected by secret written ballot cast (except as otherwise provided in this section) by the Members present at such annual meeting and qualified to vote under the terms and conditions of the Bylaws. Such election shall be conducted as follows:

1. Appointment of Nominations Committee: The Board of Directors shall appoint, not less than one hundred fifteen (115) nor more than one hundred forty-five (145) days prior to the date of the annual meeting of the Members of the Cooperative, a Nominations Committee which shall consist of nine (9) Natural Persons, three

from each Directorate District. Members of the Nominations Committee shall not be employees, agents, officers, or Directors of the Cooperative, shall not be known candidates for Director, and shall not be Close Relatives of employees, agents, officers, Directors of the Cooperative, or known candidates for Director.

2. Candidates Nominated by Nominations Committee: On or before eighty-five (85) days prior to the annual meeting of the Members of the Cooperative, the Nominations Committee shall:
 - a. Nominate as many Natural Persons who meet the qualifications stated in Section 5B of these Bylaws as the Nominating Committee deems desirable to be candidates for election to the Board of Directors; and,
 - b. Post a list of the names of such Natural Persons so nominated by the Nominations Committee at the principal place of business of the Cooperative.

3. Candidates Nominated by Petition: In addition to those candidates named by the Nominations Committee, any fifteen (15) or more Members of the Cooperative may nominate such other Natural Persons as candidates for election to the Board of Directors by filing with the Secretary of the Cooperative not less than seventy-five (75) days prior to the annual meeting of the Members of the Cooperative a written petition bearing the signatures, names and addresses of at least fifteen Members of the Cooperative nominating such other Natural Persons as candidates for election to the Board of Directors and listing the candidate's name, address, age, and telephone number. The Secretary of the Cooperative shall post such petition at the principal places of business of the Cooperative where the list of nominations made by the Nominations Committee was posted.

4. Notice to Members of Nomination of Candidates: The Secretary of the Cooperative shall mail or cause to be mailed to the Members notice of the annual meeting of the Members of the Cooperative at least fifteen (15) days but not more than sixty (60) days before the date of said annual meeting a statement of the names, addresses, ages, and telephone numbers of all candidates nominated for election to the Board of Directors. Such statement shall identify the Directorate District to which such candidate may be elected, and such statement shall identify which candidates were nominated by the Nominations Committee and which candidates were nominated by petition filed by Members of the Cooperative.

VOTING AND ELECTION OUTLINE

Members may vote absentee at the cooperative's headquarters (525 US Route 40, Greenville) Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., August 28 - September 11.

Members may vote for board candidates during Southwestern Electric Cooperative's 88th Annual Meeting of Members, Saturday, September 12, at The American Farm Heritage Museum in Greenville.

Members elected to the board begin serving a three-year term September 12, 2026. Their term ends on the date of the 2029 annual meeting.

Election results are published in the October issue of The Southwestern. A summary of the annual meeting appears in either the October or November issue.

Building a grain bin?

Call us first!

**PLANNING TODAY
COULD SAVE LIVES
TOMORROW**

While safety is usually a matter of being in tune with your environment at any given moment, there are instances when forethought on your part can prevent accidents for years to come. Grain bin construction is

Left: Clearance envelope for grain bins filled by portable augers, conveyors, or elevators, as printed on page 128 of the 2023 edition of the National Electrical Safety Code. Appears courtesy of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, Inc.

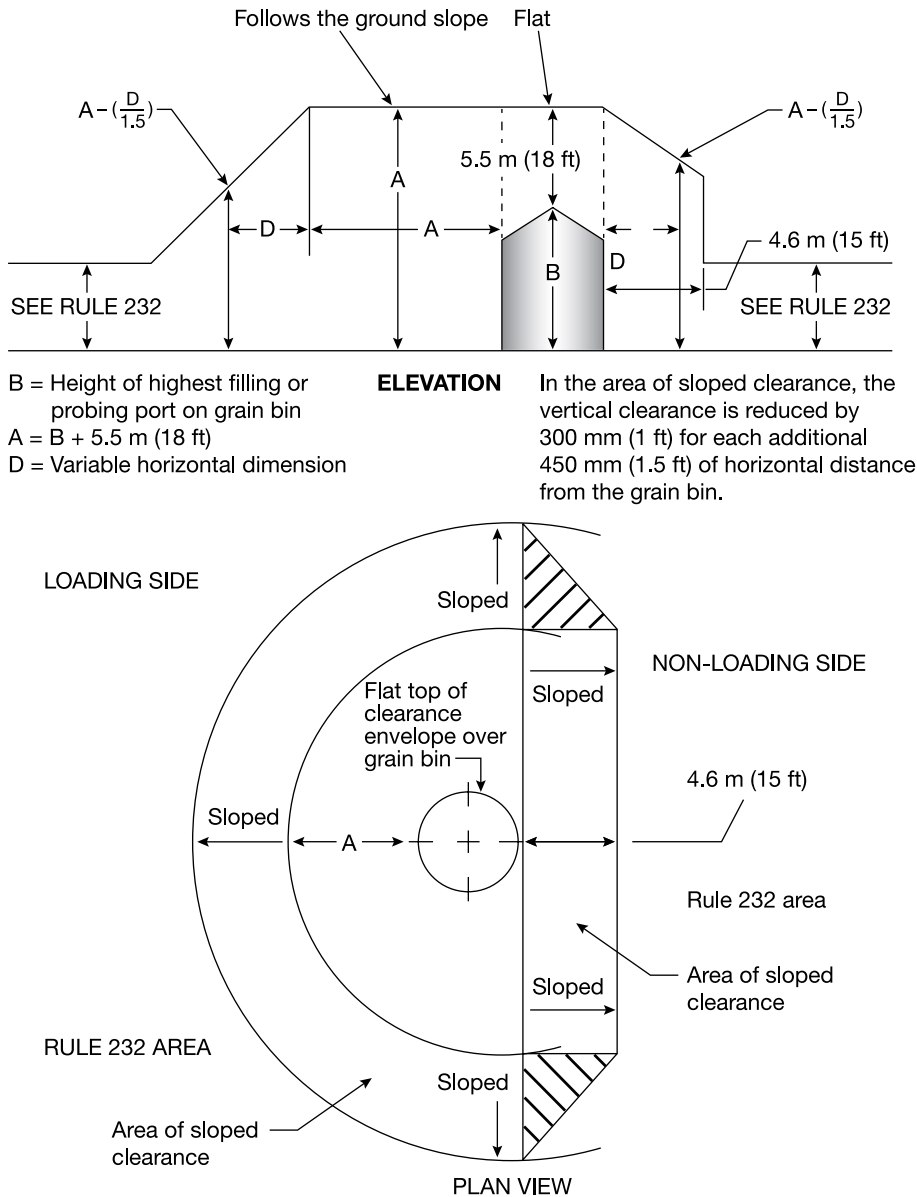
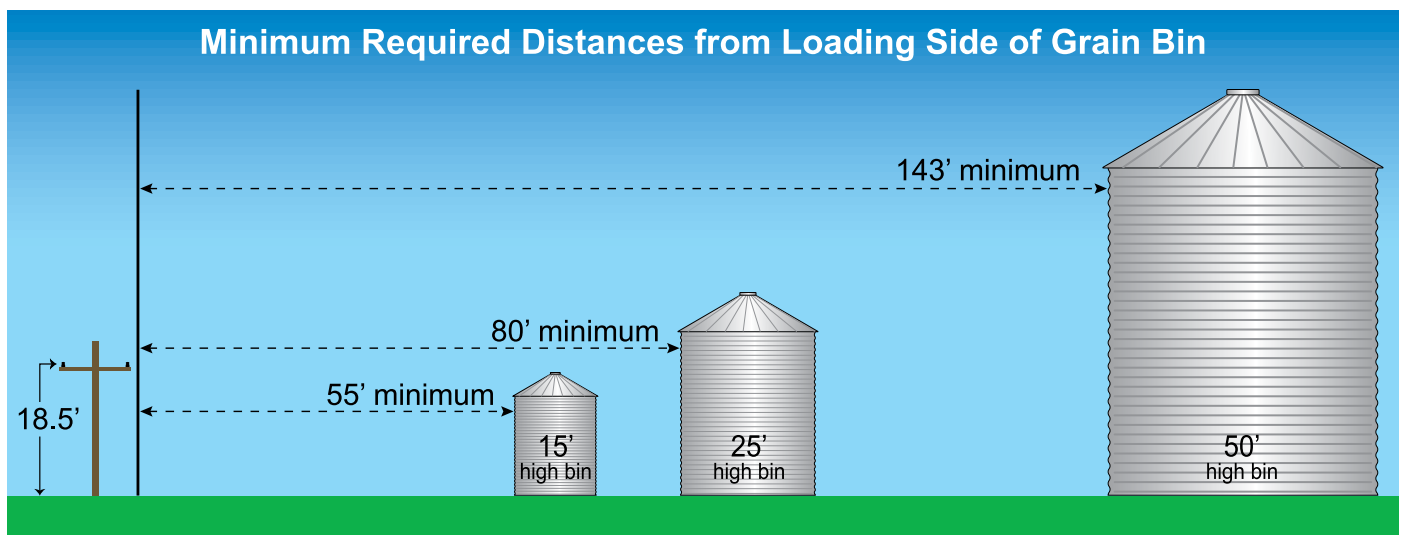


