

EAT WELL, BE WELL: LINK MATCH • LET'S GET CREATIVE • STORMY WEATHER

MORSEL

neighborhood.coop

Spring 2022



FREE

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Spring 2022

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{Co-op Throw Back}

On May 1, 2006 Neighborhood Co-op Grocery relocated to the current store, which is approximately four times the size of its former location. It was an audacious move for a small organization to make as we leveraged less than \$50,000 in cash into a \$1.5 million project. Many doubted that we would succeed but the Co-op just finished its two best years financially.

MORSEL

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF

NEIGHBORHOOD CO-OP GROCERY**DIRECTOR OF DESIGN**

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EDITORIAL POLICY

Morsel is a quarterly magazine produced by Neighborhood Co-op as a means to share news from the Co-op, promote local food, celebrate the seasons, and inspire our owners and patrons to enjoy a healthy lifestyle full of delicious and nutritious food. The views expressed in Morsel are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Co-op's directors, staff, or ownership. Health and nutrition articles are for informational purposes only and do not constitute medical advice.

SUBMISSION POLICY

Morsel accepts submissions on an ongoing basis. Letters, articles, artwork and ideas are all welcome! We reserve the right to edit content for brevity and clarity. Please send inquiries and submissions to amy@neighborhood.coop.

OUR STORE

1815 W Main Street, Carbondale, IL 62901

Neighborhood Co-op is a cooperative grocery store owned by members of our very own community. Most of our staff are even owners! We are a founding member of the National Cooperative Grocers, a network of more than 200 cooperative grocery stores all across America. We combine our buying power to bring you the best food at the best value while staying locally governed. We work hard to support our community and improve our local food system.

OUR MISSION

Neighborhood Co-op Grocery aims to serve the needs of its owners and patrons by providing wholesome foods, economically, in the cooperative tradition and in ways that best promote the health of the individual, the community and the earth.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Generally, meetings are held in the Co-op Community Room once a month at 6p.m.

Contact the Board at:

boardlink@neighborhood.coop

Margaret Anderson

Kristy Bender

Lauren Bonner

Quianya Enge

Ron Mahoney

Erika Peterson

Jak Tichenor

Richard Thomas

Barbara James

Secretary: Karen Schauwecker

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ECO PRINTING

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Sales & Events

at the Co-op

MAY

01
31



Owner Appreciation

Owners receive a 10% off coupon good toward any one transaction they choose during the month of May.

04

Wellness Wednesday

10% off all wellness items!

07

Plant and Pot Sale

SIU Ceramics Fundraiser

JUNE

01

Wellness Wednesday

10% off all wellness items!

JULY

01

Red Cross Blood Drive

Co-op parking lot from 12 - 5pm

06

Wellness Wednesday

10% off all wellness items!

AUGUST

01
31



Owner Appreciation

Owners receive a 10% off coupon good toward any one transaction they choose during the month of Aug.

03

Wellness Wednesday

10% off all wellness items!



GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT



FRANCIS MURPHY

Employee Retention Credit (ERC)

The best thing that happened for the Co-op in the past year was the forgiveness of our \$206,200 Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan. However, it turns out that was not the end of the federal money available to the Co-op. Under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, the Employee Retention Credit (ERC) was included as a refundable tax credit against payroll taxes. Businesses, including cooperatives, that took out Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans could not originally participate in this program, so the employer benefit was severely limited.

However, legislation signed into law last year included significant changes to certain payroll tax credits. These changes, especially to the ERC, were targeted at those businesses that experienced declines in revenue or had been “shut down” due to state and local mandates. Additionally, and importantly, these changes allow businesses that received PPP loans to claim this payroll tax credit, if certain criteria are met. Our Co-op was eligible because we had a state order that restricted operations. Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker issued an executive order on May 1, 2020 which ran through January 2021 imposing a 50% occupancy limit on essential stores like the Co-op. In addition, indoor dining in the community room was suspended officially on March 16, 2020 by executive order. On June 26, 2020 we were allowed to resume indoor seating with capacity limits, but on October 22, 2020 mitigation policies were implemented in Region 5 (the Co-op is in this region), which shut down indoor seating in our community room again.

It is possible to correct earlier payroll tax reports by reporting qualified wages and health insurance costs on an amended form. In other words, we were able to

retroactively apply for this tax credit. Because of the extreme complexity involved in the calculation of the ERC, the Co-op contracted with a CPA firm to make these calculations and prepare amended payroll tax returns for the applicable quarters. We recently learned that the Co-op will be receiving an ERC refund for three quarters in 2020-2021 totaling approximately \$190,000. With a 30.5% combined federal and state income tax rate the Co-op will have to pay about \$58,000 in taxes but we are going to net about \$130,000.

