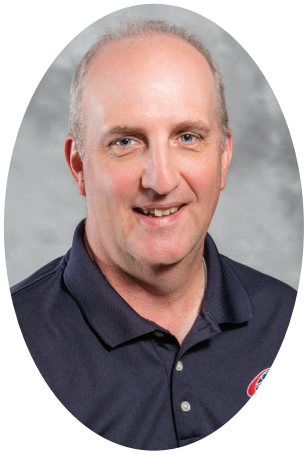
PowerLines
March 2021

PCA background – and winter finally arrived!

Winter weather continued in February with the arrival of snow and arctic cold air masses. Since the calendar has turned to March, warmer days are ahead, as is spring.

Purchased Power Cost Adjustment (PCA)

I'd like to provide some background about the PCA line item on your monthly bill, as you may notice changes with the upcoming rate adjustments next month.



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Since 2013, nearly 7.6 cents per kWh has been included as a proxy for our estimated power cost from our wholesale power provider, Prairie Power, Inc. (PPI). Then, any difference in the PPI actual wholesale costs vs. the estimated cost is recovered in the monthly PCA line item. PPI's wholesale power costs have steadily risen since then, mainly due to increased transmission charges from both Ameren and the larger grid network.

For 2020, the budgeted PPI power cost was 8.3 cents per kWh, which would have resulted in a monthly levelized PCA charge of 0.7 cents per kWh (8.3 cents compared to the embedded amount of 7.6 cents mentioned above). Fortunately, market forces and, to some extent COVID-19, allowed PPI to significantly come in under their budget estimate. Because of that, we were able to keep your PCA value at zero for the last 10 months of 2020. That resulted in nearly $1.6 million in savings to members during the year.

For 2021, our expected power cost from PPI is about 8.2 cents/kWh. As part of the upcoming rate adjustments, we have embedded the new wholesale power cost estimates into our base rates, which then reset the PCA. This means that if our PPI costs match the forecast, the PCA should remain at zero. If those wholesale costs are lower than budgeted, the PCA line item may become a negative value and members will receive a bill credit.

Please note that our rate structures are designed to pass through and recover the amount of wholesale power cost from PPI each year. For the years that PPI costs are less than budgeted, members see a lower average rate (like 2020). In the years that PPI costs are more than budgeted, members may see a higher average rate.

Hopefully this explanation of the PCA helped to provide a brief overview of the power supply portion of your rate. We are thankful that we could pass along the significant PPI wholesale savings in 2020, and are hopeful that PPI can provide a level of savings in 2021 as well.

Please contact us at any time with any questions or comments and stay safe.

Sincerely,

Bob Hunzinger

In this issue:

Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative

MISSION STATEMENT

Providing our members with safe, reliable energy solutions, and exceptional service.

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

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CHANGES IN RATES COMING

Rate Adjustment

At Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative, we work diligently to control costs without adversely affecting reliability and service, but eventually the rising costs we pay for wholesale power, materials, and services needed to deliver reliable electricity make it necessary to adjust our rates.

One of the responsibilities of managing an electric cooperative is to provide the best possible service at the most affordable cost. To do this, the EIEC board of directors and our staff analyze the optimal way to manage the finances of the cooperative every year, looking closely at operating costs and comparing those to the income we expect to receive from electric sales.

After careful consideration, Eastern Illini's board of directors has adopted a rate adjustment effective with March 2021 electric use. You will see the rate adjustment on the bill you receive in early April.

WHY IS A RATE ADJUSTMENT NEEDED?
This rate adjustment is primarily driven by the forecasted increases to the cost to deliver power.

WHO DETERMINES WHEN A RATE INCREASE IS NECESSARY?
Eastern Illini's board of directors and senior leadership continuously monitor the financial stability of the organization to determine if or when a rate increase is necessary. To establish the new rate structure, an independent, experienced firm reviewed and recommended changes to our rates.

