



MJM
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

ALONG THE LINES

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Wild Pickins and Wild Fun!

p. 4-5

Celebrating with a Ribbon Cutting

p. 7

Welcome, Stefanie Frizzo, to MJM!

p. 8

In This Issue:

Pg. 2 - Member Trading Post/MJM Asked and Members Answered

Pg. 3 - Continuation of Page 2

Pg. 6 - Your Electric Bill and How You Can Lower It



ALONG THE LINES

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18300 Shipman Road, Carlinville, IL 62626

Office 217-707-6156

Pay by Phone 1-855-313-6314

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Member Trading Post

FOR SALE: HEAVY Square bales of Oat hay \$5.00 each. Grass hay square bales \$4.00 each. Call 217-371-3688 or 618-494-8444 please leave message.

To list your free ad, email brookeg@mjmec.coop, call 217-707-6156 or mail the ad to MJM Electric Cooperative, P.O. Box 80, Carlinville, IL 62626. Each ad will run for one month. Some restriction may apply.

MJM Asked and the Members Answered!

MJM Electric asked and the Members answered. MJM was interested in what Members had thought of the annual meeting being held as a drive thru meeting on Friday, June 4, 2021. A survey of 10 questions was sent out via email to those Members who have their email on file with MJM. The survey was also posted on social media and the website. After the survey had been opened for two weeks, MJM had a total of 461 responses to the survey. In July's edition of *Along the Lines*, it was mentioned that the results of the survey would be shared. The following are questions and answers that Members sent as feedback:

1. Approximately, how long have you been a MJM Member?
 - This was an open-ended question. The average answers were between two, 35, and 50 years.
 2. Have you EVER attend a meeting?
 - 65.36% answered YES
 - 34.64% answered NO
 3. If yes, was this your FIRST Annual Meeting that you have attended?
 - 71.61% answered YES
 - 28.39% answered NO
- 3(a). If you did NOT attend this year's Annual Meeting, please select the reason you were unable to attend:
- 43.84% answered CONFLICT
 - 19.48% answered OTHER
 - 17.19% answered DIDN'T CARE TO
 - 13.18% answered TOO FAR
 - 6.3% answered LACK OF INCENTIVE

► Continued on page 3

4. Which type of meeting would you prefer to attend:
 - 61.97% answered: A Friday evening early in June with a drive-thru meeting. Registration and meeting starting at 4 pm – 7pm similar to an “open house” with a bagged meal to go.
 - 38.03% answered: A Saturday morning early in March with a sit down meeting. Registration starting at 8:30 am with “official” meeting lasting from 10 am – 11:15 am and a lunch to follow
5. Please rate this year’s Annual Meeting:
 - 51.22% answered EXCELLENT
 - 36.59% answered GOOD
 - 10.57% answered FAIR
 - 1.63% answered POOR
6. Did you have the opportunity to voice any comments?
 - 62.9% answered YES
 - 37.1% answered NO
7. Was the bagged meal satisfactory?
 - 89.26% answered YES
 - 10.74% answered NO
8. Could you hear the entertainment “BlackHill” performing?
 - 47.93% answered YES
 - 52.07% answered NO
9. Did you go to MJM’s website or social media page(s) to find out winners of the prizes and/or scholarships?
 - 82.22% answered NO
 - 17.78% answered YES
10. Please respond with any comments or suggestions: (This was an open-ended question – here are a few of the responses.)
 - Love MJM!!! Working with them is easy when you’re having a crisis with your electricity. We have MJM for our cabin on the Illinois River. Wish we had them at our home as well!
 - I thought the meal was really nice and everyone we encountered on our drive-thru was very pleasant as well.
 - We liked the family type atmosphere we experienced. It was 6pm by the time we got there and still everyone was nice, helpful and the drive thru was easy. The packed dinner was perfect. Thank you!
 - We really appreciate the opportunity you give to be part of MJM. For years, we lived south of here and had Ameren. Much happier with MJM.
 - MJM is a fantastic company with very good communication. We hope to someday be able to attend the meetings but have had conflicting duties on meeting dates.
 - Keep up the good work. I know that most people criticize the service workers. I feel the MJM crew does an excellent job.
 - Thank you for the credits. Annual Meeting was very organized, and very happy to meet our Directors and employees as we went through the line. Great job! Thank you again for my credits.

This is just a mere few of the incredibly positive and uplifting responses! Members have continued to call in and thank Member Service Representatives over the phone for the fantastic meeting. One Member had thanked an employee during the meeting and stated that the drive-thru meeting has provided the opportunity for her to come back to meetings. Due to having trouble walking and standing, she could no longer stand in line to get a lunch on a typical Saturday morning meeting. The drive thru Annual Meeting reached young families, Members with difficulty getting around, and everyone in between. MJM reaching the most Members possible is what success looks like to this Co-op!