Figure 234-4(b)—Clearance envelope for grain bins filled by portable augers, conveyors, or elevators



a perfect example. Just as you'd survey a new field before planting, you should also take a minute to survey your grain bin site.

First, look up. Are there power lines nearby? They don't have to be directly overhead to pose a problem. Plot the movement of your equipment around the field. How many times do you pass near or beneath power lines? Can you re-route traffic in ways that will keep you farther from them?

Perhaps you know precisely where the lines are and always use extreme caution when working near them. But what about the people who work with you? Are they just as diligent? Will a distraction or lapse in judgment place them in danger of electrocution?

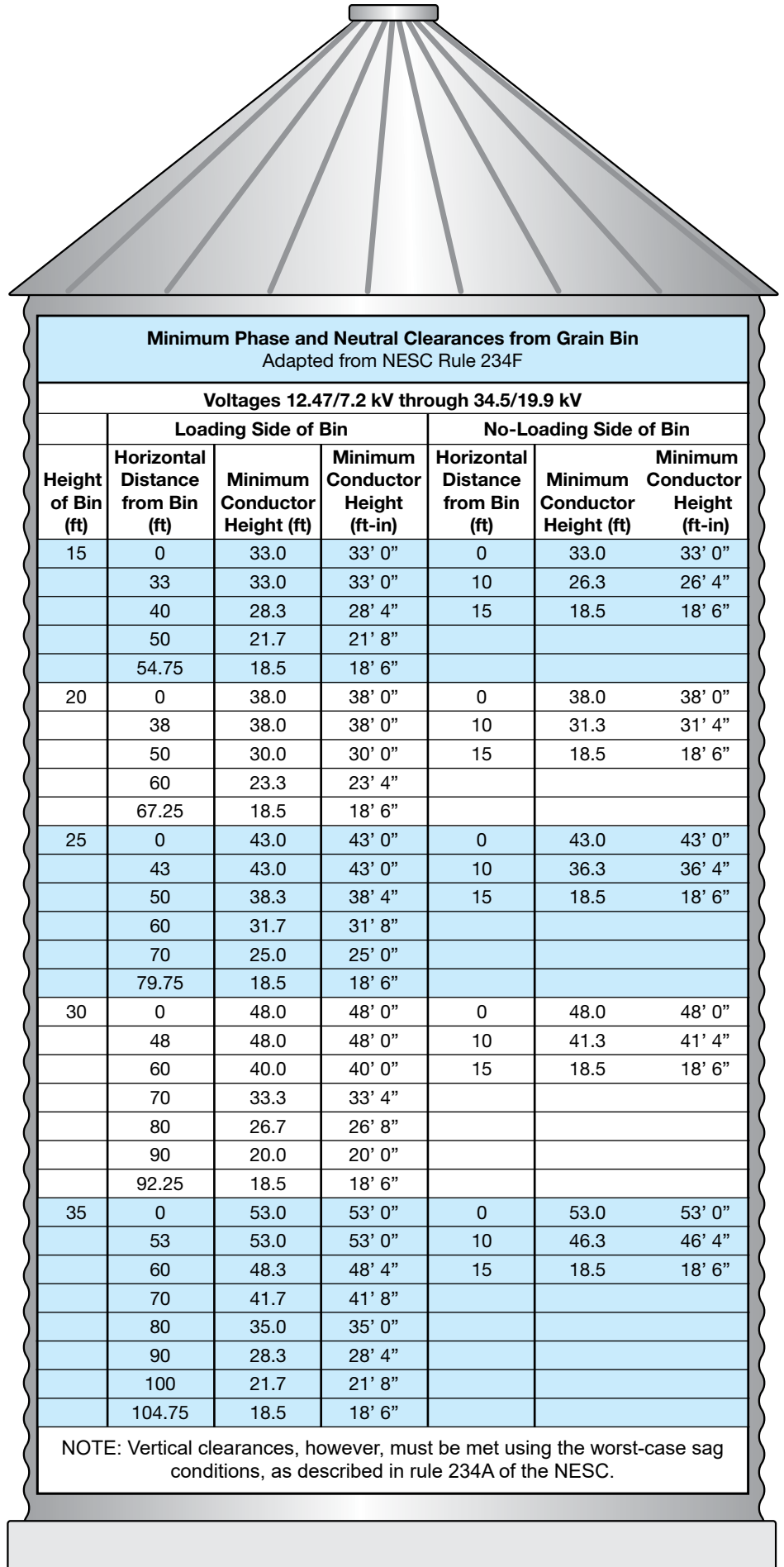
You can cut down on the danger significantly by building your bin far from power lines.

How far is far enough?

We've included diagrams and a table that illustrate requirements established by the National Electrical Safety Code (NESC). Keep these distances in mind when you search for a bin site, and then call Southwestern Electric Cooperative. We'll send a staking engineer to survey your site. It's the best way to make sure your bin will meet NESC guidelines.

While safety is certainly your first concern, there are also financial penalties for violating the NESC. If grain bins are constructed too close to power lines, Southwestern Electric is obligated to alter the path of the electrical system and bring the site into compliance. The member who violated the code by constructing the bin too close to a line is liable for the cost. In other words, if you build a bin too close to a power line, you'll have to pay the cost of relocating our facilities.

The easiest way to avoid such a problem is to call Southwestern Electric Cooperative before building. Our staking engineers will be happy to visit your site and help you plot a safe and efficient solution. For assistance, please call 800-637-8667 and ask for the engineering department.