WHY DID RATES INCREASE?
A recently completed cost of service and revenue study indicated the need for an overall rate structure adjustment.

We worked with an external rate consultant to evaluate rate classes and determined the level of future changes in our fixed cost components and then compared that among rate classes.

WHAT IS MY BASE CHARGE?
You may have wondered about the "base charge" line item on you bill. The base charge is a set amount each month, similar to a monthly access fee you might pay for your phone service. It represents many of the fixed costs associated with providing you safe and reliable service - even before you use any electricity at all.

The base charge includes many of our distribution costs, including poles (we have over 91,000!), wires, transformers, materials, and equipment. Eastern Illini maintains over 4,500 miles of electric line. That's enough to stretch all the way to California and back!

The base charge also includes bucket trucks, employees, and the software we use to manage the electric system and member accounts. It is the lineman on call 24/7 standing by, so that they are ready to restore power during storms. It is the voice on the phone ready to assist you when needed. All of these fixed costs are incurred, whether a member uses 5,000 or 5 kWh.

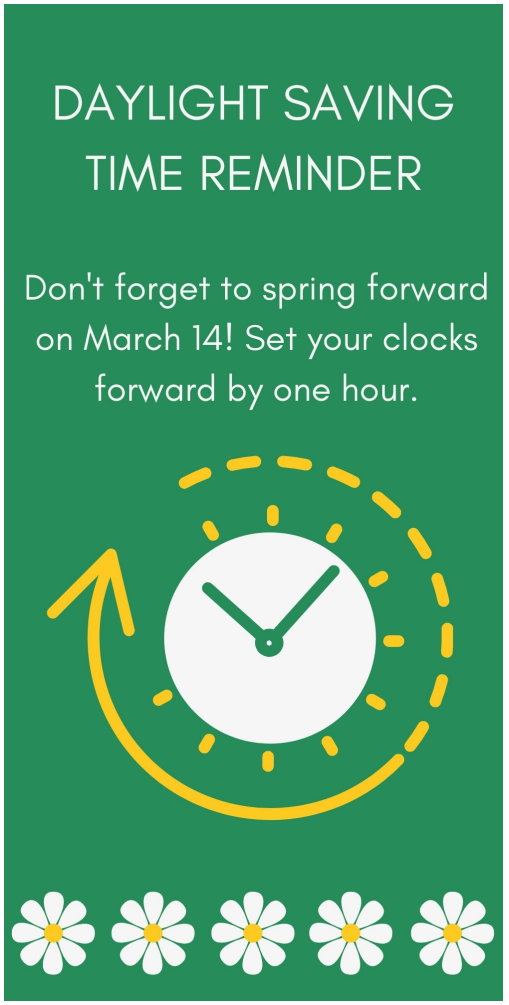
WHEN WAS THE LAST INCREASE?
The last cost of service and revenue study was completed in 2012, resulting in a change of rates in March of 2013. Eastern Illini works diligently to control costs, and we have kept our rates stable for the last eight years. However, the most recent cost-of- service and revenue study indicated the need to update our rate structure to ensure that each member pays their fair share.

HOW MUCH WILL MY BILL CHANGE?
The cost-of-service study performed ensures that each member pays his or her fair share. Based on rate classification, consumption and load requirements, the impact will vary per each member.

The overall impact of this rate adjustment is 1 percent. Residential members will see an even smaller increase - only 0.55 percent. That translates to just a few dollars per month. Rate adjustments will vary by each rate class. Eastern Illini Electric Co-op rates can be found at: **https://www.eiec.org/rate-and-regulations.**

WE'RE HERE TO HELP
We recognize that a change in our rates means a change in your bill and your household budget. Consider signing up for SmartHub. It lets you view, manage, and pay your bill either online or with your Smartphone. You may also want to consider PrePaid Advantage, which lets you pay your electric bill weekly or bi-weekly.