Link Match

The Co-op received a \$28,000 grant from Experimental Station for this year's Link Match program (please see Monica Tichenor's article in this issue). This is \$7,500 more than we received in any previous year. The Co-op is printing three rounds of Link Match currency this year, with the first round expiring on June 30. This will allow us to address problems that we have had in the past four years. The biggest problem is that it is easy for us to issue a lot of currency early in the year and not know if or when it will be redeemed. Because of this, Link customers are frustrated that we have no more currency to issue and staff are frustrated that people don't use the currency that we have issued them. With June 30 and September 30 expiration dates respectively on the first two rounds we are hoping to encourage Link customers to redeem the currency rather than hold on to it. This will also allow us to know, with a greater degree of certainty, how much currency to have printed for subsequent rounds, because as the expiration dates pass, the Co-op will no longer be liable for what we had previously printed. The third and final round Link Match currency will have our usual December 31 expiration date.



Reflection Through Food

by *Kristy Bender*

Several years ago, I wrote a Morsel article about my four young children growing up as a part of the Neighborhood Co-op community. Back then, they wandered freely through the aisles looking for both new foods to sample and pantry staples that they recognized. And then the pandemic struck. Our kids didn't shop with me anymore. Trips for groceries were short and to the point. There was no lingering to talk. Like many of you, we went from social creatures attending work and school and activities in the community to hermits virtually overnight. We muddled our way through remote work, remote learning, and hybrid learning. There were plenty of tears as our kids struggled to adapt to a new routine.

And that's where food stepped up to fill the void. It wasn't so much the food itself; it was the process of making the food and the time spent together at the table. My kids, who pre-pandemic spent little time in the kitchen, suddenly had hours of unoccupied time and wanted to have a voice in deciding or a hand in preparing meals. The academic and sporting activities that kept us spread across town at night were cancelled and we found ourselves together at the table, sometimes for multiple meals every day.

During the morning my kids were off in all corners of the house trying to focus on their schoolwork. My fifth grader was conquering fractions, my third grader was tackling weather and climate, and my kindergartener was learning to read, all via the internet. In the late afternoon and early evening, especially as long summer days spent playing outside turned into cold winter nights, the kids all made their way to the kitchen.

Since the start of the pandemic, our school district has provided free breakfast and lunch to all students during the school week. When we were remote learning early on in the pandemic, we used the ingredients sent home by the school as a starting point for many of our creations. We turned the containers of corn and peas into creamy pot pies, diced apples to use in sweet potato soup, sliced carrots to roast in the oven with honey, and mashed bananas for peanut butter banana bread. They learned how to knead dough for pizza (it's a skill you have to master if you insist on personal size pizzas) and

bake their favorite sweets. I started to broaden their horizons to include other textures and flavors like roasted radishes and Garam Masala. They started to enjoy peeking in the bag when I came home from the store to see what was purchased and were shocked one day to find brussel sprouts on a stalk. Some creations were better received than others, and there was plenty of arguing during the process over who stood where and which child got to mix first, but they kept showing up so we forged on.

I occasionally wonder if our kids will remember the time we spent in the kitchen as we've slowly started easing back into our pre-pandemic routines, albeit with some adjustment. Now that my older kids are back in school, my two-year-old has taken to wandering the aisles of the Co-op with me and enjoys stopping to talk to people, things I used to take for granted but now have a new appreciation for. She helps pick out the ingredients for our latest creations, routinely reminding me that vegetables are not her favorite. She knows exactly which bulk items she wants to stop for (the yogurt pretzels and peanut butter are directly at her eye level after all) and how to request her favorite deli items, but seems innately aware of the need to keep her hands to herself and to stand apart from others.

Our weeknight activities have picked back up and we spend less time at home together. And yet, they still pipe up when I plan dinners for the week and regularly appear when it's time to cook. On a recent evening, when I was up to my ears in spelling words and geography, my 11-year-old asked if he could make banana bread with my 2-year-old. I told him they would be on their own in the kitchen, and he shrugged it off as if baking was something he had done his whole life. As I snuck glances of them together in the kitchen, I marveled at how the time we spent together in the kitchen has changed their perspective on food and their confidence in themselves.

It won't be long before my oldest is able to go shopping at the Co-op by himself, and I look forward to the meals he claims he will make for us. If you happen to see him there, remind him to eat his vegetables!