Minimum Phase and Neutral Clearances from Grain Bin
Adapted from NESC Rule 234F

Voltages 12.47/7.2 kV through 34.5/19.9 kV

Height of Bin (ft)	Loading Side of Bin			No-Loading Side of Bin		
	Horizontal Distance from Bin (ft)	Minimum Conductor Height (ft)	Minimum Conductor Height (ft-in)	Horizontal Distance from Bin (ft)	Minimum Conductor Height (ft)	Minimum Conductor Height (ft-in)
15	0	33.0	33' 0"	0	33.0	33' 0"
	33	33.0	33' 0"	10	26.3	26' 4"
	40	28.3	28' 4"	15	18.5	18' 6"
	50	21.7	21' 8"			
	54.75	18.5	18' 6"			
20	0	38.0	38' 0"	0	38.0	38' 0"
	38	38.0	38' 0"	10	31.3	31' 4"
	50	30.0	30' 0"	15	18.5	18' 6"
	60	23.3	23' 4"			
	67.25	18.5	18' 6"			
25	0	43.0	43' 0"	0	43.0	43' 0"
	43	43.0	43' 0"	10	36.3	36' 4"
	50	38.3	38' 4"	15	18.5	18' 6"
	60	31.7	31' 8"			
	70	25.0	25' 0"			
	79.75	18.5	18' 6"			
30	0	48.0	48' 0"	0	48.0	48' 0"
	48	48.0	48' 0"	10	41.3	41' 4"
	60	40.0	40' 0"	15	18.5	18' 6"
	70	33.3	33' 4"			
	80	26.7	26' 8"			
	90	20.0	20' 0"			
	92.25	18.5	18' 6"			
35	0	53.0	53' 0"	0	53.0	53' 0"
	53	53.0	53' 0"	10	46.3	46' 4"
	60	48.3	48' 4"	15	18.5	18' 6"
	70	41.7	41' 8"			
	80	35.0	35' 0"			
	90	28.3	28' 4"			
	100	21.7	21' 8"			
104.75	18.5	18' 6"				

NOTE: Vertical clearances, however, must be met using the worst-case sag conditions, as described in rule 234A of the NESC.

CONSIDERING COGENERATION? CALL BEFORE YOU INSTALL

A new solar array won't pay for itself anytime soon. It may not deliver the rate of return you've seen in brochures. You'll still pay a monthly bill.

Members who fail to consult with Southwestern before they go solar may find they've invested tens of thousands of dollars in a disappointment. Before you sign the contract, get the full story.

by Julie Lowe, Energy Manager

The appeal of green energy — and solar power in particular — is clear. It's clean, quiet and renewable, and harnessing your own energy can cut dollars from your electric bill. The benefits of generating your own energy are significant — but the expenses and obligations are as well.

It is very important that we all work together — you, your chosen solar installer, and Southwestern Electric — to ensure that you are completely satisfied with your investment. Below are some of the key factors to consider *before* signing a contract with a solar installation company.

THINK AVOIDED COST, NOT NET METERING

We can't emphasize this point strongly enough: If you are considering installing solar, *call us first*. That call will help you make an informed decision about your solar project. We want you to understand how we meter and reimburse you for energy, so you will know what to expect on your first post-installation bill.

Many solar companies are used to working with investor-owned utilities who may use net metering. Ameren is an investor-owned utility that offered net metering through 2024; customers who installed solar prior to January 1, 2025 are grandfathered in to net metering while customers who installed solar after

January 1, 2025 will receive supply-only credits rather than full retail.

Southwestern Electric, like many cooperatives, doesn't use net metering to calculate cogeneration reimbursement. Your co-op calculates reimbursement based on *avoided cost* — the cost Southwestern Electric avoids paying for wholesale energy supplied by its primary power provider.

When you install a cogeneration system, we'll equip your home or business with a dual-register meter. As the name suggests, the meter is equipped with two registers. One register tracks the kilowatt-hours (kWh) you use from the grid. The other tracks the kWh your system overproduces and supplies to the grid.



We read both registers on the first day of the month. Kilowatt-hours you pull from the grid are calculated at our retail rate, which includes fees associated with moving energy across the grid and delivering it to your home or business.

Kilowatt-hours your system pushes to the grid are calculated at our avoided cost — \$0.0377 per kilowatt-hour.

We apply credit from your overproduction to your bill. If the dollar amount of your credit is greater than the dollar amount of your energy charge, we deposit the difference in your “cogen bank.” We’ll apply that credit to your bill in a future month.

Cogeneration credits expire April 30. Southwestern doesn’t issue checks for the energy you generate, so to get the greatest value from your system, you’ll want to design it with the energy needs of your home in mind.

BEFORE YOU SIGN

It’s important to understand the difference between net metering and reimbursement based on avoided cost, and to be certain your installer knows, so they

can accurately estimate your return on investment.

When you call, we’ll send you an information packet. The packet will explain how we meter and reimburse for energy, and information regarding your responsibilities as a cogeneration owner.

We’ll also include a list of local installers Southwestern members have used and recommend. While you aren’t limited to this list, you can be assured they’ll know how to figure your return on investment based on how we meter.

If you choose an installer not on this list, please make sure they’re aware of our interconnection policy so they can provide you with an accurate estimate, as well as meeting our technical requirements. Our interconnection policy and terms and conditions can be found at www.sweci.com/solar-energy.

HOW MUCH WILL MY COGEN SYSTEM COST?

Expenses vary from one installation to the next. A system’s rating, manufacturer, the complexity of the installation, and contractor costs affect your overall

Continued on next page ▶

Due to recent changes to legislation, we’ve made changes to our interconnection policy and no longer require members with solar to carry a specific amount of liability coverage or to provide proof of coverage. We will require the installer to submit their certificate of insurance prior to scheduling interconnection. We encourage you to speak with your agent and verify that your coverage is sufficient.

► *Continued from page 11*

investment. Ask your installer about tax credits that may help you offset the cost of your system.

Keep in mind, each installer is unique. You can expect to see differences in the equipment they recommend, cost of labor, and project timelines. We recommend you get no less than three estimates for your project. Each estimate should be detailed and include an outline of your return on investment. Make sure the estimates for return on investment aren't based on net metering.

KNOW YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

In addition to the items we've already mentioned, the information packet we send will include our interconnection policy, and sample bills from accounts with solar projects. Please read these documents carefully and don't hesitate to contact us with any questions.

We'll also include a list of terms and conditions so you can easily see what you will be responsible for.

THE WRONG IDEA

Some misconceptions involving solar energy are as old as the sun. Others are more recent. Here are three ideas about solar energy that are more fiction than fact.

“Before you talk to an installer, call us. We'll give you a list of questions to ask before you invest. Those questions may save you a lot of disappointment — and a lot of money.”

— Julie Lowe, Energy Manager

I'll have power during an outage.

If you're connected to Southwestern's distribution system, your home remains part of, and is affected by, conditions on the grid. Which means you'll lose service during an outage — even if your array is producing power. The only exception to this would be if you have battery storage.

If I produce enough power I won't have a bill to pay. Regardless of how much power you produce, you'll get a bill from the cooperative to cover service charges and taxes.

