



**Sumner-Cowley
Electric Co-op, Inc.**

Building on our past. Lighting the way to the future.

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**SUMNER-COWLEY
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE**

NEWS FROM THE **WHEAT CAPITAL**

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Ellis Island Farm

Supporting local makers and growing community connections in Belle Plaine

Nestled in the heart of Belle Plaine, Kansas, a small town where everyone knows your name, Ellis Island Farm is a business built on passion, community and a little bit of humor. Owned and operated by SCEC member **MICHELLE ELLIS**, this quaint yet thriving store has become a go-to destination not just for fresh, local products but for the spirit of collaboration and support that defines Belle Plaine itself.

Michelle’s journey to opening Ellis Island Farm started with a simple, yet pivotal moment in 2023. While working at a smaller, more simple version of her

current store in downtown Belle Plaine, an older woman named Miss Jo, riding her scooter, approached Michelle with a request. “Can you help me find some fresh vegetables? I can’t drive out of town, and I can’t find anything locally.”

Without hesitation, Michelle replied, “Hold my beer.”

That moment sparked something. Belle Plaine, often referred to as a “food desert” due to the lack of grocery stores and basic food staples, was missing a place where residents could easily access local food and goods.

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LEFT: Michelle Ellis points out her Retail/Service Merit Award. **RIGHT:** Ellis Island Farm’s Heat and Eat meals are a big hit!



Ellis Island Farm *Continued from page 12A* ▶

Michelle knew she could make a difference, and that's exactly what she did.

Michelle opened Ellis Island Farm with the goal of creating a space that not only offered farm fresh eggs from her personal flock and grass-fed beef from local farms like the Griffith Family Farms and Maze Ranch, but also featured 17 other local small businesses that Michelle affectionately refers to as her “producers.” These partners, many of them being SCEC members, bring everything from spices, seasonings, and teas, to handmade jewelry, home accessories, hair products, artwork, jams, jellies and even freezer meals. She even brings in essentials like bread and milk from the big box stores to ensure the store offers something for everyone.

But Michelle's shop is about so much more than the products. She says her “warped humor” is reflected in everything from quirky mugs to hats with funny sayings — proof of the eclectic spirit that infuses every corner of Ellis Island Farm. Her goal? To make sure customers feel at home.

“I want to support everyone,” she says with a smile. “I want Belle Plaine to stay small, but I want it to thrive. There's so much charm here, and it's a place that welcomes you in with open arms.”

Her passion for Belle Plaine is evident, and her mission extends beyond business. Michelle has made it a point to support everyone around her, especially women in business. Her commitment to strengthening her community has only grown since she settled in Belle Plaine 14 years ago, after being born an “Army Brat” in Germany and living in numerous places throughout her life.

“I've always had a gypsy soul,” she admits. “But Belle Plaine is home. This town has given me the strength to put down roots and build something meaningful. And I want to give back as much as I can.”

A self-proclaimed “green thumb,” Michelle operates her own farm, which is home to cattle, hogs, goats, rabbits,



chickens and a large garden. The knowledge she shares about farming and gardening is as valuable as the products she sells. Her son, who has developed a passion for gardening, credits everything he knows to his mom's expertise.

Her belief in the power of community isn't just a slogan — Michelle has personally delivered goods to elderly residents and others in need who can't make it into town. She makes sure that everyone has access to what they need, and it's this personal touch that makes Ellis Island Farm stand out.

One of Michelle's proudest ventures is the “Makers Market” she hosts every year starting in March. Every third Saturday of each month, vendors from across the area set up at the market outside her store, offering their homemade and handcrafted products. It's a time for the community to gather, support local businesses, and connect. When you're in town, don't miss the Saturday breakfast buffet at “The Mystic Kitchen” down the road or the treasures waiting for you at “Reimagined,” another Belle Plaine gem.

A strong advocate for women in business, Michelle carefully curates the products she sells. When you walk into Ellis Island

FROM LEFT: Ellis Island Farm prides itself on affordability. Just check out the price of a loaf of bread. Local produce is seasonally offered including green beans, potatoes, onions, tomatoes, lettuce, radishes and more. Green beans were a hot commodity in 2024!





FAR LEFT: Michelle is known for her magic spice blends.

MIDDLE: A variety of goods can be found at Ellis Island Farm. There's something for everyone!

