

# PowerLines

August 2016

## You are a member!

Many businesses use the word “member” to describe their customers. Places like Sam’s Club or Costco and even American Express like to refer to their customers as members. You pay a fee to buy their goods and services, but that is really all you get for the “membership.” There is no right to vote for the board of directors or to participate in any meaningful way in the organization.

In electric cooperatives, like Eastern Illini, membership really does mean something more than just the right to buy electricity. Co-ops of all types are founded on seven cooperative principles that give us guidance and strategic direction.

Membership also gives you rights as an owner of our co-op.

Brett Fairbairn is the director of the Center for the Study of Cooperatives at the University of Saskatchewan in Canada. He makes the case that member relations is not just part of what co-ops should be doing, but in fact is the fundamental core business of the cooperative. He further lays out the three strategic concepts that are critical for all cooperatives.

### Economic linkage

Eastern Illini is connected to you. There is a business relationship that serves you (the member) and the co-op. Since co-ops are solely owned by people in our community, they have a mutual interest to ensure that both the co-op and the member do well.

### Transparency

As an owner of the co-op, you have a right to know how it operates and how decisions are made that directly impact you. Cooperatives strive to be open and transparent to their member/owners. When combined with integrity and fairness, cooperatives build long-term trust with their members.

Here at Eastern Illini, we welcome your questions and comments!



**MESSAGE FROM  
THE PRESIDENT**

### Thought Process

Our thought process includes the current and historical identity of our co-op, and the mission and the sense of shared values with you, our co-op members. Research,

education and training are critical functions that we must conduct on an ongoing basis to ensure that we always have the best information to make decisions that are beneficial to you - our member/owners.

The cooperative business model is the best one on earth, but like any enterprise, it is up to the human beings who work at the co-op, who serve on the board and the member/owners like you to ensure that the principles and values do not fade over time.

First and foremost, Eastern Illini strives to be thought of as a member-owned cooperative that gives you the best overall value possible. If we succeed, our community thrives and you will always value being a member of your cooperative.

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**SmartHub is your online  
and app portal to:**

**View and pay your bill  
Report an outage  
Track your electric use  
Update your account info**

**Visit [www.eiec.coop](http://www.eiec.coop) to  
get started!**

## Updated Bylaws

Our updated bylaws were approved during our recent annual meeting. You can view the updated bylaws, and all of our terms and conditions on our website at [www.eiec.coop](http://www.eiec.coop) or by calling 800-824-5102.

Your Touchstone Energy<sup>®</sup>  
Cooperative 



# Youth Tour offers lasting memories

**The Youth to Washington tour highlights Eastern Illini's involvement in youth programs.**

Emma Johns of Villa Grove represented Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative in Washington, D.C., during the annual "Youth to Washington" Tour, June 10-17. This event, sponsored by the electric and telephone cooperatives of Illinois since the late 1950s, is an introduction to our democratic form of government and cooperatives for rural youth.

Emma met with Congressman John Shimkus and was among 64 rural Illinois youth leaders selected for the trip. The Illinois students joined more than 1,691 young leaders from across the country. In addition to the Capitol, they also visited Arlington National Cemetery, the Washington National Cathedral, several Smithsonian Museums, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, the World War II Memorial, memorials to Presidents Lincoln, Jefferson, Washington and Roosevelt, the National Archives, the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, the Newseum and a number of other historical sites.

Johns earned her trip to our nation's capital by winning

Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative's Youth to Washington Scholarship Contest. In addition to her all-expenses-paid trip, she also earned a \$1,000 college scholarship.

The Youth to Washington program is just one aspect of Eastern Illini's commitment to our communities and area youth. The cooperative invests in youth education and engagement programs throughout our local communities.

Some of the other activities include performing electrical safety presentations at area schools, working with local 4-H clubs to promote electricity learning, and sponsoring several other youth and community programs.

For more information about any of our youth programs (which are all offered at no charge), or to schedule events at your school, please contact us at 800-824-5102 or [info@eiec.coop](mailto:info@eiec.coop).