Solar energy is free. Sunlight is free. Technology that converts it into a form your home can use, isn't. A cogeneration system is a significant investment. Solar energy is efficient — it isn't cheap. Be wary of any installer who says installation will cost you nothing. Ask a lot of questions. If the answers you get sound too good to be true, they probably are.

ILLINOIS SHINES

In recent years, solar installations in Southwestern Electric Cooperative's service area have been steady. Key incentives include federal tax credits and the Adjustable Block Program, now known as Illinois Shines.

Developed by the Illinois Power Agency and administered by Energy Solutions (a third-party program administrator), Illinois Shines was established by the Future Energy Jobs Act of 2018 to support the development of solar projects in Illinois. Illinois Shines buys solar renewable energy credits (SRECs) produced by solar photovoltaic systems. The dollar amount per SREC falls as program blocks fill.

Blocks are currently available for Program Year 2025-2026. You may purchase, install and finance solar projects and vendors may continue to submit applications. If blocks fill up, you will be put on a wait list. These applications will be first in line for review when capacity becomes available for Program Year 2026-2027.

You can learn more about Illinois Shines at www.illinoisshines.com.


To search for installers certified by the Illinois Commerce Commission, go to www.icc.illinois.gov/public-utility.

ASK QUESTIONS

At Southwestern Electric, we hear solar terms used every day. Most installers are well-versed in technical language and often use it when presenting information to interested consumers. It's easy for people in our field to think of industry-specific language as something everyone is familiar with — but this likely isn't the case. If we're using terms that are unfamiliar or unclear to you, ask us to define those terms or explain the point we're making in another way.

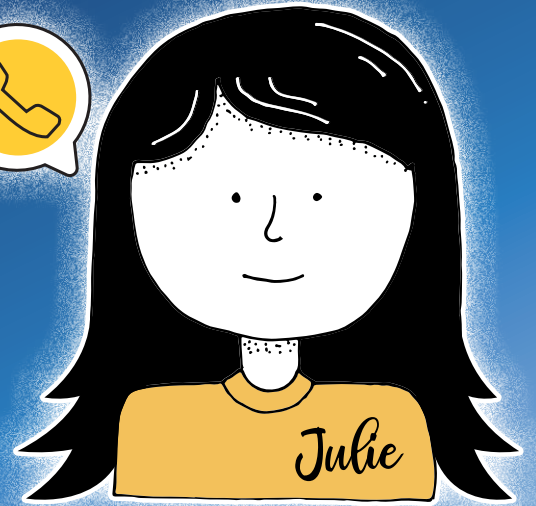
Write a list of questions. Spend some time working on your list. Have it in hand when you're gathering estimates. Your list may include questions like:

- How will the installer determine which size of system will be best for you?
- Is battery storage a good option for you? Why or why not?
- Based on your bills, how long will it take for your system to pay for itself?
- Are their return-on-investment projections based on Southwestern's avoided cost, as they should be, or did they mistakenly calculate your savings based on net metering?

Your list should help to ensure you know exactly what to expect from your installation. Which brings me back to my first point: If you're considering solar, make Southwestern Electric your first call. I'll be happy to help you create a list of questions to ask the installers you contact, and I'll explain our approach to metering and the co-op's safety requirements. You can reach me at 800-637-8667 or julie.lowe@sweci.com. I look forward to hearing from you. 

As Southwestern Electric's energy manager, Julie Lowe coordinates a variety of member-oriented programs involving cogeneration and solar energy, electric vehicles, home and commercial EV chargers, and Southwestern Electric Cooperative's energy efficiency rebate program. You can speak with Julie by calling 800-637-8667 or email her at julie.lowe@sweci.com.

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 to send a one-line diagram and certificate of insurance. Speak with your insurance agent to confirm you have appropriate coverage. 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 Every three years, we'll visit your system to confirm it's connected properly, well-maintained, and that your safety signs are in place.

Insulation Information

Ensuring your home is properly insulated can improve energy efficiency – and comfort

Spring is a time of transition – and that includes for your home.

If you're thinking about home improvement projects in the near future, consider replacing old insulation or adding new insulation if your home is older and isn't fully insulated already. While it's out of sight, insulation may not remain out of mind on hot summer days or cold winter nights.

That's because insulation acts as a protective layer that reduces heat gain during summer months and reduces heat loss during winter months. The most common areas to insulate are attics, ceilings, crawlspaces or unconditioned basements, exterior and interior walls, floors, and ductwork located in unconditioned spaces.

Many older homes have less insulation than newer homes, but even newer homes can benefit from additional insulation. While it's not the least expensive efficiency improvement, adding insulation and air sealing your home can provide the biggest bang for

your buck in energy savings and overall comfort.

The amount and effectiveness rating of insulation required for each area varies, but the Department of Energy has an easy-to-use chart that outlines recommended R-values for specific areas of the home based on climate zones. R-value is a measure of thermal resistance; the higher the R-value, the greater the insulating effectiveness. The R-value you'll need depends on several factors, including type of heating and cooling system and which area of the home you plan to insulate. Visit energy.gov/insulation to learn more.

Insulation is offered in a wide range of materials from bulky fiberglass rolls to cellulose materials made from recycled paper products. If you're considering installing additional insulation, talk to an expert who can offer guidance on the right materials for your budget, climate and comfort needs.

Investing in proper insulation for your home not only enhances comfort but also reduces energy consumption.

AIR LEAK OFFENDERS

Sealing attic air leaks will improve the performance of your insulation and make your home more comfortable. Some of the most common areas for household air leaks include:

- Doors and Windows
- Spaces Behind Kneewalls
- Attic Hatches
- Wiring Penetration Points
- Vents, Ducts and Flues
- Basement Rim Joists

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- Gather your tools and materials in an easily accessible area to limit trips in and out of your attic.
- Illuminate your work area.
- Wear knee pads, gloves, disposable coveralls and a hat to protect yourself.
- Wear an OSHA-approved respirator or dust mask to protect airways and lungs.
- As you work, watch your footing. Use joists for support and test your steps before transferring your weight.

MIX OR MATCH

When you're adding insulation to your attic, you don't have to match your choice of materials to the existing insulation. For instance, you can add loose-fill insulation over the top of blanket insulation or vice-versa.

R-VALUE

The material your current insulation is made of, as well as its thickness and density, factor into the R-value, which is a measure of thermal resistance. High R-values translate into higher insulating effectiveness.

Don't Waste. Insulate!



Properly insulating your home reduces heating and cooling costs, and improves comfort. R-values measure a material's resistance to conductive heat flow. The higher the R-value rating, the greater the effectiveness of the insulation. Below are recommended R-values for areas of the home that should be insulated.

**Recommendations on R-values are subject to regional climate conditions.*

Source: U.S. Dept. of Energy



TYPES OF INSULATION

-  Batt
-  Foam
-  Blow-in

1

DUCTWORK

Whether it's made of metal or plastic (PVC), insulated ductwork protects your investment in conditioned air year-round. Minimal R-values of 4.3 are recommended for blanket-style wraps secured with tape. Insulated ductwork rated at R-6 is also available.

2

EXTERIOR WALLS

There are multiple options for insulating exterior walls. Rock wool or fiberglass batts of R-13 to R-20 value are preferred behind drywall, but each inch of blown-in polyurethane foam insulation provides an R-value of 3.9.

3

BENEATH LIVING SPACE

Whether your home has a full basement, a crawl space or an attached garage, having an insulation value of R-19 under the living space floor will help increase comfort year-round.

