

PowerLines

A monthly publication for member/owners of Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative

October 2014

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Give us your opinion for a chance to win a \$25 bill credit

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Providing value
for your
electric dollar

Did you know that Eastern Illini now has 56 employees, compared to a high of 69 in 1998? We've continued to control our costs by working smarter and utilizing technology to serve you better.

This is one more simple way that we are looking out for you!



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A Touchstone Energy[®] Cooperative 

Power of co-op membership

As we celebrate National Co-op Month, let's look at how we strive to exceed your expectations.

Ask yourself this - What does it mean to be a member/owner of Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative, a Touchstone Energy electric cooperative?

As a member/owner of Eastern Illini, you have the power, a voice and control in how your electric co-op is run; in what's best for the community; in the decisions that allow us to provide safe and reliable electricity for your home.

This October, we're celebrating National Cooperative Month (see the story on page 4) and we're recognizing the most important part of our co-op – you, our member/owners.

Membership represents a vested interest - everyone is more engaged and attentive to something they feel a responsibility for. We work hard to engage you every day. Whether it is an energy evaluation (which we offer at no charge to all member/owners) or simply a quick and professional response to a request, our mission is to take care of your needs the best we can.

When member/owners are engaged and informed they become advocates for their co-ops, not just consumers. We hope we are on that right track for you.

In today's world, electric co-ops are

doing more than just providing safe and reliable electricity with exceptional service.

Member/owners like you are the reason cooperatives exist. When

you embrace the idea that you have more than a passing interest in your co-op, and that you actually are the owners, with an ability to help guide it, that is the power of co-op membership.

The power of co-op membership is the cooperative difference, and our business 'bottom line' is your empowerment. Eastern Illini actively engages with the communities we serve. That's why last month we hosted a series of member appreciation events throughout our service territory. The events were a great way for us to hear from you directly.

The best part about being a member of a Touchstone Energy cooperative: It's your Touchstone Energy cooperative. Power to the people, for the people, from the people.

Please take a moment to fill out the short survey on page 6 of this newsletter. We appreciate your input and will use it to improve our service to you.

Sincerely,

Bob Hunzinger



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Weather stripping your home

Cold weather is on the way... make sure your home is ready.

Not only is it important to make sure that your heating unit is working properly as we head into the colder weather, but you should check your home to make sure that none of that heat is escaping.

When the weather turns colder, drafts around windows and doors are constantly letting in cool air. Most people will immediately want to raise their thermostat even higher; however, that will cause you to use more energy when you don't necessarily need to. The best solution may be to weather strip your home. This is typically an easy fix that will eliminate energy waste and help you save on your monthly utility bills.

Sometimes drafts are obvious, and other times the openings are much smaller. Here are two quick ways to

find out if heat is escaping from your home. For doors, look for daylight between the door and its frame, if you see even a hint of light in between the two, you need to weather strip that area. For windows, place a piece of paper between the sash and the seal then close it. If you can remove the piece of paper from the window without ripping it, you need to weather strip that area as well.

The great thing about this is that weather stripping is an easy solution! There is an assortment of materials available to you (like rubber, foam, metal, etc.) and they are all inexpensive.

Once you have purchased what you need, keep the following in mind before you begin weather stripping: be sure the surface is dry and clean, measure the area more than once for best accuracy, and apply so that strips compress both sides of the window or door.

Roughly half of the energy that your home uses comes from heating and cooling. So the next time you feel an uncomfortable draft in your home, do not immediately crank up the heat. Check to find out where the draft is coming from and properly weather strip the area.

To weather strip windows:

- Place the stripping between the frame and the sash.
- Be sure that it compresses when the window is shut.
- Check to make sure that the stripping does not interfere with the movement of the window.

To weather strip doors:

- Choose the proper sweeps and thresholds for your door.
- Weather-strip the entire door jamb.
- Make sure the stripping meets tightly.
- Use a thickness that allows for a tight press between the door and the ground.

WHAT WILL I NEED TO WEATHER STRIP DOORS AND WINDOWS?

There are a variety of materials available to weather strip your home. Here are a few options to help you choose:

**Apply weather stripping around the door frame and stop. At the bottom of a door, install a door sweep, door shoe or threshold; or apply reinforced-foam weather stripping. Apply weather stripping at the top and bottom of window sash.*

FELT

Reinforced with a flexible metal strip.

Should be stapled, glued or tacked into place.

Cost: Low

Advantages: Easy to install and inexpensive.

Disadvantages: Low durability. Do not use where exposed to a great deal of moisture. All-wool felt is more durable but very visible.

ROLLED OR REINFORCED VINYL

Pliable or rigid strip gasket (attached to wood or metal strips).

Cost: Low to moderate.