By taking the survey, Members were entered into a drawing for a \$50 bill credit. Congratulations to Vicki McCann of Plainview! Thank you to all who took time to answer the survey. We are constantly wanting to make sure we hear out our Members and apply their positive or negative comments to our work! 🎉

Wild Pickins AND WILD FUN!

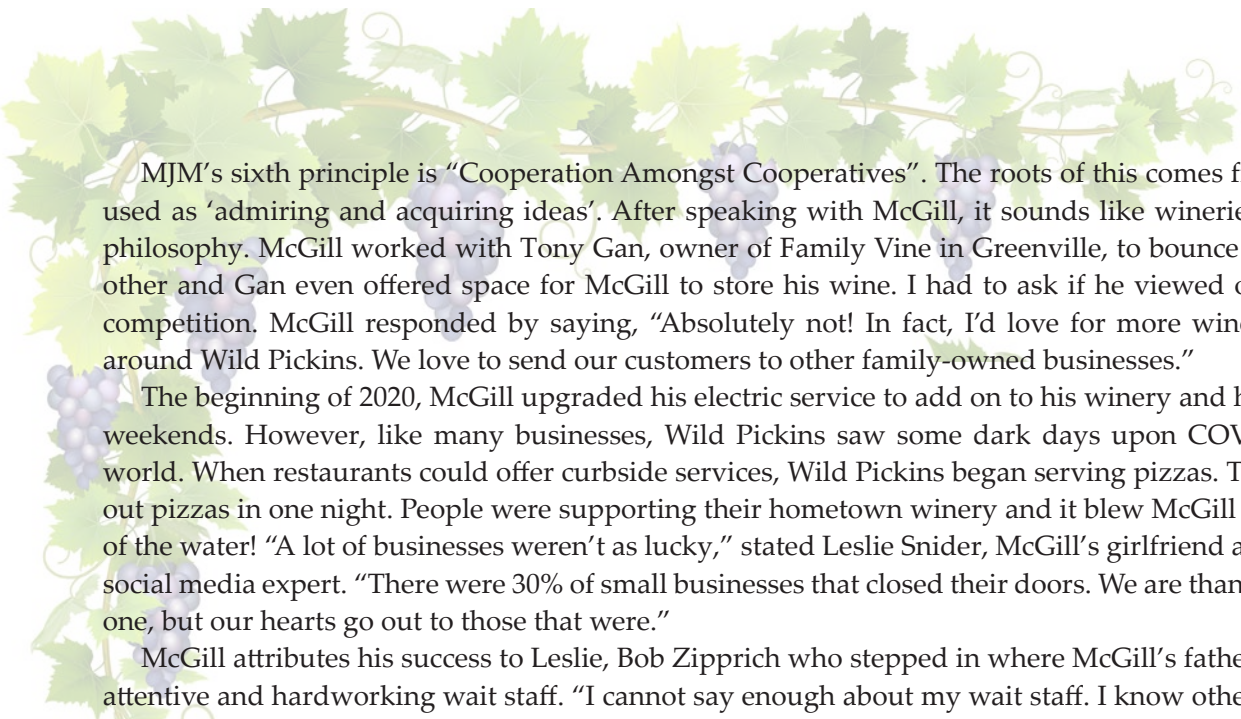


Looking for entertainment, great food, cold drinks, and amazing cheesecake? I have just the place for you! As the summer season lays on the heat, one of the best places to cool off is at Wild Pickins in Chesterfield, IL. Through the trees and up on a small incline is a winery that is family, pet, and genuinely friendly. I had the opportunity to meet with owner Todd McGill and get to know Wild Pickins – a MJM Member and business.

An account for McGill was created with MJM in November of 2001. Who would have thought that his old family farmstead would spark the interest of a winery to open over a decade later? Before becoming a winery owner and manager, McGill had been an electrician. In 2009, an accident happened that caused McGill to have multiple surgeries and it forced him to hang up his tool belt as an electrician. Sitting around was not an option for McGill. Back then, he visited Forsee Vineyard and Winery out of Coffeen. The seed was then planted in his mind to make something out of the acres that he owns in Chesterfield. On March 12, 2012, Wild Pickins opened its doors to the public. This was a soft opening, but then a grand opening was held mid-April. McGill, with a smile, recalled the parking lot being completely packed. Wild Pickins offered an outdoor venue that promoted nature and beautiful scenery. After hosting a wedding for a customer, he realized that an outdoor only venue and not serving food was something that needed to be changed.