If you have any questions regarding this rate adjustment, we encourage you to call us at 1-800-824-5102.



One pole at a time

Power poles are probably one of the most iconic structures in the electric industry. Since electric cooperatives began constructing their systems back in the 1930s, images of line workers setting poles, climbing poles and hanging the lines have reflected the hard work involved in bringing vital electricity to rural America.

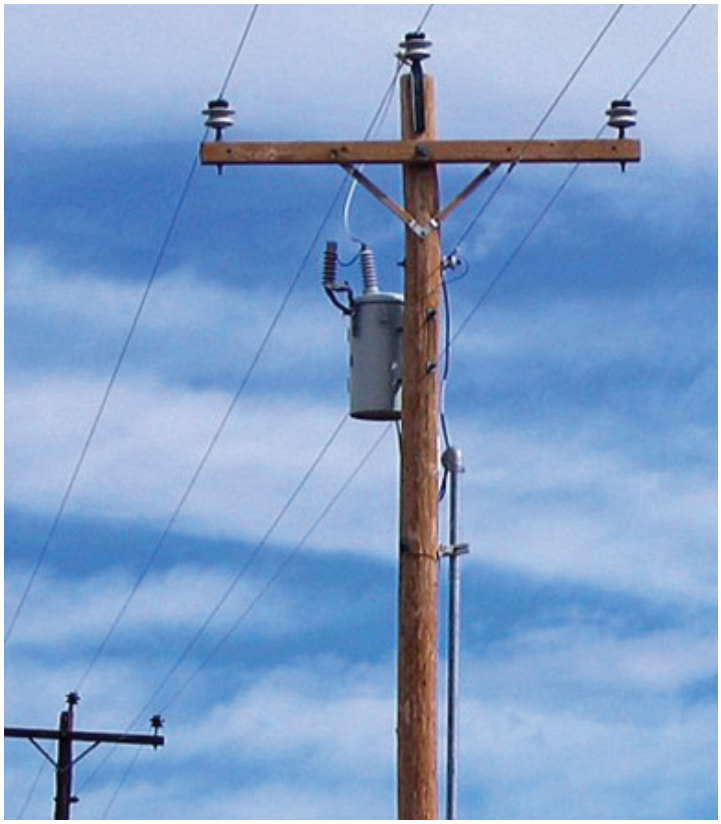
Today, Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative maintains over 91,000 poles in our 10-county service territory. We are continually working to ensure every one of those poles is in the best possible condition to do its job of holding up overhead lines effectively. Our pole inspection program places emphasis on cost-effectively extending the life of existing poles while maintaining appropriate levels of safety and reliability.

Our ultimate goal is to always provide safe and reliable electricity to members and the pole inspection program is one of the many behind-the-scenes programs that contributes to the goal.

In 2020, almost 13,000 electric poles were inspected. There are varying inspection methods for poles based on their age. A newer pole may only require a visual inspection, which includes looking for damage of any type. A pole could have been the target of a woodpecker or may have been struck by a vehicle or machinery.

It's important to note that just because a pole is rejected doesn't mean it was in imminent danger of failure. The purpose of the inspection process is to prevent future issues with the poles and to document the status of each one if it is deemed to be in good enough condition to remain in service. The pole inspection process also turns up other issues on and around an electric pole. Broken guy wires, chipped insulators, broken lightning arrestors, frayed wires and even loose bolts are noted by the inspectors and then remedied by Eastern Illini crews.

Pole inspections are currently underway. Thirteen thousand poles are scheduled to be inspected this year. Inspections will encompass the areas near Papineau, Beaverville, Martinton, Clifton, and Donovan. Additional areas include Fairbury, Anchor and Sibley. Inspection crews will also examine over 1,000 poles in the Tolono area this year. Inspectors will have Eastern Illini identification with them and their vehicles will have the EIEC logo prominently displayed.