Advantages: Easy installation, various colors to help with visibility and some types of rigid strip gaskets provide slot holes for height adjustment.

Disadvantages: Can be difficult to install and very visible.

REINFORCED FOAM

Closed-cell foam attached to wood or metal strips.

Cost: Moderately low

Advantages: Effective sealer, rigid, proven to work well.

Disadvantages: Can be difficult to install and very visible.



Source: Department of Energy

*For more weather stripping options, visit <http://energy.gov/energysaver/articles/weatherstripping>

Teach your children electrical safety

Teaching children safe habits around electricity will help keep them safe for a lifetime.

Electricity is a dynamic power source. We live our lives surrounded by it, but sometimes we forget just how dangerous electricity can be.

Many home electrical fires, injuries and electrocutions can be prevented when we understand and practice electrical safety. This is especially true for our youngest co-op members.

But as your child's first and most important teacher, perhaps it's time to have a talk with your sons and daughters to reinforce those lessons. Start at an early age, teaching them about the physical dangers associated with electrical components and how to handle electrical plugs, outlets, switches and other devices.

Keep in mind, talking to your children about electrical safety should also include fun activities and facts about the basics—what is electricity, the need to respect its power and how to use it efficiently as they study, work and play.

As we all know, kids will be kids. Getting them to show interest in

some of these lessons won't be easy. Just remember that what your children learn from you today can be a lifesaver later when they encounter potential hazards like downed power lines in their path, play hide-and-seek behind those big metal electrical boxes in the neighborhood or are tempted to clamber up a utility pole.

Gather your youngsters around the kitchen table or on the front porch—some of the best teachable moments about electrical safety can happen in and around your home. Look around. There are plenty of opportunities to demonstrate safety that are as close as the electrical outlet on your living room wall. For example, show young children how plugs work, and let them know that even if they are curious about the slits of an electrical outlet, nothing else should be placed inside.

Each year about 2,400 children end up in the emergency room after suffering injuries caused by inserting objects—paper clips, pens, screws, nails, forks, hair pins, coins and more—into electrical receptacles. That's about seven children a day who sustain injuries ranging from electric shock to burns.

But this isn't the only electrical mishap that impacts youngsters. Our reliance on electronics and gadgets have left both youngsters and their parents at risk when they overcrowd electrical outlets, continue to use frayed

wires, place devices near liquids or leave electronics on for long periods of time.

Some of the same guidelines we offer to protect adults also help protect children. We should all set good examples for our youngsters.

Electrical safety programs

With our exciting, visually stimulating demonstrations, students will see – first hand – just how dangerous electricity can be, when it is not respected.

Led by Eastern Illini staff, these presentations last about 30-45 minutes, and are geared for grades 3 – 8.

The presentations are offered at no charge to area schools and community groups. Please call 800-824-5102 or email info@eiec.coop for more information.

Supplement your lessons at home with resources galore; including those provided by Eastern Illini.

The Electrical Safety Foundational International (www.esfi.org) is among the many national organizations offering free kits, videos and interactive online tools that make learning and practicing electrical safety fun for you and your children. And as they grow older, remember to keep teaching them about the power of electricity and how to use it safely.



Energy Efficiency

Tip of the Month

Fall is here, and that means colder months will be here before we know it. Is your home prepared for the drafts that may enter? Tight-fitting insulating drapes or shades are a perfect way to keep the heat in and the cold out.

Source: U.S. Department of Energy

Co-op principles in action

There are seven cooperative principles that give all co-ops guidance.

October is National Co-op Month. The time of year when the 29,000 plus co-ops in the U.S. take a few moments to ensure their employees, members and the general public truly understand the value of the cooperative business they own.

While we applaud any effort that brings more attention to co-ops, our feelings are best represented by a T-Shirt slogan, "October is Co-op Month - But I Cooperate All Year Long!"

Cooperatives around the world operate according to the same core principles and values, adopted by the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA). Cooperatives trace the roots of these principles to the first modern cooperative founded in Rochdale, England in 1844.

All cooperative businesses have at their foundation these seven cooperative principles to follow:

1. Voluntary and Open Membership
2. Democratic Member Control
3. Members' Economic Participation
4. Autonomy and Independence
5. Education, Training and Information
6. Cooperation Among Cooperatives
7. Concern for Community

One of the ways co-ops demonstrate that they are different from investor-owned businesses is by actually living the principles. Principle 6:

Cooperation Among Cooperatives, is our focus this month, and there are many examples that demonstrate how co-ops do this every day. In theory this sounds so simple, answering the question, "Can't we all just get along?" As it turns out, it's easier to get along when we focus on what our personal or organizational self-interest is - and find others who have a similar self-interest.