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Co-op's Honors

Awards are often a way to validate the hard work to meet specific goals. Over the years, the Co-op has received many accolades, such as Business of the Year or getting a Silver Level Award from the U.S. EPA's GreenChill Program. Though an award is most gratifying for specific communities of interest, we want to honor our staff's hard work and dedication, which has made the Co-op such a success.

As Covid has left a lasting impact, we have seen many businesses continue to deal with closures, staffing and supply issues, and adapting to new trends. Our staff has definitely endured a lot but has been very adaptive, for which we are beyond grateful. In early February, we were excited to learn that the Co-op was voted "Best Locally Owned Grocery Store" in the Southern Illinoisan Readers Choice Awards – awards that celebrate and recognize the best in our community. This award validated that, even with so many uncertainties, staff connected with our owners and customers on a level that inspired them to vote for our store! We love our community, and winning this award reinforces that our community appreciates what we do!



Another award we received in early March was for our *Morsel* magazine, which won a Silver Addy for Magazine Design in the American Advertising Awards. Conducted annually by the American Advertising Federation (AAF), the local Ad Club phase is the first of a three-tier national competition. Concurrently, all across the country, local entrants vie to win an ADDY Award – recognition as the very best in their markets. Entries receiving the Silver award are considered outstanding and worthy of recognition.

The Co-op's *Morsel* is a publication written and designed all in-house with content related to upcoming events, educational articles, recipes, and more. Freelance writer, Monica Tichenor, is a fantastic writer who writes the majority of the articles, and the Co-op's Brand Manager, Amy Dion, designs the overall look. Our goal is to create a high-end publication that brings value to our community through relatable stories, factual information, and connections to community resources.



Eat Well, Be Well

Building Healthier Communities Through Link Match

by **Monica Tichenor**

Good nutrition is the cornerstone of a healthy lifestyle – and you'll find plenty of research conducted over the course of decades to prove it. According to studies published by a wide variety of organizations, from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to the National Library of Medicine, diets rich in fruits and vegetables can lower blood pressure, improve gut health, boost immunity, stabilize blood sugar, and even lower the likelihood of developing serious health conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, and cancer.

Why Access to Healthy Food Matters

Everyone should have access to healthy food, but that's not the case for millions of U.S. households. Families identified as low-income struggle daily with food insecurity – a lack of consistent access to fresh produce – and many simply can't afford healthier food options, which can in turn lead to nutritional deficiencies and poor health outcomes.

In research published recently through the U.S. government's Healthy People 2030 initiative, a 10-year measurable public health objective, the USDA reported that 5% (or roughly 17-million) of U.S. households were food insecure and/or fell below the federal poverty line – and the food insecurity status of the adults in those households proved to be a strong predictor of a long list of chronic health conditions, including hypertension, coronary heart disease, stroke, cancer, asthma, arthritis, and kidney disease.

Experimental Station, a statewide not-for-profit organization based on the south side of Chicago, is helping to improve health outcomes for Illinois families by narrowing the accessibility and affordability gap through the Link Match program.

What is Link Match?

Link Match is a product of Link Up Illinois, an initiative launched in 2009 to make it easier for low-income families who participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to access and afford fresh produce.

"Link Match doubles the value of Link/EBT purchases at farmers markets, farm stands, food co-ops, and independent grocery and corner stores across Illinois," says Jennifer Paulson, executive director of Food Works, a non-profit organization dedicated

to creating a sustainable food economy in southern Illinois. "Customers can use their Link card to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables, and Link Up Illinois will match their Link purchase dollar-for-dollar, up to \$25.00 per cardholder per day."

One out of six Illinoisans qualifies for Link benefits, adds Jennifer, a statistic that shows the need is great for access to healthy fresh foods. "Link Match allows individuals to swipe their card at approved locations, receive Link Match funds, and use those funds for fresh fruits and vegetables they may not otherwise be able to buy."

How is Link Match Funded?

Link Match is currently funded by a grant through the USDA's Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP). Grant monies are in turn distributed by Experimental Station through an annual application process to farmers markets and select grocery stores.

Food Works became involved with the Link Match program six years ago, says Jennifer. "We first got started in 2016 to support the Carbondale Community Farmers Market. Now we are an approved Link Hub and will be supporting eight markets for the 2022 market season."

The Neighborhood Co-op Grocery's participation in Link Match began around the same time, says Francis Murphy, General Manager of the Co-op.