There are many variables when evaluating a pole: wood species, preservation methods and material, soil and climate conditions, insect, and mechanical damage, additional cables, equipment, or hardware on the pole. There are several testing procedures.

Visual inspection. Many of the electric pole inspections to measure rot or strength can be performed with the naked eye, simply by looking closely enough. Is there visible rot or decay? The pole inspector visually assesses the physical appearance of the pole, as well as the hardware.

Hammer test. The inspector takes a hammer and, starting at the bottom, strikes the pole sharply. This is continued every few inches, up to about six feet. The resulting sounds from the pole can indicate its structural integrity.

Bore test. If any points of probable decay are found, the inspector bores into them with a drill. This allows them to measure the level of decay within the pole.

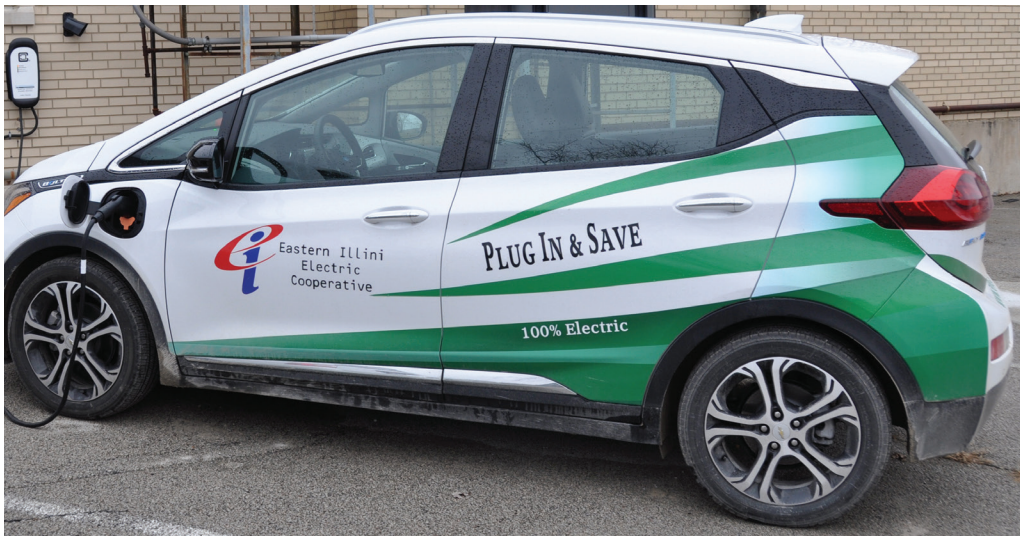
Eastern Illini's pole inspection program uses AppSuite. The test results are entered at the pole location into the pole database. The inspector records the type of test performed and a condition score. The score ranges from 1 to 5 with 1 being a brand-new pole and 5 being the pole needs to be replaced. The reason for pole deterioration is recorded as well. Pole data is available on the Eastern Illini Mapping System. EIEC staff have instant access to the pole management information from their i-Pad or laptop.

We have found that having a pole testing and replacement program in place reduces the number of broken poles we experience during storms.

If you see a problem with a pole or overhead line in your area, please call Eastern Illini at 1-800-824-5102, so it can be checked out. Safety, along with reliability, are taken very seriously at EIEC, and we appreciate your help as we maintain electric poles to stand tall and strong for years to come.

EV MARKET IS GROWING AND BUYERS HAVE MANY CHOICES

Is there an Electric Vehicle in your future?



Electric Vehicles (EVs) are becoming increasingly common as EVs become less expensive and widely available. More people are interested in buying them for many reasons. Aside from the environmental benefits, EVs cost less to operate and maintain, and provide better overall performance. Making the transition from gas to electric is a big step. Before you take the plunge, be sure to do your homework and ask the right questions.