RIGHT: Ellis Island Farm offers various local cheeses in-store.

Farm, you'll find only one candle vendor, one potato farmer, one hat maker, and one strawberry farmer — ensuring there's a uniqueness to everything.

"It's not about competition," she says. "It's about ensuring everyone has their place, their moment to shine."

The heart of Ellis Island Farm is rooted in Michelle's Native American bloodline and the holistic practices she values. "Strength, grit and love — those are the core principles of who I am and what I try to bring into my business," she says.

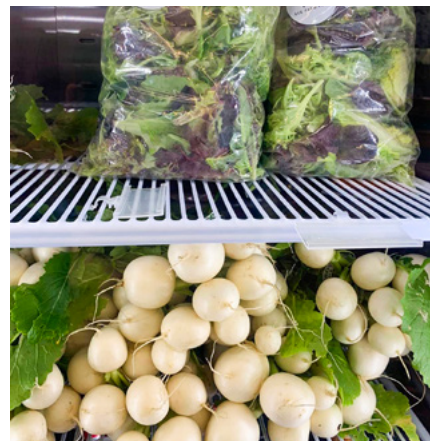
Michelle's story is one of resilience, kindness and deep love for her community. She may be known for her smile and her quick wit, but it's her unwavering determination to support others that has truly made Ellis Island Farm a success.

If you haven't visited Ellis Island Farm yet, make it a point to do so. Michelle's personal touch, combined with the talents of local artisans and farmers, makes it more than just a store — it's a community hub, a place where neighbors support each other, and where every customer is treated like family.

As Michelle says, "I want everyone to leave here feeling like they matter, because they do."

And Belle Plaine, with its strong sense of community, has certainly made a place for Ellis Island Farm — and Michelle Ellis — in its heart.

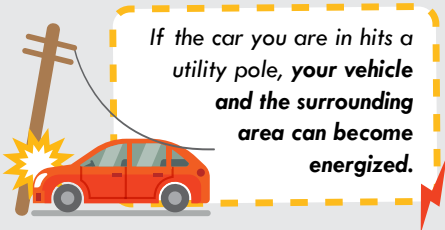
For those interested in featuring their products at Ellis Island Farm, Michelle welcomes new vendors with open arms. She ensures a balanced and curated selection, so that each vendor has a unique space in the store. Contact Michelle for more information on how to become part of this one-of-a-kind local marketplace.



KNOW WHAT TO DO



if in an Auto Accident with Power Lines



If the car you are in hits a utility pole, your vehicle and the surrounding area can become energized.

Even if you do not touch lines or equipment, you can still be killed or seriously injured.



1. Do NOT leave the car, and warn others to stay away.

2. Call 911 to have the utility notified.



3. Wait until a utility professional has told you it is safe.



The **only** reason to exit the vehicle is **if it's on fire.**

If the car is on fire, jump clear of the vehicle: with feet together, and without touching the car and the ground at the same time.



Continue to **hop away** with your **feet together** as far as you can.



Learn more at



18 Years of Service at Sumner-Cowley

In February, **LEAH DROUHARD** celebrated 18 years with Sumner-Cowley Electric Cooperative (SCEC) as our dedicated cashier/receptionist. Throughout her time here, Leah has become a cherished member of our team, known for her friendly and welcoming demeanor. Her position allows her to interact with our members daily, something she truly enjoys, and she takes pride in providing excellent service. Leah's knowledge of SCEC's processes and her dependable nature make her an invaluable part of our cooperative family.

Outside of work, Leah leads an active and fulfilling life. She enjoys shopping, baking and walking, but her greatest joy comes from spending time with her seven grandkids. A little-known fact about Leah is that she was once an avid water skier and impressively

popped right up on a slalom ski on her first try. When it comes to weaknesses, she confesses that coffee and chocolate are her irresistible indulgences. Her first car was a classic blue 1975 Mustang, which adds a fun bit of nostalgia to her story.

At SCEC, we truly appreciate Leah's hard work, dedication and the positive energy she brings to the office. Her commitment to our members and her role here is something we value deeply, and we wanted to take a moment to celebrate her and all that she contributes to our team. Here's to many more years of success and smiles, Leah!



Leah Drouhard

2025 ANNUAL MEETING

SAVE THE DATE



MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR SUMNER-COWLEY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE'S 2025 ANNUAL MEETING!



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