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Power industry faces clean-energy reckoning

By DENNIS GRUBAUGH

A battle continues over energy regulation proposals that failed to muster the power needed to make it through the Illinois Legislature this summer. Neither the utility industry nor clean-power advocates are happy with the present state of talks that fell apart

on the last day of the spring session. The unprecedented effort to rework energy policy in Illinois is viewed as critical to the survival of power plants throughout the state, as well as the direction of renewable energy programs. Left pending are proposals that have the potential to zap the pocket-books of both consumers and utilities.

The last time policy saw such massive change was in the mid-1990s when customers became interested in shopping for their own electric supply. By 1997, Illinois had approved electric deregulation that kept utilities as regulated delivery companies but allowed them to operate on the free market, which those companies

said has done a lot to keep costs reasonable for consumers in the years since. Patrick Evans, president of the Illinois Energy Association, said the Land of Lincoln has one of the largest electric power industries of any state, representing a large investment.

See POWER, Page 6

‘Uncle Gene’ lends history of goodwill to Love a Senior Day

By DENNIS GRUBAUGH

Eugene Verdu has dedicated his life as a missionary, teacher, gerontologist, and advocate for needy children. Now he’s lending his inspiration to a special one-day event that will celebrate America’s fastest-growing demographic. “Love a Senior Day,” a celebration of the contributions of senior citizens, will be held at Belle-Clair Fairgrounds & Expo Center on Oct. 8. A new public charity called the Uncle Gene Foundation, recently founded by Verdu, has accepted an invitation to be the host organization and will collaborate with the nonprofit Love a Senior Company to present the event.

The day will feature area vendors, food, music, presentations, senior performances, prizes, guest speakers, and fun for the family.

“It’s going to be a big day,” said host organizer Mike Stith, who has been busy lining up sponsors. Stith is volunteering as director of the Uncle Gene Foundation and works closely with and is a volunteer director for Love a Senior Company, a Pueblo, Colo.-based nonprofit that offers free events for seniors around the country.

“We’re getting great early support from sponsors and vendors, as well as from St. Clair County, and support from local mayor’s offices,” Stith said.



Gene Verdu, of Belleville, whose new Uncle Gene Foundation will help benefit seniors and needy children.

So far, sponsors include Cambridge House Retirement Communities, Ameren Illinois, and St. Clair County Interdepartmental Grants. Early vendors include EmpowerMe Wellness, The Esquiline, St. Clair County Transit District, Cedars of Lebanon Apartments, Bradford Place Assisted Living, Adaptive Equipment&

Caregiving Corner, Clear Captions, St. Clair County Housing Authority, St. Clair County Mental Health Board, Brightly Senior Living, and TreeHouse Wildlife Center (in Jersey County).

The aim of Love a Senior Day is to provide an opportunity for seniors to get out for a day of fun. “We’ve all been cooped up

too long,” Stith said. Fliers will be distributed in August and billboards are planned, he said. People will need tickets to access the event, but they are free and available at participating businesses.

With the fairgrounds rented and the vendors and sponsors now showing interest, Stith said the biggest hurdle might be the pandemic and where things stand in October. But “it’s a large enough venue where we can socially distance and require masks, if necessary,” he said.

Stith, of Edwardsville, is the founder of One Legacy LLC, a company he formed several years ago to promote meaningful senior activities and collect the life stories of people in their retirement years.

One of his life’s best experiences, he said, has been meeting Verdu, who turns 81 this month and who has had a notable career at home and abroad.

Verdu’s philanthropy began as a teenager, working as a Catholic missionary for the Jesuit Papal Volunteers. It continued for more than 50 years as he helped hundreds of children in Belize.

His work began in 1961, at age 19, when he was invited to be schoolteacher in San Ignacio, Belize. He taught there for just two years but returned many times afterwards to visit the many close friends he met while teaching.

See UNCLE GENE, Page 2

Loan lets older homeowners look forward by thinking in reverse

By DENNIS GRUBAUGH

Increasingly, a loan program born decades ago is keeping older homeowners in their residences for longer periods. Reverse mortgages were officially authorized by the U.S. government in the 1980s, but the first one, according to some, may have taken place 60 years ago in Portland, Maine.

The loan option has helped more than 1.2 million homeowners since the beginning, said Steve Irwin, president of the National Reverse Mortgage Lenders Association based in Washington.

A reverse mortgage is basically a loan that under the right circumstances would allow a borrower to age in place. Reverse mortgages allow people 62 and older ac-

cess to the home equity they have built up in their homes. Payment of the loan is deferred until the property owner dies, sells, or moves out. Because there are no required mortgage payments on a reverse mortgage, interest is added to the loan.

Eligible property types include single-family homes, two- to four-unit properties, manufactured homes (built

after June 1976), condominiums, and townhouses. Co-ops do not qualify.

Borrowers are responsible for property taxes and homeowner’s insurance.

Borrowers can choose a payment plan of their choice. They can:

- Establish a line of credit;

■ See REVERSE, Page 7

Physicians Groups of Southwestern Illinois
Pages 9-11



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