Thank you so very much - from the bottom of my heart - for sponsoring my trip to D.C. and for being a part of such a wonderful program. If your goal was to teach me about cooperatives, it has exceeded. I am already telling my family to buy Prairie Farms milk because it is a cooperative! Ha!

I did not fully understand the value of cooperatives until this trip. My eyes have been opened. I will spread the word through my community about this wonderful experience. It has truly changed my life! I realize how much more I could be doing in this world. My big picture got a whole lot bigger.

My favorite part was the friendships I have gained. I know they will last a long time!!! I was a blubbering baby leaving my week-long friends! I truly cannot express how thankful I am. THANK YOU. Illinois Youth Tour was the BEST experience of my life. It has become important to me that you know how much I support Youth Tour! Thank you for sponsoring me, again. I learned about the cooperative business model, government, and some U.S. history. I made lasting connections. This trip is priceless!!!

In addition to the trip, I was blessed to receive the Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative \$1,000 scholarship. This will play an extreme part in my education!!! Thank you so very much.

Rest assured that I will go on and on about how awesome my time in D.C. was and that my community will hear all about Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative. Also, while I was in D.C., I saw how many opportunities to get involved with cooperatives and politics were available. It amazed me. Thank you so much for giving me the trip of a lifetime! It was more than I ever dreamed it would be.

Thank you, thank you, thank you,

Emma Johns

**Above:** Eastern Illini's Youth to Washington representative, Emma Johns, visits with Congressman John Shimkus on the steps of the United States Capitol during her recent trip to Washington, D.C.

**Left:** The entire Illinois contingent visited the White House during the Youth to Washington trip in June.

# Considering renewable energy?

## **Congress recently extended tax credits for various renewable energy sources.**

We've all seen large-scale "wind farms" in our area, and you may have noticed smaller wind turbines or solar panel arrays on or around homes or businesses.

Smaller renewable energy sources, primarily solar, are becoming more common. Some people consider them as a "green" option that may also help to lower their utility costs.

Here at Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative, we have a very generous "net-metering" program for member/owners that install a small-scale renewable energy system.

There are many companies selling and installing solar systems. Before making a decision to own and maintain any renewable energy system, there are many items to consider. As your trusted energy provider, we can help you estimate utility savings, length of system payback, and provide you with the safety and other considerations needed as you interconnect to the grid.

There are many ways to invest your hard earned money, and we want to help provide you with the information you need to make the best decision for your specific situation.

Since Eastern Illini is a cooperative, we are owned and governed

by you - our member/owners. Our board is elected from and by the membership. Because of that, our focus always must be what is in the best interest of the membership as a whole.

We try to avoid situations where some member/owners are subsidizing others - or are paying more than their "fair share" for our cooperative services.

Since the sun does not shine all the time, and the wind is intermittent, renewable energy sources require a utility connection to provide a continuous power supply. The cost of providing this system must be shared fairly among all of the cooperative member/owners.

Our net metering policy is actually quite simple. You get a special electric meter that can track electricity going both to and from your location. Your monthly bill is based on your net electric use. For example, if you used 2,000 kWh in a month, and generated 500 kWh, you would be billed for 1,500 kWh.

Although it is rare for residential systems, if you were to generate more electricity than you used during the billing period, you would be paid back at our avoided cost rate (which fluctuates).

There is a 10 kW limit for renewable energy systems to be eligible for our net metering program. We also require a \$500 charge due to the additional equipment and administration that is necessary to accommodate the installation. There is much discussion in the utility industry regarding net metering. We will continually review our policy as necessary to ensure fairness for all of our member/owners.

We recommend that anyone considering a renewable energy system contact our office as early as possible in the process. That way, you and your installer will have the information you need as you progress with your potential system.

For more information on our net metering program, please contact our office at 800-824-5102 or visit our website at [www.eiec.coop](http://www.eiec.coop) and follow the renewable energy link.





# PrePaid Advantage gives you control

**Now you can pay your bill on your schedule - not ours.**

Prepaid metering is as simple as it sounds: members pay for electricity before it is used, then use the electricity until the credit expires.

This type of program gives users the ability to control when and how much they pay for electricity, makes them more aware of the energy they are using, and offers flexibility compared to traditional billing.