What is the operating range?
With the current generation of electric vehicles able to run for more than 200 miles on a charge, so-called range anxiety is less of a factor than it was a few years ago. Still, you'll want to make sure a given model's range is, at the least, sufficient for your daily commute and weekend activities.

You'll burn through more kilowatts of energy at highway speeds than you will around town. You can also expect an EV's range to suffer significantly in cold weather. Research conducted by the AAA found that when the mercury dips to 20°F and the vehicle's heater is in use, an average EV's range drops by 41 percent. Battery range suffers in the summer as well, dropping by an average 17 percent with the air conditioning running.

Does the EV meet my needs?
As with any type of vehicle, you'll want to do some research to ensure the EV you're considering is sufficiently roomy inside for you and your family. Make sure there's enough cargo space for weekly shopping excursions, sports equipment, or strollers. Choose a model that fits your budget and comes with all the features you require.

How and where will I charge the EV?
Though the number of public charging stations is growing, it's far more convenient – not to mention cheaper – to juice up an EV at home. You can simply plug the vehicle into a standard 110-volt wall outlet for what's called Level 1 charging, but it can take anywhere from eight to 24 hours to fully charge the EV battery if it is empty.

A better choice would be to have an electrician install 240-volt service in your garage to accommodate Level 2 charging that can replenish a drained EV battery in as little as four hours.

Where are the public charging stations?
Even if you're buying one of the longer-range models on the market, there will be times when you'll want to give your EV an extra jolt of volts away from home. Public chargers are typically installed in public parking garages, retail parking lots, at new-car dealerships, and even on some urban streets. While most public units are of the Level 2 variety, some provide what's called Level 3 charging. Also known as DC Fast Charging, it can bring a given EV's battery up to 80 percent of its capacity in around 30-60 minutes. Tesla maintains its own network of Superchargers exclusively for their models. A number of websites including PlugShare.com and PlugInAmerica.org, as well as apps from charging-networks like ChargePoint and EVgo feature interactive maps that show the locations of public charging stations.

How long do you expect to own the EV?
Those looking to forge a long-term relationship with an electric car may be concerned about what it would cost to eventually replace the battery pack. Fortunately, federal regulations mandate that an EV's power cells be covered under warranty for at least eight years or 100,000 miles.

Assuming you own a given EV to the point that that battery needs replacing, it's not a cheap component to swap out. It may cost anywhere from $5,000 to $15,000. EV batteries do degrade over time, but with proper care the battery is essentially a life-of-the-vehicle component.

How much does it cost to insure an EV?
Insurance costs for EVs tend to be costlier than gasoline engine cars. In some instances, premiums are 21% higher than comparable gas-powered models.

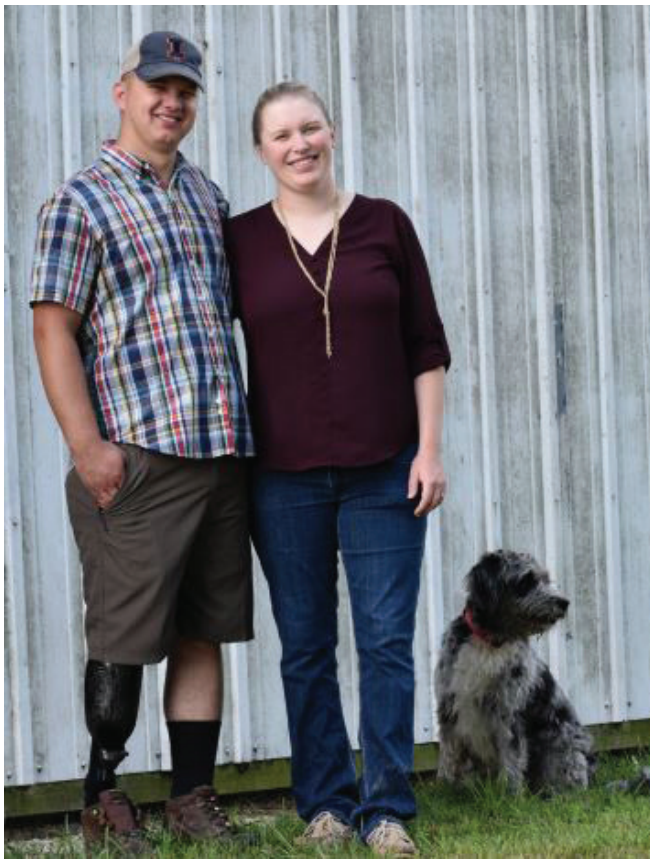
Should I buy new or used?
Buying an electric car can be a costly proposition, with most mainstream branded models priced in the $30,000 range. Buying a new model assures you are getting a full warranty. That said, you, you can find five-year-old EVs selling for $10,000 or less.