"In late 2016, the Co-op wrote a letter of support for Experimental Station's efforts to obtain funding for the Link Up Illinois Double Value Coupon Program through the USDA's Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) grant," he says. "We committed to working with Experimental Station and Southern Illinois Healthcare to serve as a pilot retail grocery site in an effort to increase access to locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables among low-resource families of southern Illinois. We've continued to apply each year since then and as customer participation has grown, so has our grant award. This year, we received a record \$28,000 to distribute Link Match coupons through the Co-op."

While the Neighborhood Co-op and Food Works both participate in the Link Match program for essentially the same reason – to give low-income southern Illinoisans increased access to affordable nutritious food and to strengthen the bond between local food producers and consumers – they apply for and implement the program separately. As a result, usage requirements vary depending on who distributes them.

Link Match coupons distributed by the Neighborhood Co-op may be used only at the Co-op. Coupons acquired from Food Works, while not transferable to the Co-op, can be used at area farmers markets, such as the Carbondale Farmers Market (spring/summer) and Carbondale Community Farmers Market (winter), among others.

Additionally, Food Works offers local farmers markets technical and operational assistance with the Link Match process.

“We submit an application each year for all of the markets that we will support with Link Match funds,” explains Jennifer. “The money is disbursed to Food Works and then we work with each individual market to support them with funding and resources. In this way, we act as a Link Hub because many farmers markets are run by volunteers who don’t have time to handle the administrative, record keeping, and reporting requirements of a grant.”

Spreading the Word

Link Match is a win-win program for everyone involved – families who struggle financially get access to locally-grown fresh fruits and vegetables at an affordable cost, thereby improving their overall health and quality of life, while local growers, farmers markets, co-ops, and independent grocers expand their customer base, which supports the local economy. But it does no good to have such a program in place if the people who could benefit from it aren’t aware of its availability.

That’s why raising awareness about the Link Match program is a primary objective for both the Co-op and Food Works.

“The Co-op promotes the Link Match program on our website, through social media, and in press announcements to local media,” says Francis. “We also incorporate Link Match messaging on our shopping center marquee and in banners, fliers, signs, advertisements in print media, and digital advertising at the Co-op’s cashier stations. We’ve also offered in-store tastings, recipe cards, and general information about Link Match.”

Food Works utilizes many of the same communication channels to inform people about Link Match. “We tap into as many avenues as we can – our website, social media, fliers around the community, TV and radio advertising, and outreach partners who can help spread the word,” says Jennifer. “This is a key goal of our new Link Hub – to increase awareness for the program throughout southern Illinois.”



How to Participate

If you have a Link/EBT card, you can participate in Link Match! Just swipe your card to purchase your qualifying groceries at the Neighborhood Co-op or when you buy fresh fruits and vegetables at a farmers market. With every Link purchase up to \$25.00, you’ll receive a dollar-for-dollar-match, or an additional \$25.00, to purchase more fresh produce. You can use your Link Match coupons on the same day of your initial purchase or use the coupons at a later date. You don’t have to sign up or give out personal information – and the more coupons you redeem, the more grant money the Co-op and Food Works receives through Experimental Station and Link Up Illinois.

New this year at the Co-op are set usage dates for Link Match coupons. This allows staff to monitor how many coupons have been handed out and what’s been redeemed, giving those who use the coupons more opportunities to save. Keep track of the following dates to enjoy the full value of your Link Match coupons!

- **Round 1 coupons: March 1-September 30**
- **Round 2 coupons: July 1-September 30**
- **Round 3 coupons: October 1-December 31**

Learn More About Link Match

If you represent a farmers market and have questions about setting up Link Match, contact Jennifer Paulson at Food Works at 618-370-3287, ext.102 or jennifer@fwsoil.org, or visit the Food Works website at fwsoil.org. You can also learn more about Link Match on the Neighborhood Co-op’s website at neighborhood.coop/link-match-program or by calling the Co-op at 618-529-3533. For information about Link Up Illinois and Experimental Station, go online at experimentalstation.org.



LET'S GET CREATIVE

Building Community Through Art

by *Monica Tichenor*

From inspiring creativity to reducing stress, from building cross-cultural connections to encouraging civic engagement, art in all of its manifestations is powerful medicine and can act as a catalyst for positive change in both individuals and society. Artspace 304 and Project Human X are two local art organizations whose efforts to showcase the arts and encourage creativity embody this view of art as a force for good.

Art as Healer and Change Agent

"Public art has the power to transform and heal a community," says Chuck Benya, Executive Director of Artspace 304 in Carbondale, formerly known as Carbondale Community Arts. "It sparks conversation and is a positive way to impact businesses and neighborhoods. For many, it becomes a familiar beacon of beauty, a point of pride, and a starting point for new beginnings."