4

SLAB FOUNDATION

Properly installed foam boards around the exterior edge of the slab of an existing home can reduce heating bills by 10 percent or more.

KNOW WHAT'S BELOW

Call Before You Dig

From where you're standing, your yard may look peaceful — but there's a lot going on underfoot. Most utilities — Southwestern Electric included — deliver services underground. To avoid personal injury and damage to underground lines, state law requires you to contact Joint Utility Locating Information for Excavators (JULIE), Inc., before any digging project, regardless of the project size or depth.

You can call JULIE at 8-1-1 or enter your locate request at illinois1call.com. Both the call and JULIE's services are free.

When homeowners inadvertently cut or damage lines during routine projects, the results can take a staggering toll in terms of costly delays, environmental or property damage, liability, personal injury and loss of life.

All digging projects — from relatively small tasks like planting a tree or shrub to more complex projects like installing a deck, fence or home addition — require a call.

Any number of utility lines may rest where you intend to dig. What appears to be the perfect place to plant a shrub or set a post may be home to water, electric, gas or sewer lines.

When you call 8-1-1, you'll speak with a JULIE call center agent. The agent records the location and description of your project site, and notifies affected member-utility owners and operators. The utilities send a professional locator (JULIE personnel do not perform locating or marking services) to mark the approximate location of their underground utility lines with small flags or paint.

JULIE's call center agents are available to receive and process requests 24 hours a day, seven days a week at either 8-1-1 or (800) 892-0123. Homeowners can also submit locate requests online via E-Request, a free, web-based program, at www.illinois1call.com.

Projects that require notifying JULIE include, but are not limited to, planting trees, bushes or shrubs; putting up a fence or tent; installing a swing set, a mail box post or water feature such as a pool, pond or fountain; building a deck; or preparing a new garden or landscape area.

For a free copy of JULIE's Homeowner's Guide with information about the one-call process, visit www.illinois1call.com.

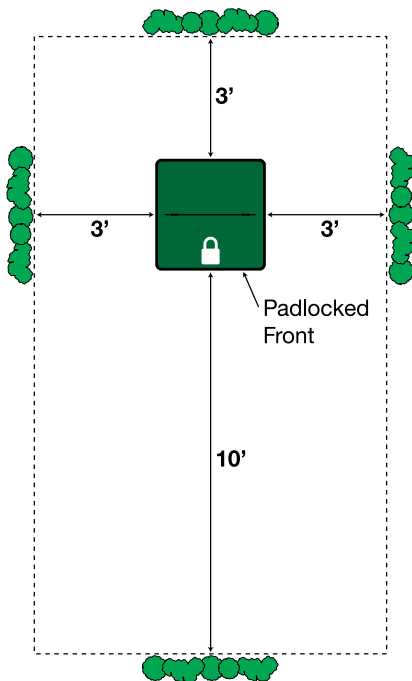
All digging projects — from relatively small tasks like planting a tree or shrub to more complex projects like installing a deck, fence or home addition — require a call.



BURY ME NOT

If there's a pad-mounted transformer in your yard, please don't bury it. It isn't dead. To the contrary, there are live electrical components inside the cabinet. Our crews need to work with those components now and then. By planting thorns around your transformer, or fencing it in, or burying it, you're making it more difficult to restore power to your neighbors and yourself during an outage. You're also compromising your safety and possibly the integrity of Southwestern Electric's distribution system.

A pad-mounted transformer isn't the most attractive feature in your yard, but it is one of the most useful items on your property. Please help us maintain it by following the guidelines we've provided here.



FIVE STEPS TO SAFETY

There are five important steps to every safe excavation project

1. Identify your dig area.
2. Submit a request.
3. Wait for the paint or flags.
4. Respect the markings.
5. Dig with care.

COUNTRY ROADS, TAKE ME HOME

ROUTE 66 AND ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES HAVE A LOT IN COMMON

Story by Nathan Grimm | Photos by Mike Barns

It's said that electric cooperatives helped democratize the American dream for rural communities.

By making access to electricity more attainable, cooperatives helped ensure rural Americans had the same opportunities for upward mobility as those in bigger cities and more populated areas. President Franklin D. Roosevelt once said the “forward march of electric cooperatives has an even more profound significance in terms of our fight to preserve democracy.”

The same can be said for U.S. Route 66. While rural electrification paved metaphorical roads for cooperative members, Route 66 quite literally paved the way for those in remote towns and villages across the western part of America to reach destinations never before dared to be imagined.

The Mother Road, as John Steinbeck dubbed it in “The Grapes of Wrath,” is celebrating a milestone birthday in 2026. The road, which spans from Chicago to Santa Monica, California, turns 100 this year.





Locally, many communities are touched by the road in one way or another. Cities located along the 301-mile stretch of Route 66 in Illinois include Carlinville, Hamel and Staunton, to name a few. In Girard, Doc's Just Off 66—formerly Doc's Soda Fountain—harkens back to life in the early days of the road, and Litchfield's Ariston Café is the longest-operating restaurant along the route's entire 2,448 miles.

Edwardsville's West End Service Station has had a few different lives since its inception in 1927—including

most recently as a dentist's office—but in 2022 the city of Edwardsville partnered with the Great Rivers and Routes Tourism Bureau to purchase and restore the landmark to its original glory. In June 2023, the service station reopened not as a fueling center but as a Route 66 interpretive center, taking visitors on a journey through the decades as the Mother Road and the city grew and changed with time.

Whether this week, this month or this year, make it a goal to celebrate a century with the widely celebrated road. Maybe that's a visit to a landmark like Soulsby's Route 66 Shell Service Station in Mt. Olive or the World's Largest Catsup Bottle in Collinsville. Perhaps it's driving a stretch of the route through the rural towns that make up the country's heartland. Or, if you're truly enterprising, endeavor to complete the whole route, stopping frequently to appreciate the 100 years of history surrounding you.

Ambitious? Sure. If electric cooperatives and Route 66 have taught us anything, though, it's that it's alright to dream big.

Continued on page 26 ▶



West End Service Station volunteer Richard Schlesinger shows off what he says is his favorite artifact in the service station, a World War II-era license plate made of soybean fiber as a way to conserve metal for the war efforts.

WHO • WHAT • WHERE

For years, this space—like so many others in the magazine—belonged to The Southwestern Editor Joe Richardson.

Well, not entirely. The space truly belongs to the readers whose contributions make it what it is. But the curation of Who~What~Where, the engine that made the whole thing go? That was all Joe.

Unfortunately for fans of this column, the March issue of The Southwestern

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.

was Joe's last. He's on to a new adventure, in search of people, places and things not yet featured in these pages. Who~What~Where lost its engine.

That's not unlike our March puzzle. Reader Jerry Horstmann of Maryville recognized the Louisville and Nashville Railroad depot and train car in the photo and correctly placed them in Mascoutah's Scheve Park. Frozen in time—and quite literally frozen, as evidenced by the snowy scene in that photo—they, too, are without a locomotive, an engine to keep them moving forward.

Railroad depots weren't just for departures, though. Just as surely as one train left, another arrived, bringing with it a new load of passengers with their own stories and perspectives and ideas. That didn't make the previous stories and perspectives and ideas any less cherished, only departed. In the same way, Joe's impact on Who~What~Where, on The Southwestern, and on Southwestern Electric Cooperative as a whole will live on.