Ready to go electric?
A Consumer Reports study shows that 71 percent of prospective car buyers are interested in EVs. By 2025, EVs are predicted to have 9 percent of the new car market.

Will there be an EV in your future? Maybe so, because they're practical, easy to drive, and inexpensive to run.

REMEMBER ELECTRICAL SAFETY DURING PLANTING SEASON

Power line awareness on the farm



Farming equipment has become more massive and technologically advanced over time. While these welcome improvements help farmers cover more ground in less time, taller equipment and longer extensions can bring added challenges around power lines.

As farmers prepare to enter the fields for planting Eastern Illini urges everyone working in the agricultural field to be alert to the dangers of working near overhead power lines, poles and other electrical equipment.

Before you think it could never happen to you, consider electrical accident survivor Cody Conrady's experience. He shares what happened to him in an effort to help increase power line awareness.

It was Cody Conrady's next-to-last day as an assistant manager for an ag fertilizer company. They were understaffed that day, and Cody jumped in the truck to get ahead of the sprayer. Once the sprayer was in position, he hopped out to fill the tank with fertilizer. What happened next changed everything, since he and his coworker inside the cab were unaware that the sprayer boom had either made contact or gotten too close to a power line.

Seven thousand four hundred volts of electricity traveled through the boom and electrified the equipment and ground where Cody was standing. Unfortunately, the unyielding stray voltage considered Cody's body as part of its electrical path to ground and the results changed Cody's life forever.

In the minutes and hours that followed, Cody was brought back to life, rushed to a local hospital, and then transferred via Medevac to a Level 1 trauma center. That was the starting point to a very long and arduous road to recovery that included many surgeries, rehabilitation, and prosthetics fittings.

Cody's advice to others when working near power lines is, pay attention a little more. Keep an eye on your surroundings. Just take an extra second to look at things, to see how your situation is going to unfold. Now days, he drives by fields buzzing with activity during active farm seasons and wonders if others see what he sees — if they realize the potential dangers of getting too close to power lines. His wife, Bailey, says this type of accident could happen to anyone. Unintended contact happened in an instant, but its impact lives on long after an accident.

More information about Cody can be found at safeelectricity.org

To stay safe around overhead power lines, follow safe work practices at all times to help prevent serious and even deadly accidents. Start by making sure everyone knows to maintain a minimum 10-foot clearance from power lines. This 10-foot rule applies not only to the area underneath the power line, but to the full 360 degrees around it. Not only can electricity change paths if direct contact is made, it can also happen when someone or something gets too close to a power line, and the current jumps, also known as arcing.

In addition to the 10-foot rule, take these steps to help decrease the chances of an electrical-related incident:

• If your machinery or vehicle comes in contact with a power line, do not get out of the cab because you could be electrocuted. Instead, stay where you are and call 9-1-1 to dispatch the appropriate utility to deenergize the power.

• If it is not safe to stay in the cab due to fire or smoke, make a solid, clean jump with both feet landing at the same time. Use a bunny hop to hop away with feet together as far as you can.