This is how Eastern Illini's two original co-ops got started. Rural residents realized they would be better off working together if they wanted to bring electricity to their community.

Once the co-op was established, we soon realized that if we work with our sister co-ops, we can gain control of our power supply, so we formed over 60 generation and transmission cooperatives across the nation, such as Prairie Power, Inc., our local generation and transmission cooperative.

This pattern kept repeating, and soon electric co-ops cooperated to

form new co-ops that offer a variety of services, such as financing, insurance, IT services and more to ensure that they had ownership and control over these core products. This was done to help serve you, our member/owners, by making sure there would be no interruption in these vital services that help us bring electricity to you.

This cooperation among cooperatives continues today, not only with co-ops directly related to the provision of electricity but in other sectors as well. Electric co-ops partner with credit unions, food co-ops, housing co-ops and others to help bring critical services to rural residents and businesses throughout the country. For instance, we've had the Common Ground Food Co-op, in Urbana, attend our annual meeting.

So while we take special note of the value of our cooperative in October, we are delighted to be a part of our community delivering vital services to you all year long.

OCTOBER IS NATIONAL CO-OP MONTH

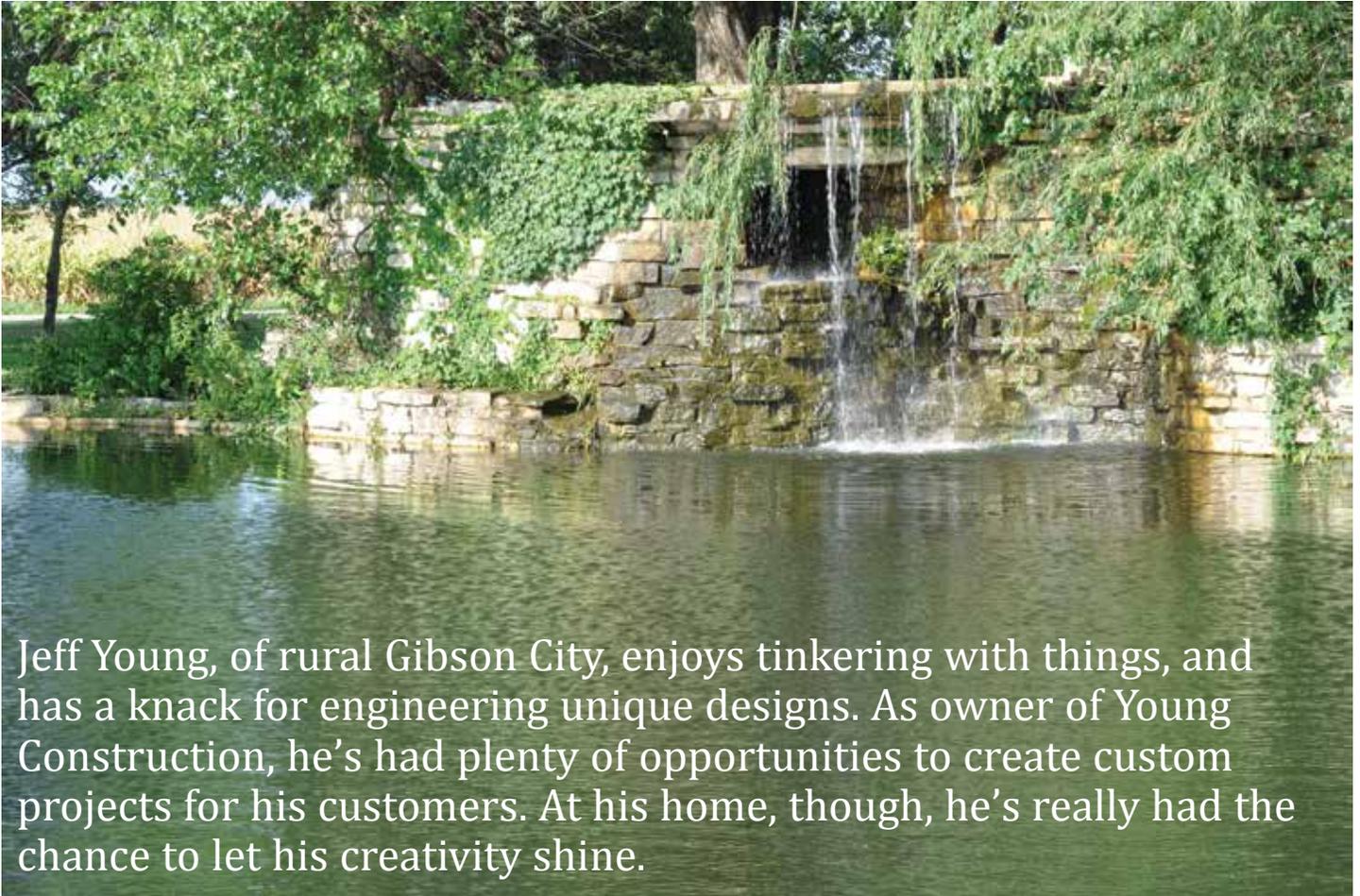
A graphic with a yellow background. At the top, the text "OCTOBER IS NATIONAL CO-OP MONTH" is written in bold, black, sans-serif font. Below the text is a grid of ten circular icons: a briefcase, a stack of books, three coins, a utility pole, a graduation cap, a sheaf of wheat, a money bag, a house, and a t-shirt. At the bottom left is the logo for America's Electric Cooperatives, which consists of a stylized sunburst icon and the text "America's Electric Cooperatives".