"Our life is a constant journey, from birth to death," the author Paulo Coelho

wrote. "The landscape changes, the people change, our needs change, but the train keeps moving. Life is the train, not the station."

As the Who~What~Where train rolls on, new engine and all, our April mystery person brings with him thoughts of warmer weather. Can you name him?

Meanwhile, here's what Jerry had to say about our March puzzle.

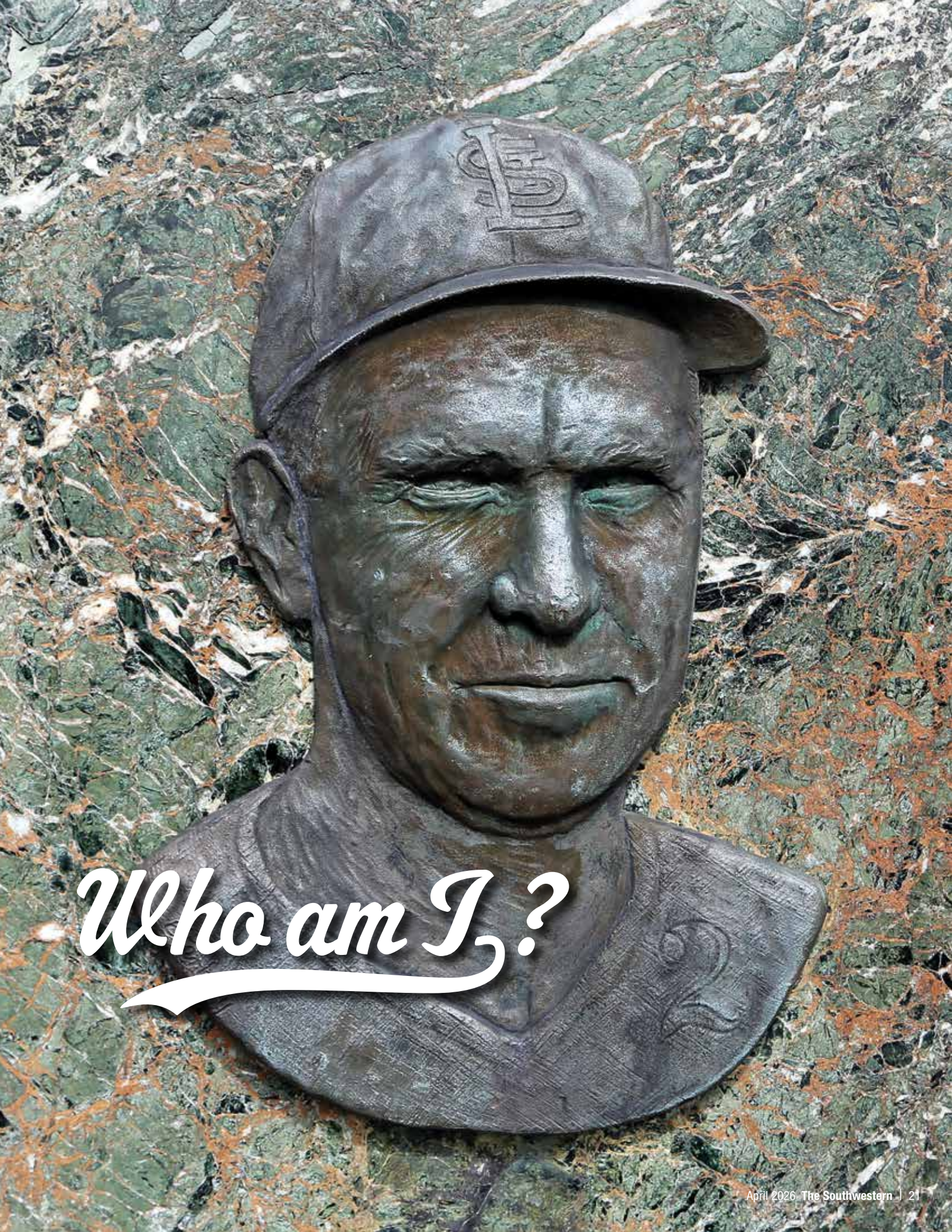
The picture in this month's Southwestern is the depot and caboose in Scheve Park in Mascoutah, Illinois.

The depot was located at the south edge of Mascoutah owned by the Southern Railroad. In 1975, the city purchased it from the railroad for \$1. They then moved it to Scheve Park and restored it to be used for various functions during the yearly homecoming and festivals.

Since then, they have added the caboose and train car. Scheve park is named in honor of the Scheve family, who were long time residents and contributors.

—*Jerry Horstmann, Maryville*

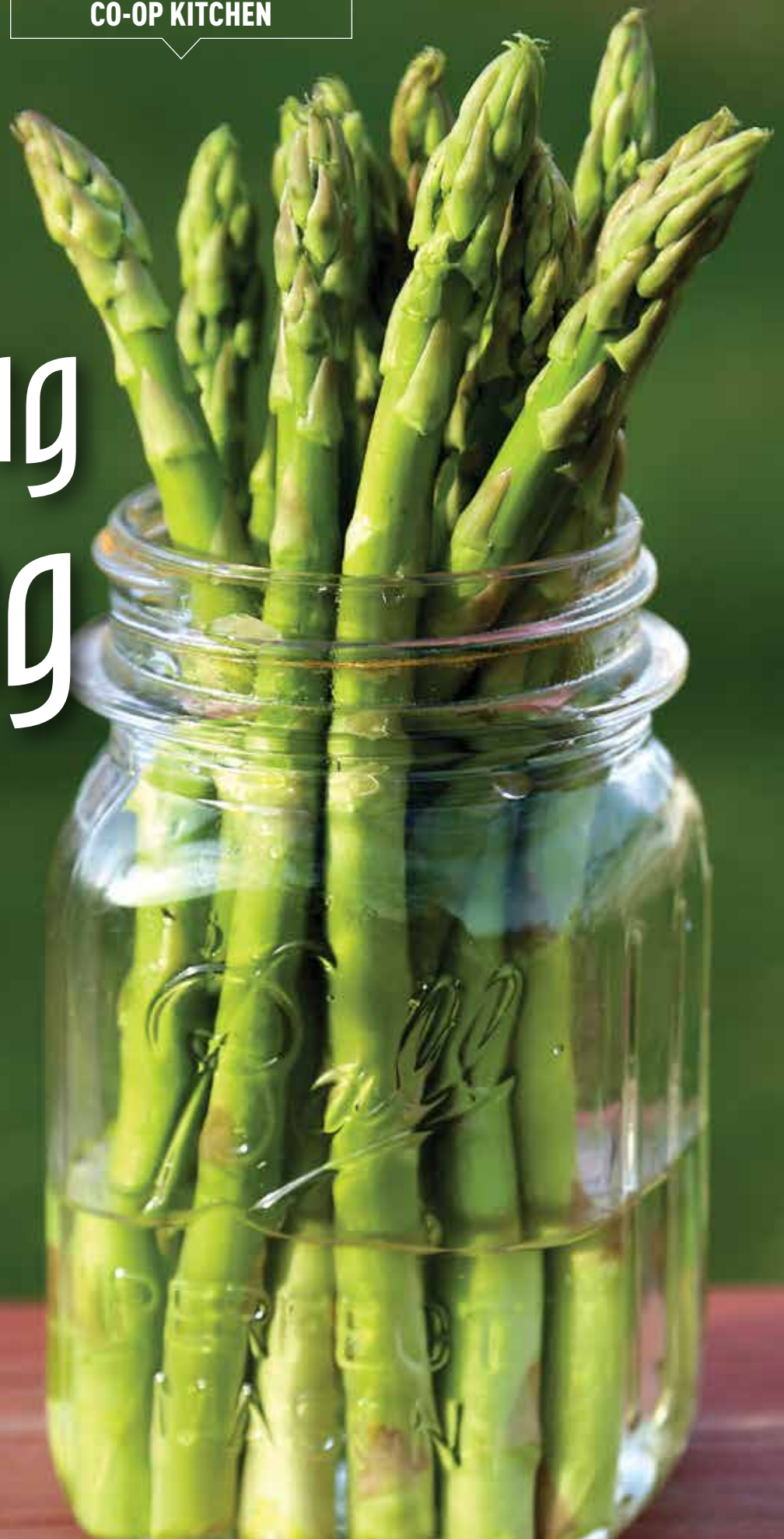




Who am I?