A terrific analogy for prepaid metering is putting gas in your car. Say you only have \$30 for the week to pay for gasoline. You drive down to the station, pump in \$30 and drive off. As you drive during the week, what happens? You monitor the gauge and make sure each trip is necessary. If you drive too much, you burn up your \$30 before the week is out. By checking the gauge throughout the week, you became more prudent with your gas use and made informed decisions on when and how much to use.

Now let's transfer that analogy to your account with Eastern Illini. With normal metering, you get a bill after you have used the electricity. Sometimes it comes as a shock. "How could I possibly have used so much electricity?" Prepaid metering is designed to ease – and hopefully eliminate – that shock.

## **How does it work?**

The components of a prepaid metering system aren't too different from regular metering. Most single-phase (residential) homes with 200-amp service or less are eligible to participate. Two extra pieces of equipment are required; a way to turn off the power when all your money is used and a way for us to

let you know how much you have left in your account; think of this as your "electricity tank gauge."

Now let's see it in action. You have the prepaid metering equipment installed. You can then register with our online and mobile account portal called SmartHub to be able to view your account balance and add payments to it.

Now you decide how often you want to buy electricity. Monthly? Weekly? Then you budget for a certain amount of power and pay the co-op. You can pay with SmartHub, over the phone, or even in our office. Bingo, your electricity tank is full.

During the time period you have paid for (let's say a week for this example), you receive regular feedback on how much you have left in your tank.

As you approach "empty," you add more money to your account and are then set for the next period. If you run out, the power goes off just like your car stops when it runs out of gas.

## **Other Benefits**

To complete the analogy, let's look at what you have been doing during the week. You become quite aware of how you are using electricity. You turn things off more often. You may change the setting on your thermostat so you don't cool or heat as much. You might cook outside to avoid using the oven or make sure your dishwasher is really full before running it.

Industry studies show that consumers who participate in prepaid metering plans use as much as 10 percent less electricity than their counterparts.

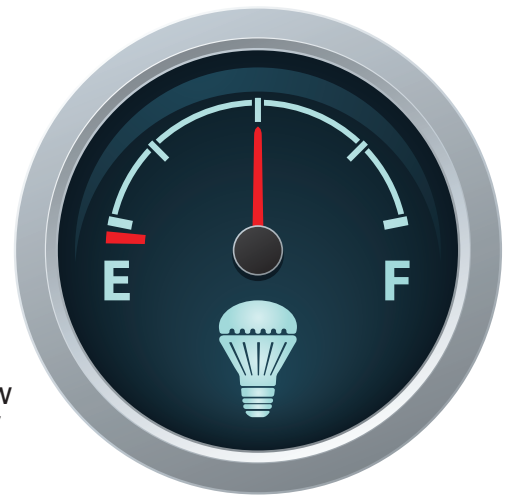
For members that required a deposit when you began your service with us, you might even have the opportunity to lessen the deposit, and apply the remainder of it to your prepaid account!

Prepaid metering teaches the value of electricity, can provide you with absolute control over how much you pay, and helps you reduce your energy use. It is a tremendous way to power your life. Contact us at 800-824-5102 to learn more.

## *The power is in your hands with...* **Eastern Illini's PrePaid Advantage Program**

By paying for electricity as you go, you have control over all aspects of your electric use and payments. A few benefits of participating in our PrePaid Advantage program are:

- You control when you pay your bill
- Helps you understand what uses electricity in your home
- Provides absolute control over how much money is spent on electricity
- Can help you reduce energy use