For SIU alum Marquez Scoggin, who along with wife and fellow SIU alum, Cree Sahidah Glanz, owns and operates Project Human X in Carbondale, one of the key roles art plays in the community is its ability to forge connections between people of different backgrounds whose paths might not otherwise intersect.

"Art brings communities together," says Marquez. "It's really that simple. Art gives us the opportunity to come together, to share our unique perspectives, and to give each other the space and opportunity to express ourselves in a non-judgmental space, which is very healing. No matter what culture you come from or what color you are, we all have an appreciation for



(Left) Marquez Scoggin, co-owner of Project Human X, stands in front of his artwork on exhibit at the facility. Photo credit: Monica Tichenor. (Right) Local musician Beth Davis performs at Artspace 304 as part of the Sandwiches and Strings performance series. Photo credit: Artspace 304.

art – and giving people a dedicated community space where they can create together, to experience joy and make new connections with new human beings, is so important. It allows us to experience our shared humanity on a deeper level.”

The Arts and Culture

Community arts programs can play a vital role in cultural planning – a public process in which local municipalities and the arts community collaborate to create and implement a shared cultural vision, which in turn strengthens community bonds and the local economy.

“Cultural plans act as mirrors for a community – they are, ideally, a reflection of the community’s culture that they serve,” says Americans for the Arts, a non-profit organization that works to build recognition of and support for the arts nationwide. *[Source: americansforthearts.org/by-topic/culture-and-communities]*

Through cultural planning, cities assess current resources and facilities, identify needs, develop an artistic vision that best reflects their community’s values and unique qualities, and seek funding to implement those creative efforts.

Locally, Artspace 304 is working to create a more focused awareness of and support for the arts in Carbondale and the broader southern Illinois community – a commitment that can help foster an environment from which cultural planning can successfully emerge.

“We work very closely with local municipalities across the region and look forward to making even stronger connections throughout Southern Illinois as one of the largest geographical local arts networks in the state,” says Chuck. “One of Artspace 304’s main priorities is to build these relationships so we can better serve the people who represent one-third of the state. We have already formed the Southern Illinois Artists’ Council with representation from eight counties.”

Project Human X also believes that partnerships are vital when it comes to growing interest in the arts and building community connections.

“We’ve had some preliminary conversations with board members at Artspace 304, who love what we’re doing and appreciate our vision,” says Marquez. “We’re talking about collaborative spaces, securing funding for local artists to hone their craft, and the possibility of working together on future projects that can enhance the region.”

Continue to next page



A kids painting event led by Cree Sahidah Glanz at Project Human X. Photo credit: Marquez Scoggin.

Building Community at Artspace 304

Located at 304 W. Walnut in Carbondale, Artspace 304 offers a wide variety of services, from providing public space for artists to exhibit their work and helping them to secure grant funding through the Illinois Arts Council Agency to hosting youth workshops, artist-in-residence programs, and cultural events such as exhibits, concerts, and film screenings.

In addition to existing services, Artspace 304 is excited to announce the return of youth programming, which was sidelined over the past two years by the pandemic.

"The last weekend of July, area high school students in our All Southern High School Theatre Project (ASHTP) will be performing *Grease* on the McLeod Theater stage to the delight of their family, friends, and neighbors," says Chuck. "We're also entering the third year of our Southern Illinois Mural Project. Visionary artists will create large-scale murals to welcome visitors to their cities. This year we'll have an opportunity to add six more murals to the five throughout the region that we have already underwritten."

In keeping with their mission to broaden public access to the arts, Artspace 304 recently purchased additional space at 607 South Illinois. "We will offer expanded retail for regional artists

and maker space for artists, and youth classes and other programming," says Chuck. "Children ages 5 and up will roll up their sleeves and get smudgy. We're also making significant efforts to be more accessible to underserved communities and rural populations across the 25 counties of southern Illinois."

Artspace 304 also serves a vital role as an advocate for local artists during legislative sessions of the Illinois General Assembly.

"As the area's local arts agency, a key role is to help ensure that the artists, arts educators, and organizations that support the arts know their voices are heard in Springfield," says Chuck. "We provide that representation through different channels and, in turn, we help the arts community access the resources available from the state and private foundations."

Building Community at Project Human X

Housed within the building complex on "the island," at 715 S. Illinois, Project Human X is a community art center and gallery that hosts a wide variety of activities to engage people with the arts, their inner creative spirit, and each other – and the list of artistic opportunities they offer has grown exponentially since they first opened two years ago.