CO-OP KITCHEN

Stalking Spring



GRILLED ASPARAGUS

Ingredients

- 1 bunch (about 1 pound) asparagus spears trimmed
- 2 teaspoons extra virgin olive oil
- salt and pepper to taste

Dressing Ingredients

- 1 teaspoon orange zest slivered or grated
- 1/3 cup orange juice
- 3 tablespoons lime juice
- 1 tablespoon red onion minced
- 1 large garlic clove minced
- 2 teaspoons Dijon mustard
- 1 generous pinch ground cumin
- 1/2 cup olive oil
- salt and pepper to taste

Dressing Directions

1. Whisk together the orange zest, orange juice, lime juice, onion, garlic, mustard, and cumin.
2. Slowly whisk in olive oil.
3. Season with salt and pepper.

Directions

1. Lay asparagus in a single layer on a baking sheet, drizzle with olive oil, season with salt and pepper, and roll spears to coat.
2. Grill asparagus over medium heat about 5-8 minutes depending on thickness, turning at least once, until lightly browned (do not overcook).
3. Place asparagus in serving platter.
4. Drizzle dressing over asparagus to your liking and serve warm.
5. Remainder of dressing can be refrigerated for future use.

ASPARAGUS TOPPING

Ingredients

- 1/2 cup heavy cream
- 2 teaspoons brown mustard
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1/4 cup slivered almonds

Directions

1. Mix heavy cream, brown mustard, and lemon juice together.
2. Pour over cooked asparagus, and sprinkle with slivered almonds.

ASPARAGUS OVEN BAKE

Ingredients

- 1 can asparagus drained
- 1 cup cracker crumbs
- 2 tablespoons melted butter
- 1 cup cream
- 1 can mushroom soup
- 1 cup shredded cheese
- 1 cup Rice Krispies

Directions

1. Place asparagus in a greased 8 x 8 inch baking dish.
2. Mix the cracker crumbs with melted butter and pour over asparagus.
3. Pour on the cream and bake at 350° for 20 minutes.
4. Heat the soup and cheese together and pour over asparagus when it is taken out of oven.
5. Top with Rice Krispies and enjoy.

PARMESAN ROASTED ASPARAGUS

Ingredients

- 1 pound fresh asparagus
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1/3 cup Parmesan cheese
- 1 teaspoon lemon pepper

Directions

1. Cut off tough ends of asparagus and place stalks in baking dish.
2. Drizzle with olive oil and sprinkle with Parmesan cheese and lemon pepper.
3. Toss with fingers to coat.
4. Bake at 350° until tender, stirring occasionally.

HAWAIIAN ASPARAGUS

Vegetable Ingredients

- 2-4 tablespoons cooking oil
- 3 cups fresh asparagus cut into 1 inch pieces
- 1 cup onions wedged and separated into strips
- 4 ounces cashews

Vegetable Directions

1. Bring oil to medium heat in large frying pan.
2. Add asparagus and onions and stir fry quickly until they are tender crisp (about 3 minutes).
3. Stir in cashews.
4. Pour warm sauce over vegetables and serve.

Sauce Ingredients

- 1 (15 ounce) can unsweetened pineapple chunks, drained (keep juice)
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 2 teaspoons cornstarch
- 1 pinch of salt
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice

Sauce Directions

1. Combine pineapple juice, sugar, and salt.
2. Cook over medium heat, stirring until sauce thickens.
3. Stir in pineapple chunks and lemon juice, cover, and keep warm.

Photographed by Mike Barns, mike.barns@sweci.com

CURRENT EVENTS

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. Wednesdays from 6 - 8 p.m. Class size is limited. For ages 14+. Highland Middle School, 2813 IL-160. Email burns-kathy1@gmail.com for questions or visit highlandartscouncil.org for easy sign-up.

April 1 - November 8 1926 EXHIBIT, Edwardsville. Take a trip back to 1926. It was this year that Route 66 debuted in the U.S., connecting travelers from Chicago to Los Angeles, including a path through Edwardsville. In honor of Route 66's centennial, this exhibit takes a look at the news, fashions, sports and happenings of 1926 in Edwardsville. Wednesday - Sunday. 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Admission is free. West End Service Station, 620 St. Louis Street. Visit cityofedwardsville.com/749/west-end-service-station.

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 and \$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 lakesarad-amrun.com.

April 9 FROG WALK, Edwardsville. Join the Heartlands Conservancy team at Poag Sand Prairie. Learn about early spring frogs in southwestern Illinois in this easy, family-friendly walk. Learn to identify certain frog calls and see if you can find any frogs as we walk. This event will be outdoors during the evening (when the frogs call) rain or shine. Please dress appropriately for weather conditions and wear comfortable walking shoes. Flashlights or headlamps are highly recommended. Registration is required for this free event. Poag Sand Prairie, 4836 Street Car Road. To register, visit heartlandsconservancy.org/event/frog-walk-at-poag-sand-prairie/.

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 givebut-ter.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 12, 19; May 17 DEMOULIN MUSEUM CONCERT SERIES, Greenville. This year's free concert series includes bluegrass band Number 9 Coal April 12, singer Lauren Ash April 19 and blues musicians Jeff Chapman and Travis Ried May 17. The DeMoulin Museum is located at 205 South Prairie Street. Visit demoulinmuseum.org.

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 18 COLOR, COURAGE & CHANGE 5K AND FUN RUN, Salem. This 5K is open to all ages and abilities, whether you walk, jog, run, push a stroller, or cheer from the sidelines. Participants will be showered in vibrant color along the route as we celebrate courage, heal-

ing, and community connection. The competitive race will begin at 9 a.m., followed by the non-competitive walk/run at 9:05 a.m., allowing everyone to participate at their own pace. The event kicks off with the run and continues with a full day of activities, including kids corner and family resource area, music and entertainment, touch-a-truck, local vendors and food trucks, guest speaker(s), community organizations and resources. Proceeds from this event help support free, confidential services for survivors of sexual violence, including advocacy, counseling, and prevention education. Bryan Memorial Park, 925 North Broadway Avenue. To register, visit runsignup.com/Race/IL/Salem/ColorCourageChange5KAndFunRun.