"We are all human and we are learning. The last thing that I want is to have a customer leave upset. I want everyone to leave with a good experience, good food, and great memories," McGill stated. In 2017, McGill featured his first house wine called "Legacy". It takes three years for vines to mature enough to make wine. The wait was worth it as this bottle was created and labeled to honor his late father and the impact he had made on McGill. In 2018, he added on to his venue for his customers to have an outside or inside dining experience.

► Continued on page 5



MJM's sixth principle is "Cooperation Amongst Cooperatives". The roots of this comes from a term often used as 'admiring and acquiring ideas'. After speaking with McGill, it sounds like wineries have the same philosophy. McGill worked with Tony Gan, owner of Family Vine in Greenville, to bounce ideas off of each other and Gan even offered space for McGill to store his wine. I had to ask if he viewed other wineries as competition. McGill responded by saying, "Absolutely not! In fact, I'd love for more wineries to open up around Wild Pickins. We love to send our customers to other family-owned businesses."

The beginning of 2020, McGill upgraded his electric service to add on to his winery and had three roaring weekends. However, like many businesses, Wild Pickins saw some dark days upon COVID's stop to the world. When restaurants could offer curbside services, Wild Pickins began serving pizzas. They had 99 carry out pizzas in one night. People were supporting their hometown winery and it blew McGill and his crew out of the water! "A lot of businesses weren't as lucky," stated Leslie Snider, McGill's girlfriend and Wild Pickin's social media expert. "There were 30% of small businesses that closed their doors. We are thankful we were not one, but our hearts go out to those that were."

McGill attributes his success to Leslie, Bob Zipprich who stepped in where McGill's father left off, and his attentive and hardworking wait staff. "I cannot say enough about my wait staff. I know others are struggling to find great workers. I am fortunate enough to say I have them," McGill stated. He could still use more help, but he is counting his blessings.

Wild Pickins has Bingo on Friday, live music on Saturday and Sunday, but Thursday is reserved for Queen of Hearts. It is one of the ways that Wild Pickins gives back to the community. Currently, they are fundraising for Project Third Day out of Carlinville. This is an organization that raises money for kids. McGill beamed when he stated, "It has become so successful! Children are able to get clothes, food, pillows, and even bikes! We try and help everybody."

As I interviewed McGill, I wanted to ask what his role is as a manager and owner. I did not have to ask as I watched him politely excuse himself to greet regulars and new faces. He was quick on his feet to address dilemmas and help serve when the staff was bogged down. I am sure that is barely scratching the surface of his duties. After our interview, my husband and I got to stick around for supper, cheesecake, and a few rounds of bingo. I even won a game!

Wild Pickins is located at 14223 IL - 111, Chesterfield. Wild Pickins can also be found at www.wildpickinwinery.com and on Facebook. MJM also serves three other wineries: Vixen Hill Winery-Palmyra, Grafton Winery - Grafton, Forsee Vineyards and Winery (currently closed)-Coffeen, and Plainview Vineyard - Plainview.

Take a drive and support your community wineries. I know they would love to serve you! 🍷🍷🍷



By Brooke Gross, Communications and Member Services Coordinator

Your Electric Bill and How You Can Lower It!

By Laura Cutler, CEO

In the April edition of *Along the Lines*, it explained how MJM sets its electric rates. Step One was to add up all the costs that the Co-op incurs to run the business and see how much revenue is required to maintain financial stability. The costs were separated into three areas: power supply and transmission, distribution, and consumers. It is then separated by consumer class: commercial and residential. The cost-of-service study identifies the amount to recover through consumers, demand, and energy charges and how costs vary by time of day or season.

Did you know that when you use electricity often matters as much as how much electricity you consume? It's no surprise that electricity use fluctuates throughout the day based on consumer demand, and MJM must be able to provide enough electricity to meet the energy demands of its Members during times of highest energy use, also known as "on-peak hours." Early-morning hours, when people often start their day, and evening hours, when people return to their homes after work, are common times for on-peak hours. Energy is less expensive to provide during off-peak hours.

Using less on-peak power means lower costs for the co-op and ultimately, lower rates for Members. Because many Members have shown interest in a time-of-use rate, this is one option that MJM is looking at. Electric rates based on time-of-use offer consumers the ability to lower their electricity costs without reducing the amount of electricity used. By performing some of your chores like running the dishwasher or doing laundry during off-peak hours, you can save on your utility bill. In a similar way, plug electronic equipment, such as computers, printers, TVs, and power tools into a power strip, then turn it off during peak hours. You can put technology to work for you. If you have a programmable thermostat, adjust the settings so your heating/cooling system syncs up with the off-peak rate periods. Use automatic timers to run hot tubs, pool pumps, water heaters and other appliances in the same way.