• If you come across an accident or incident near a downed power line, alert individuals (from at least 50 feet away) to stay in the cab or vehicle as long as there is no imminent danger. Call 9-1-1 and do not approach the scene.

• Have a daily meeting with employees to go over possible hazards. Map out routes where equipment will be moved and ensure it will clear power lines.

• When working around power lines, always use a spotter, who has a broader vantage point than the person in the cab.

• Lower extensions to the lowest setting when moving loads.

Even though planting season is a busy and often stressful time filled with tight deadlines, take time for safety, including electrical safety.

2021 EMPOWERING EDUCATION GRANT WINNERS

Congratulations!

We value our schools and students, because they will be our future, so we have awarded 42 grants to teachers to help fund projects that inspire students and provide memorable learning experiences. This is the fourth year of the grant program and more than $75,000 has been awarded to deserving teachers.

NAME	PROJECT	SCHOOL
Nathan Gayheart	Spectrophotometer	Armstrong High School
Renee Brown	Maker Space	Arthur Lovington Atwood Hammond HS
Chrissy Patterson	Positive Behavior Incentive System	Atwood-Hammond Grade School
Denise Strack	Online Resources	Atwood-Hammond Grade School
Stephanie Eccles	Flexible Seating	Bement Elementary School
Ashley Sterkel	Flexible Seating	Bement Elementary School
Monica Hall	CPR & Blood Pressure Equipment	Bement High School
Meghan McFall	Minds in Motion	Chebanse Elementary School
Amy Ramsey	Minds in Motion	Chebanse Elementary School
Cindy Vance	Book Club Reading Lab	Christ Lutheran High School
Tresa Maul	Benchmark Assessment System	Cissna Park C.U.S.D. #6
Deb Johnson	Hands on Learning	Clara Peterson Elementary School
Kimberly Onnen	100 Mile Club	Donovan Junior/Senior High School
Brian Linsner	Heart Rate Monitors	Fisher Grade School
Tara Walters	Life Skills and Organizational Skills	Fisher Grade School
Kelly Beach	Remote Learning Technology	Gifford Grade School
Deb Talbert	Sensory Areas for Learning	Iroquois West Elementary School
Tecia Mills	Flexible Seating	Lincoln Trail Elementary School
Nicole Ernst	Building Reading Confidence	Lincoln Trail Elementary School
Jenny Cho	Relevant Reading	Ludlow Grade School
Kimberly Hillard	Supportive Monitors	Mahomet Seymour High School
Kathleen Vines	Story Time with Mrs. Vines	Maple Grade School
Ashley Clemmons	Encouraging Creativity	Maple Grade School
Jamie Miller	Encouraging Creativity	Maple Grade School
Sarah Landon	Let's Escape	Milford Grade School
Brian Zecher	Theatrical Stage Lighting	Milford High School
Brad Curry	3D Printed Mold Making	Monticello High School
Briana Hendrickson	Personal Narratives/ Social Justice	Monticello High School
Nolan Woller	Cup Stacking	North Ward Elementary School
Sally Ellis	Fashion Nook	PBL High School
Ashley Pruiett	Flexible Seating	Potomac Elementary School
Amy Stivers-Anders	Books for Remembrance	Pleasant Acres Elementary School
David Rothert	Tig Welding Crafts	Prairie Central Junior High School
Emily Willard	Student Spotlight Recognition	Rantoul Township High School
Amanda Meyer	Guided Reading	Ridgeview Elementary School
Lacey Price	Independent Learning Kits	Salt Fork North Elementary Schol
Kari Stachura	Fine Arts Program	St John's Lutheran School
Christina Gherna	Reading Matters	St Joseph Grade School
Kimberly Nigg	Standing Desks	St Joseph Middle School
Dan Huse	Staying Active during COVID	St Paul's Lutheran School
Scott Saffer	The Science of Cooking	Tri-Point Junior High School
Erik Parmenter	Uninterruptible Power Source	Watseka High School