"We're now connected with over 50 committed local artists, who are developing their artistry every day, and are honored

to give them space to exhibit and sell their work," says Marquez. "We offer open studio time and all kinds of classes for youth and adults, including glow paint nights, freestyle paint nights, paint and sip events in partnership with local vineyards (which average between 30-50 guests), stress-relief paint workshops, art therapy workshops, and plein air events, with more classes being added all the time. We also offer private art lessons, as well as private and corporate team building events."

New to the growing list of classes offered at Project Human X is the addition of resin workshops, which have proven to be especially popular.

"We've sold out every resin workshop we've offered so far!" says Marquez. "Most people haven't experienced working with resin before and seem to appreciate the educational component. They're excited to be learning a new art form. We've also started offering watercolor workshops and will host our first clay workshop in May. We're offering PHX courses, as well, so people can work more intensively with a particular medium over the course of multiple classes instead of at a one-time event."

New activities Project Human X would like to pursue include creating a collaborative mural painting on Boyton Street in Marion, Ill., making their facility more accessible to the elderly and the differently abled, incorporating art therapy workshops for specific groups, and collaborating with other local groups to host a Southern Illinois Arts Festival featuring visual artists, music artists, performance artists, workshops, and more.

How You Can Support the Arts

One of the easiest ways you can support the arts locally is simply by attending both paid and free events taking place at venues around the region.

"Participate in events at Artspace 304 – and events at other venues, such as exhibits at the African American Museum in Carbondale or Cedarhurst in Mt. Vernon, public library readings, sculpture gardens, or a high school art show," says Chuck. "Join Artspace 304's Facebook and Instagram pages and sign up for our newsletter. Become a regular visitor to our website at artspace304.org to see what's happening in our area

and to browse our online retail store, shop304. Bring a friend with you to see our latest exhibition and check out what local artists have to offer in our gift shop."

In addition to signing up for classes and workshops, people can support Project Human X by making a monetary donation via PayPal at projecthumanx.com or via the Cash App at \$projecthumanx. Donations of canvases, paint, and other art materials are also welcome, adds Marquez.

"We also encourage people to join us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, and YouTube and to spread the word about what we do by sharing their participation in our events on their own social media pages," he says. "Art is for everybody. It unites people and brings joy – and we want as many people as possible to experience it in their own lives."

**"When artists give form to revelation,
their art can advance, deepen,
and potentially transform the
consciousness of their community."**

– Alex Grey, American visual artist

Embrace Your Creative Self

People often mistakenly think that if they don't draw, paint, write, sing, dance, or play an instrument, they don't possess any creative abilities. But, this isn't true! We all have the potential to be creative – and it manifests differently in each person.

Perhaps your creativity lies in your resourcefulness or problem-solving ability. Maybe you're a creative gift giver, have a flair for fashion, can grow anything, or excel in the kitchen. In whatever shape your creative self emerges, give it space to grow. Nourish it with love, care, and patience, and watch your life, and your community, bloom in response.



STORMY WEATHER

WHY IT FASCINATES US AND HOW TO STAY SAFE by **Monica Tichenor**

We all know the joke. “Don’t like the weather in <insert location here>? Wait 15-minutes, and it will change!” While it’s true that southern Illinois weather can fluctuate wildly, swinging from blistering heat and clear skies to bone-chilling cold and fierce thunderstorms in what feels like a nanosecond, there is no season that seems to spawn more unpredictable weather in our area than spring. Why are we so fascinated by spring’s stormy weather – and can being weather-wise really help to keep us safe?

Why We Look to the Skies

We’re all sky scanners to some degree, whether we’re admiring a colorful sunset, marveling at cloud formations, planning an outdoor event, or considering a weather-related career. But keeping a watchful eye to the sky also has a more practical purpose, especially for farmers, gardeners, and local growers whose livelihood can be threatened by inaccurate forecasts and extreme weather events. Veteran meteorologist Jim Rasor of Carterville, Ill. was largely inspired to pursue his career path for the latter reason.

“My interest in weather forecasting was utilitarian,” says the southern Indiana native. “Growing up on a small farm, I learned the impact of weather early and later grew to understand that bad weather information could cost the operation not just time but money. I hoped to learn to forecast to provide more accurate information to farmers like my grandfather in an effort to make their lives better.”

The Allure of Severe Weather

Witnessing the raw power of nature can be a heady experience. Who among us hasn’t been dazzled by a horizon lit up by flashes of lightning or trembled at the sight of a wall cloud out of which a tornado may suddenly emerge?