Even though MJM does not currently offer a time-of-use rate, by using electricity during off-peak hours still greatly benefits all MJM Members because MJM is billed by the coincident demand peak of all Wabash Valley Power Alliance (WVPA) Member system's loads. Wholesale power accounts for 57% of MJM's expenses.

Besides the energy savings tips above, you can do your part now to help lower your electric bill without going to a time-of-use rate!! WVPA's on-peak hours are from 3 p.m. to 9 p.m. weekdays, excluding holidays and weekends. MJM's billed peak demand occurs at 6 p.m. most months. If everyone did their part of using less power during on-peak hours, it would help lower the *energy charges* on their electric bill. 🌈

Change Habits to BEAT THE PEAK

You can beat the peak (and save money!) by decreasing your power use when energy demand and prices are at their highest. Here are a few tips to help you get started:

Laundry for Less:

Full loads mean fewer cycles, and washers and dryers run in the late evenings add less heat and humidity to the home. Energy can cost less outside of peak hours.



Cool Off/Calm Down:

Turn off unnecessary lighting and electronics that generate heat, resist the urge to turn down the thermostat and remember, lower fan settings use less energy.

Intramural Competition: Online gaming with each active player using their own computer, display, gaming console and internet connection gets pricey. Play each other at home on one screen and save.

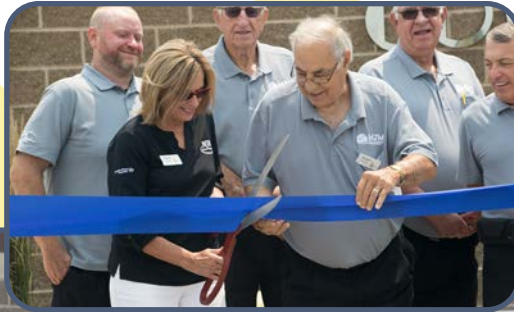


Countertop Convenience:

Range or oven cooking can really warm up a kitchen. Microwaves, convection ovens, induction cooktops, Crock-Pot® and toaster ovens put more cooking heat where you need it.

Celebrating with a Ribbon Cutting

...finally!



In July 2020's *Along the Lines*, the title of an article published read "When One Door Closes, Another Door Opens." This announced the closure of the old headquarters and the opening of the new location on July 22, 2020. Due to COVID restrictions, a ribbon cutting ceremony had been postponed until a later date. This new building has brought necessary upgrades in technology, storage, space for employees, and so much more! It has been a blessing during a time that MJM needed it most. That was worth celebrating!

That is exactly what happened on July 22, 2021. MJM was finally able to host the celebration in honor of the new headquarters on its one year anniversary. The gold and black color coordinated party had nearly 25 special guests including those from the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperative, Wabash Valley Power Alliance, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Jun Construction, Rob Wirth, and Illinois State Politicians. At noon, CEO Laura Cutler welcomed all guests in attendance and proceeded to thank all the parties involved who helped get MJM's headquarters where it is today. Senator Steve McClure and Representative Avery Bourne also stood up to give a legislative update on Illinois' politics.

Finally, after waiting a year, CEO Cutler and Director of Engineering and Operations Joe Heyen were able to stretch out the blue ribbon and cut it with a large pair of scissors. It is said, "It's worth the wait!" After the hard work that MJM's management has poured into the new headquarters, it definitely was worth the wait *and* the celebration. 🎉

Welcome, Stefanie, to MJM!

On June 21st, MJM welcomed Stefanie Frizzo to the team as Engineer and Operation's newest Operations Assistant. Frizzo graduated from Sanford-Brown College and now lives in Gillespie. After working as an Executive Assistant for a financial advisor and assisting in tax preparation, it was time for a change. Frizzo is ready to apply her learned skills in a different way and grow with a Cooperative that better serves its community. "MJM Electric does just that! Being so close to home is an added bonus," Frizzo stated. Since she has been here for over a month, she was surprised to learn that MJM serves such a large service territory where three warehouses are needed to house linemen and tools needed to serve MJM Members. Frizzo was asked how she would better serve MJM's Members. She said, "I plan to educate myself and learn as much as I can about the industry and the Cooperative."

When Frizzo is not at work, she enjoys bike rides, working out, riding side-by-sides, attending her niece and nephews sporting events, and hanging out with friends. She is a fur-mom to two miniature dachshunds, Harvey and Heidi. Welcome aboard, Stefanie! 🌈