April 18 MOVIE NIGHT: THE HOBBIT (1977), Godfrey. This year marks the 25th anniversary of the release of Peter Jackson's "Lord of the Rings" trilogy. Therefore, we will celebrate by watching various movies set in J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle Earth on our giant inflatable screen. Bring your own seating (lawn chairs or blankets), as well as your own snacks. No alcohol is permitted. No pre-registration required. While this event is free, donations are welcome. Limited parking is available, so arrive early. 8:30 - 10:30 p.m. The Nature Institute, 2213 South Levis Lane. Visit thenatureinstitute.org.

April 18 RIBBON CUTTING & GRAND OPENING DISC GOLF COURSE, Maryville. Short lessons on course and how to play the game. Also an inaugural tournament. Pleasant Ridge

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.

Park pavilion, 1345 Pleasant Ridge Road. 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Visit maryville.il.us/98/parks-recreation, email parksandrec@maryville-il.us or message us 618-223-8965.

April 18 SPRING EDIBLE AND MEDICINAL PLANTS Godfrey. Join Missouri Botanical Garden ethnobotanist Dr. Kate Farley for a springtime walk to learn about useful plants of the Midwest. We will talk about edible and medicinal plants that we find along the trail, including discussions of history and folklore. Plan for a gentle hike of up to two miles, with plenty of stops along the way. 10:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. Registration is required. \$15 per person, members receive a 15% discount. The Nature Institute, 2213 South Levis Lane. Visit thenatureinstitute.org.

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 innovative 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 cahokiamounds.org.

April 25 BABY SHOWER DONATION DRIVE, Dow. Celebrate the arrival of spring 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.

April 25 HOMEBREW FEST, Belleville. Try some of the most unique beers of the area from the fantastic pool of local home brewers. Your ticket gets you a custom tasting glass and access to a growing list of beers, ciders and mead. Noon - 4 p.m. Admission is \$30. Proceeds to benefit the Belleville

Area Humane Society. Shoe-horn Brewing, 225 East Main Street. Visit shoehornbrewing.com/events.

April 25 PIRATES AND OTHER SONGS OF THE SEA, Godfrey. Set sail with Alton Symphony Orchestra with a musical voyage that captures the mystery, majesty, and mischief of the sea. Featuring Debussy's "La Mer," Rimsky-Korsakov's "Scheherazade," and "Pirates of the Caribbean!" 7 p.m. Adult \$10; children under 18 years of age \$5. Lewis & Clark Community College, Ann Whitney Olin Theatr, Hatheway Cultural Center, 5800 Godfrey Road. For more information, visit altonsymphonyorchestra.org.

May 1 - June BARRY WALLACE ART EXHIBIT, Highland. Come see and enjoy the artwork of graphic designer Barry Wallace whose work includes detailed pencil drawings, giclee prints, and mixed media epoxy artwork. This small people friendly gallery features an original artist every two months. Work is not only on display, but is also for sale. Monday, Wednesday and Friday 9 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Tuesday and Thursday 9 a.m. - 8 p.m. Saturday 9 a.m. - 2:30 p.m. Promoted by the Highland Arts Council. Latzer Memorial Public Library, 1001 9th Street. Email burnskathy11@gmail.com for questions or visit highlandlibrary.org.

May 2 FISHING DERBY, Maryville. Registration starts at 9 a.m. with tournament from 9:30 - 11 a.m. Refreshments and prizes for the most and largest fish caught in various age categories. For 15 years of age and younger. 9 a.m. - noon. Drost Park pavilion #1, East Division Street. Visit maryville.il.us/98/parks-recreation, email parksandrec@maryville-il.us or message us 618-223-8965.

May 2 LAW DAY RUN, Belleville. 5K run/walk, 1K youth run and toddler trot. 9 - 11 a.m. Registration fees vary.

Proceeds benefit the Land of Lincoln Legal Assistance Foundation, Inc., and other legal aid organizations. Belleville Main Street, 113 East Main Street. For more information or to register, visit lawdayrun.com.

May 2 LOCUST STREET HISTORICAL FAIR, Centralia. Event will feature a classic car show, Antique Power Days tractor show, crafters and artisans, food vendors and children's activity area. 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. Historic Downtown Centralia, 100-200-300 Blocks of South Locust Street. Visit seecentralia.com/events/locust-street-historical-fair.

May 2 MAY MARKET, Lebanon. Over 80 booths to browse and shop, food vendors and quaint shops along Brick Street. Event will be held rain or shine. 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. Visit facebook.com/p/May-Market-Lebanon-100082906373849/

May 3 THE ST. LOUIS BRASS BAND WITH THE ST. LOUIS BRASS ACADEMY & YOUTH BRASS, Lebanon. You won't want to miss this afternoon of music featuring everything from standard brass band repertoire to lighter toe-tapping tunes and beautiful ballads. The STLBB, under the direction of Dr. John Bell, placed second in their section at the 2024 North American Brass Band Association Championships. The Academy Band, composed of high school students, is conducted by McKendree alum Bradley Eston '24. 3 p.m. Ticket fees vary. The Hett Center for the Arts, 400 North Alton Street. For tickets, visit thehett.com.

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**NEW MAP CELEBRATES
 ROUTE 66 IN ILLINOIS**

The Illinois Department of Transportation announced in mid-March the release of a new Illinois Route 66 Map in honor of the iconic road’s 100th birthday this year. The map takes a nostalgic look at America’s most famous highway and sights to see in Illinois, while providing a historical timeline of the route’s evolution and its cultural impact.

“The new Route 66 map is a must for enthusiasts and road trippers celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Mother Road,” said Illinois Transportation Secretary Gia Biagi. “You can get your kicks with a detailed overview of the highway that’s the best as it stretches across Illinois, highlighting towns large and small that are perfect for pit stops and Route 66’s legendary roadside attractions.”

With the centennial expected to unite preservationists, tourism leaders and enthusiasts from around the world, the map will provide a touchpoint in Illinois to help celebrate the past, with a look toward the next century of adventure on Route 66.

The map was developed in collaboration with the Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway.

“The last Illinois Route 66 paper map was created in 1998, so it’s incredibly exciting to see a new version celebrating



the Mother Road,” said Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway Executive Director Casey Claypool. “Route 66 has always been about Americana, nostalgia and the joy of the journey, so having something fresh that travelers can hold in their hands will spark curiosity and inspire road trips. We’re deeply grateful for the continued support from IDOT.”

The Illinois Route 66 Map is paid with funds from the Federal Highway Administration and published by IDOT on recycled paper. The map is printed with vegetable-based inks.

To request a map, complete the form at <https://idot.click/map-request> or email DOT.Maps@illinois.gov. Free copies also will be available at interstate rest areas.

GETTING THERE

The issue isn’t getting to the West End Service Station, located at 620 St. Louis Street in Edwardsville— it’s parking once you get there. At this time, there is no dedicated parking for the service station. Street parking is available in the area, and a public lot is located south of the station at the site of the Route 66 monument and Experience Hub. The service station does also offer a bike rack for those who care to travel on two wheels. The city and the tourism bureau ask that guests just be respectful of nearby businesses and residential property.





THE FINAL FRAME

The bulletin board of Member Services Representative Allissa Bohlen is littered with vibrant, eclectic stamps she's collected from members' mail over the past few years. Bohlen said the lengths to which some members went to find interesting—and exact—postage “tickled my brain,” leading her to begin cutting out and collecting her favorites. “I thought they were cool and colorful,” she said, “and someone put a lot of time and effort into gathering them.”