Severe weather inspires both fascination and fear in all of us. For some people, it can become an obsession. These individuals are often referred to as “storm chasers,” but the term can be misleading. Movies like the 1996 blockbuster *Twister*, while highly entertaining, do not necessarily present an accurate

depiction of severe weather or storm chasers themselves. Most storm chasers (and storm spotters, who are trained to watch for and report on specific weather conditions) are simply passionate about gathering data to help scientists better understand and predict extreme weather, which can save lives.

Severe weather as entertainment is a relatively new phenomenon, emerging in recent decades thanks in large part to newer technologies that allow us to experience the sights and sounds of extreme weather events from afar.

“Severe weather intrigue grew greatly starting in the late 1970s and ‘80s,” explains Jim. “Home video cameras started to capture more ‘movies’ of severe weather, especially tornadoes. This was great for the scientific community because we were gaining more data samples to help grow our understanding and evaluate theories more rapidly. It also turned tornadoes and destructive weather into entertainment. We started to see footage of severe weather on the national news and eventually in specialized programming. Cameras in cell phones also fanned the flames by providing even more views of severe events.”

Why Severe Storms Develop

Severe weather events have increased significantly in both intensity and frequency over the past 25 years. While climate change and rising global temperatures certainly fuel much of the stronger storms we’re seeing, other factors also influence weather patterns.

“Severe weather is most likely to occur near the transition areas between Earth’s established climate zones,” says Jim. These climate zones include tropical climates, dry climates, moist subtropical mid-latitude climates, moist continental mid-latitude climates (southern Illinois falls into this category), polar climates, and highlands.

“The zones are the same by definition, but their location moves as changes in temperature and humidity become semi-permanent,” says Jim. “For example, in the last decade, we’ve seen a shift away

from the traditional tornado alley in Oklahoma and Texas and watched more active weather in Mississippi and Alabama.”

While topography can significantly impact the climate of any given region, especially in mountainous areas, the rolling hills of southern Illinois don’t appear to generate that effect.

“I do not believe there are sufficient geographical elements in southern Illinois to have great influence on severe weather,” says Jim. “We do believe the line of bluffs stretching from Union County to Saline County, combined with updraft winds from the south, can increase some rain amounts, but there have been no studies to prove the theory.”

What You Should Know About Severe Weather

Dangerous thunderstorms can develop and shift rapidly, says Jim. The sun may be shining, but if your trusted local weather source says to be on high alert for bad weather, heed their warning and keep these important points in mind:

- Severe weather is complicated and trying to make your own forecasts can be dangerous. Listen to a source you trust. Listen for key words to help you know if you are threatened.
- Know the local map. Know your county and the counties around you. Know communities around you, as well. When you hear familiar places, you have a better idea of your threat level. Local media covers a very large geographical region and ongoing coverage could be for a storm moving towards you or a storm that is no threat to you at all.
- If you’re hearing reports of storm damage, take action to be safe. Once reports of damage materialize, the event has moved to a new level.
- Not all storms are the same, requiring attention to direction and speed of movement with every storm. Listen for speed of movement and timing of arrival at your location. Severe weather can move rapidly and that can lead to a ‘surprise’ arrival.



Striking Facts About Lightning

We've all sat on a front porch or in our backyards and watched the sky light up as a storm approaches. While lightning can be mesmerizing to watch, it can be an incredibly destructive force, generating 300-million volts or more in a single strike.

"Lightning is much more dangerous than most folks understand," warns Jim. "If you can see lightning bolts moving down or if you can hear thunder, you are close enough to be struck and killed. Lightning safety is as simple as moving indoors. A vehicle can also provide protection from a lightning strike, as the electric current will stay in the metal skin and travel around the occupants."

And don't think you're in the clear just because the sun is shining overhead and an approaching storm isn't yet visible or appears far away. You are still at risk.

"It is possible to be struck by lightning while looking up at blue skies and a storm on the horizon," says Jim. "Some lightning bolts travel from the top of the storm away from the core and strike the ground several miles away." In fact, according to the National Weather Service, "bolts from the blue" (cloud-to-ground flashes that typically emerge from the side of a thunderstorm cloud) can travel 10-15+ miles from a thunderstorm's core!

Staying Safe When You're Not at Home

Most of us spend more time in our cars than we care to admit – and we've likely all been caught in a storm while driving. If you're planning to travel, research the weather forecast for your route. Knowing when and where dangerous weather is expected, and adjusting your travel schedule accordingly, could mean the difference between life and death.

"Be aware before you travel that storms are possible," says Jim. "Pulling over and waiting out a storm in a café or shop is an inconvenience of delay. Dying by driving into a storm is permanent. Severe weather is progressive and will clear a path quickly. Pulling over is not enough. Exit the road and the vehicle and wait out the event in a sturdy structure."