The **ELECTRIC CO-OP CONNECTION**

Discover the meaning of membership!

A graphic with a black background. At the top, the word "The" is in a white, cursive font, followed by "ELECTRIC CO-OP CONNECTION" in bold, white, sans-serif font. Below this is the text "Discover the meaning of membership!" in a smaller, white, sans-serif font. The background features a stylized illustration of power lines and utility poles in white and grey.

Member/owner spotlight



Jeff Young, of rural Gibson City, enjoys tinkering with things, and has a knack for engineering unique designs. As owner of Young Construction, he's had plenty of opportunities to create custom projects for his customers. At his home, though, he's really had the chance to let his creativity shine.

In 2000, Jeff and his wife, Kim, began construction on their dream home. Jeff noted "we had younger kids then, and so a pool was high on our list. It started fairly small, but my ideas kept growing, and so did the size of the pool." They ended up with a massive 12-foot deep oasis that includes a waterfall and a cliff-jumping area. The base of the pool is made from concrete.

When it came time to decide on the heating and cooling system for their new home, according to Jeff, the choice was easy. "When we looked at not only the up-front cost, but also the long-term operating costs, choosing a geothermal system made a lot of sense."

Since they already had the pool in the works, Jeff created a very unique open-loop geothermal system where the required water would be pumped in from a well, then put through the geothermal system, and then sent, via a man-made creek, to the pool. That also helped to heat the pool. "It really came together nicely. We needed warmer pool water, and we needed to have an output for the geothermal system water," Jeff said.

Once their kids grew up, they decided to convert the pool into a concrete pond. While it still gets used for swimming sometimes, it is now stocked with fish.

To find out more about Young Construction and the unique projects Jeff can do for you, please contact him at 217-369-8314.

Fill out our survey for a chance at \$25

Please take a few minutes to fill out this short survey. Answer the following questions, then simply mail it to us along with your electric bill payment. You can also fax the completed survey to 217-379-2936 or fill it out on our website: www.eiec.coop.

All submitted surveys will be eligible to receive one of 10 \$25 bill credits!

Please rate your satisfaction with Eastern Illini on each of the following:

	not at all satisfied								very satisfied	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Providing excellent customer service	<input type="radio"/>									
Ability to resolve issues or problems	<input type="radio"/>									
Conducting business in a professional manner	<input type="radio"/>									
Friendly and courteous employees	<input type="radio"/>									
Knowledgeable and competent employees	<input type="radio"/>									
Charging reasonable rates	<input type="radio"/>									
Providing valuable programs and services	<input type="radio"/>									
Delivering good value for the money	<input type="radio"/>									
Community involvement and support	<input type="radio"/>									
Providing information about energy efficiency	<input type="radio"/>									
Supporting renewable energy	<input type="radio"/>									
Having a minimum of outages	<input type="radio"/>									
Restoring power quickly after an outage	<input type="radio"/>									

For the following four questions, please rate your answers based on a scale of 1 to 10.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Considering all your experiences, how satisfied overall are you with Eastern Illini?

not at all satisfied very satisfied

To what extent has Eastern Illini fallen short of or exceeded your expectations?

falls short exceeds

Imagine an ideal utility company. How well do you think Eastern Illini compares?

not very close very close

If you could choose your electric company, how likely is it that you would choose Eastern Illini again?

very unlikely very likely

How do you view your relationship with Eastern Illini?

I'm a member I'm a member/owner I'm an owner I'm a customer

We recently released SmartHub, which is an online and/or smartphone portal to your account information. With it, you can view and pay your bill, see graphical kWh use history, and more.

Have you heard of SmartHub? Yes No Have you used SmartHub? Yes No

What are the most important features for an online and/or smartphone portal?

Viewing your bill Paying your bill Tracking electric use
 Reporting an outage Communicating with us Viewing outage information

Please list your account number so we can contact you if you are one of the winners of the \$25 bill credit drawing. Your account number can be found on your electric bill. _____