# SUMMER ENERGY EFFICIENCY CROSSWORD PUZZLE

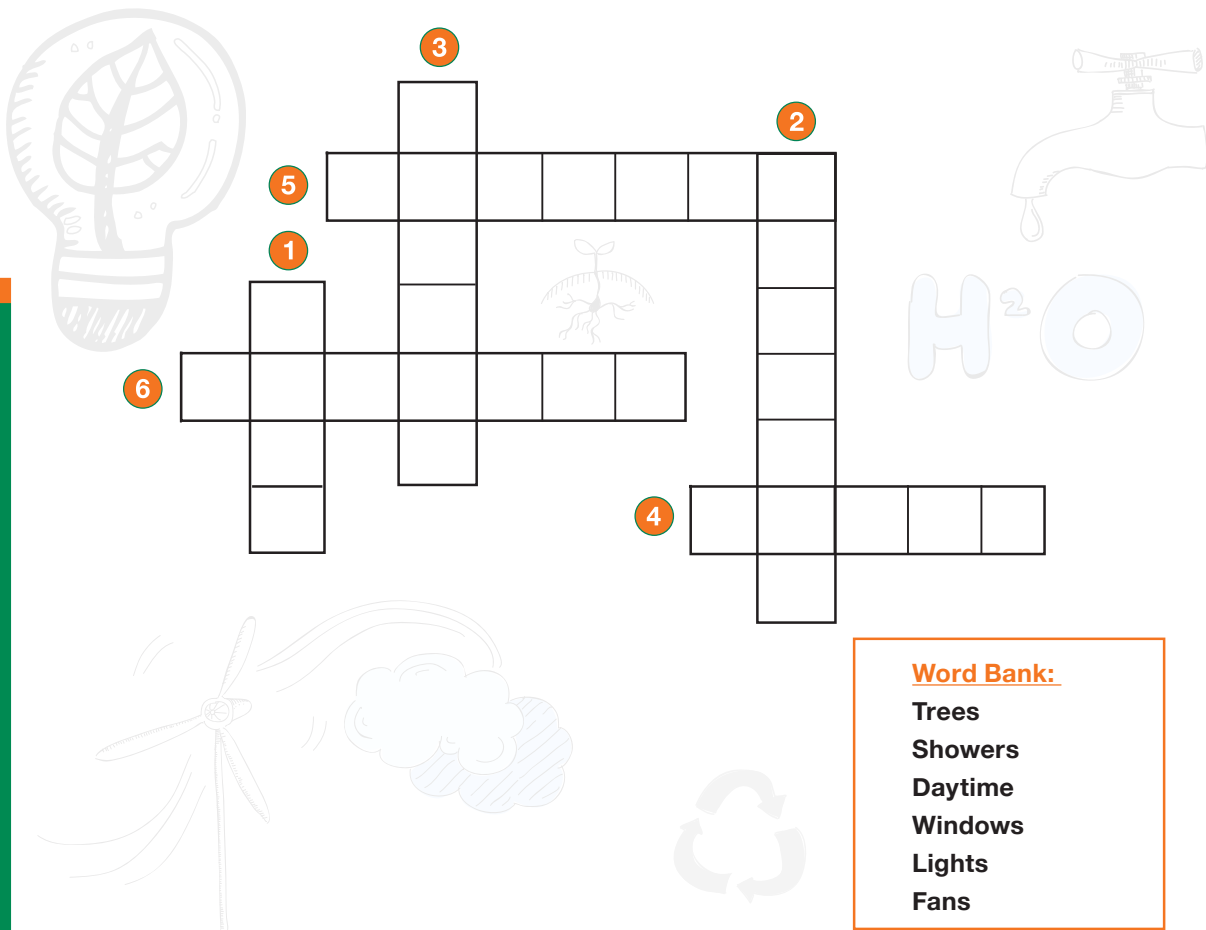
There are many ways you can practice energy efficiency in your home. Use the word bank below to complete the crossword puzzle. Be sure to tell mom and dad about these energy efficiency tips so you can practice at home!

## DOWN

1. Use ceiling \_\_\_\_\_ to circulate cool air.
2. Taking \_\_\_\_\_ are more energy efficient than taking baths.
3. Always turn the \_\_\_\_\_ off when you leave a room.

## ACROSS

4. Plant shade \_\_\_\_\_ around your home.
5. Open \_\_\_\_\_ on cool evenings and turn off the air conditioner.
6. Close shades, drapes and blinds during the \_\_\_\_\_ to help keep warm air out of your home.



### Word Bank:

Trees  
Showers  
Daytime  
Windows  
Lights  
Fans