But what if we're in a different location when a storm pops up, such as a large retail store or a mobile home? What steps can we take to minimize our risk of serious injury?

"Any time you are in a building that you are less familiar with, listen to staff and their announcements," says Jim. "They have drills and exercises to make sure they can help keep you safe. In general, the bathrooms area of a shopping facility should be safer than being on the sales floor. A mobile home, however, offers no real protection from a direct hit by a tornado. I always recommend having an established plan to leave well before storms are expected and spend time with friends or family in a more sturdy structure."

Your Severe Weather Safety Kit

A good defense is the best offense, so the saying goes. Developing a clear safety plan is your best defense against severe weather events and can save lives. A key part of that defense is assembling an accessible safety kit. Among the items Jim recommends you include are:

- First aid kit
- Flashlight(s)
- Battery-powered AM/FM radio, with extra batteries
- Bottled water
- Fully-charged cell phone
- Backup cell phone power supply
- Critical prescription medication



Other items you might want to consider include an NOAA weather radio, a sturdy bike helmet to wear during tornado warnings, and a whistle for help, if trapped.

“Reaction has improved to severe weather emergencies, so help will likely get to an impacted area shortly after the event,” says Jim. “Keep your safety kit very near your safe spot and wear ‘outdoor-chore’ type clothes and closed-toe shoes or boots, which can protect you from debris like broken glass and nails if you are exiting a destroyed building.”

While a cell phone is important to have on hand in an emergency, texting is the preferable mode of communication after a tornado or severe storm, explains Jim.

“Communication after a tornado can be difficult by cell phone. Towers can be destroyed or damaged and usage spikes can overload the system. Texting rather than voice calling is more dependable and puts less of a strain on the infrastructure available.”

Severe Weather Resources: Less is More

Type the words “severe weather” in your Internet browser’s search engine, and you’re likely to get a long list of weather-related content. When it comes to identifying trustworthy online or social media weather resources, however, less is more, says Jim.

“There is so much noise associated with weather on the Internet that I encourage following or checking fewer sources rather than more. Be comfortable with a small number of information providers, and you will see fewer conflicting opinions leading to less confusion. For example, the National Weather Service, which issues all weather warnings, has spent considerable energy to increase their presence on social media, so it’s logical to make sure you are following your local NWS office.”

Weather apps for cell phones can be especially helpful, but again, it’s important to find one you’re happy with and to keep it updated, says Jim. “Be sure to allow the app to know your location at all times because this feature will warn you even if you are away from your residence,” he adds. Among top weather apps for mobile phones are The Weather Channel and AccuWeather, which you can find on the iPhone App Store or Google Play.

Knowledge is Power – And Safety

A calm mind makes better decisions in a challenging situation. Knowing what to do before, during, and after severe weather can greatly increase your chances of surviving extreme events like a tornado or flash flood. Visit the following websites to learn fascinating facts about weather, the science behind it, and how to stay safe in a weather emergency.

- National Weather Service: weather.gov
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA): www.noaa.gov/weather
- NOAA National Severe Storms Laboratory: nssl.noaa.gov
- The Weather Channel: weather.com
- Ready Campaign: ready.gov/severe-weather

What's New at the Co-op

Pines Green Powders

Greens are a low-calorie, nutrient-dense source of minerals that aid in muscle recovery after you work out. A serving of our greens gives you a convenient source of hard-to-obtain minerals like calcium, potassium, and manganese for optimal muscle and energy production. Mix it with a glass of juice or a smoothie to get the benefits of green vegetables every day!

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- Alfalfa Powder (10 oz)
- Barley Grass Powder (10 oz)
- Mighty Greens® Super-food Blend (8 oz)



Field Roast Breakfast Sandwich

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Field Roast began in Seattle over twenty years ago. The combination of European charcuterie methods and the Asian mien ching traditions to craft plant-based meats and cheeses from grains, fresh-cut vegetables, herbs, and spices became a winning process that paved the way for all the enticing and delicious food we continue to create today.

Bragg's Nutritional Yeast - New flavors!

You may be familiar with Nutritional Yeast's "cheesy" flavor, but now we have roasted garlic and smoky BBQ! This vegan seasoning is perfect for a cheese replacement and is packed with B Vitamins. Nutritional yeast is a unique yeast strain and is not the same as baking yeast; therefore, it cannot be used interchangeably with active yeast in recipes. This yeast strain was selected for its nutrient composition (protein content) and was fortified with B vitamins to complement vegetarian diets with essential nutrients.

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