

AUGUST 2023

PENNLINES

Kid Wonders

Young Students Work to Change Their World

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ON THE COVER

Alissa Dunn, left, is one of this month's "kid wonders" – teens and youngsters living in cooperative service territories who are striving to make a difference. With her is Izzy Ostroksi, also a junior firefighter at Coudersport Volunteer Fire Department.

PHOTO BY
GLENN DUNN II

Not All Classrooms Have Four Walls



YOUTH TOUR, A WEEKLONG LEARNING experience hosted by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), is much more than a trip to Washington, D.C., for high school juniors and seniors. It's an opportunity — an opportunity for students to broaden their horizons and learn what cooperatives are all about.

Following a fun-filled, educational trip, students wrapped up the 2023 Youth Tour at the end of June. The journey — see all the photos on pages 20 and 21 — included 57 young adults and 17 chaperones from 12 electric cooperatives in Pennsylvania, Sussex Rural Electric Cooperative in New Jersey and Delaware County Electric Cooperative (EC) in New York.

Due to COVID-19, our cooperatives hadn't participated in the event for four years, but it was wonderful to be back in the nation's capital, where students had the opportunity to learn and explore. They met with members of Congress, heard from former Youth Tour students, and visited monuments, museums, and memorials throughout D.C. They even got to see a matinee at the Kennedy Center and attend a farewell evening event with more than 800 other Youth Tour participants, representing 22 states.

While Youth Tour provides students with the chance to network with peers, the teens also gain new perspectives while roaming our nation's capital and creating memories to last a lifetime.

Students found it difficult to pinpoint one favorite place or moment, as it changed each day as the number of visited landmarks and shared experiences grew. Some mentioned Arlington National Cemetery as the place that had the deepest impact. For others, it was stepping out of their comfort zone and making new friends. Many described the week as life-changing.

While in Washington, students also learned about the electric cooperative program and the benefits co-ops offer the communities they serve. The group attended an NRECA-sponsored course, "Co-ops 101," which helped students better understand cooperatives and the seven principles that guide them. And then we put many of those principles into action, demonstrating the importance of cooperation among cooperatives, education, training and information, and concern for community.

Those messages were driven home by Mat Kilgore, a lineworker from Iowa Lakes EC. He shared how he helped to bring power to a remote village in Guatemala through the NRECA International Program. Mat's story left the students in awe of the cooperative program and what it has done to change people's lives — not only in the United States, but also around the world.

In 2024, Youth Tour will be held June 16-21 at the Gaylord National Resort & Convention Center in National Harbor, Md. If your child will be a rising junior next year — or you know someone who will be — keep an eye on your local cooperative's *Penn Lines* pages for information on how they can participate in this once-in-a-lifetime experience. They won't regret it. 📸

STEPHANIE OKUNIEWSKI
PREA/ALLEGHENY MEMBER ENGAGEMENT SPECIALIST

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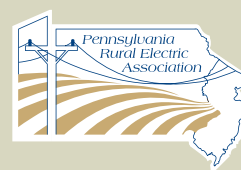
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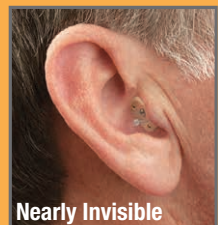
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CO-OPS AT THE HEART OF COMMUNITY

I recently had the opportunity to visit the Central European country of Slovakia. It was a family trip to connect with some of my wife's distant relatives.



We traveled from the capital city of Bratislava to the farming villages in the eastern part of the country, where her father grew up and still has family.

Located in the heart of Europe, Slovakia has been at the crossroads of much of European history, from the rise of the Austro-Hungarian Empire to the fall of the Berlin Wall. Part of the former Czechoslovakia, it became an independent nation in 1993, and today is part of the European Union. Its location has helped it become a modern logistics and distribution leader. Major car manufacturers have set up operations there, making it the "Detroit" of Central Europe.

While Slovakia's industrialization speaks to its promising future, the lush farmlands between the cities and towns reflect the country's rich agrarian roots. Sunflowers grow alongside wheat fields and cornrows, reminding me of Pennsylvania's rural farmlands and communities.

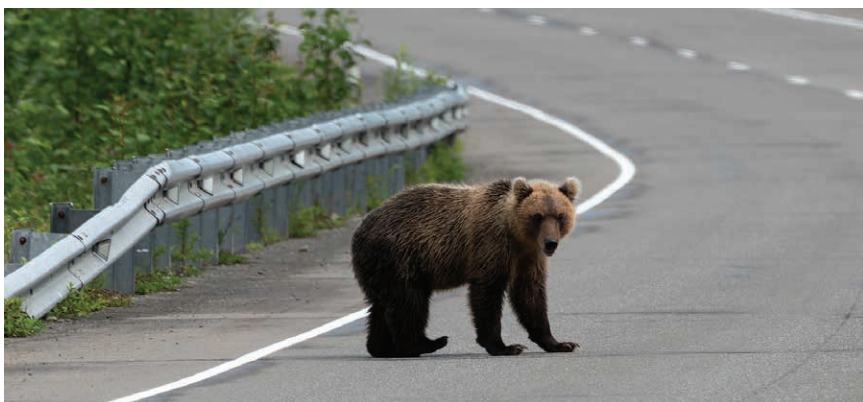
Strolling through a small town square, I saw something else that reminded me of our rural areas: a co-op store sign. The sign was for COOP Jednota, a local community supermarket. Curious about all things cooperative, I was pleased to learn that Jednota is a successful consumer cooperative in Slovakia, with more than 2,000 supermarkets and groceries throughout the countryside.

In fact, I learned Slovakia has a long history with cooperative organizations going back nearly 180 years. According to the Cooperative Union of the Slovak Republic (CUSR), Samuel Jurkovic is credited with establishing the country's first cooperative in 1845: The Farmers' Club, "a voluntary community founded with the aim of improving wealth, farming, crafts and general husbandry."

This community-driven purpose has helped cooperatives provide a stabilizing influence in periods of political and economic unrest throughout the country's history. By serving community needs, the CUSR notes, cooperatives have contributed significantly to the development of Slovakia's villages and towns – much in the same way electric cooperatives have helped develop rural areas in our own country.

So even in the heart of Europe, it's no surprise to find a cooperative at the heart of a community.

PETER A. FITZGERALD
EDITOR



LOOK BOTH WAYS: State lawmakers are hoping to secure federal funding to build more wildlife crossings near state highways – Pennsylvania currently has 35 – and reduce collisions between vehicles and animals.

OFF THE BEATEN PATH State explores adding more wildlife crossings near highways

Pennsylvania has 35 wildlife crossings — all of them state-highway underpasses — and lawmakers are hoping to secure federal funding to build more.

The House has commissioned a study about the crossings in an effort to reduce collisions between vehicles and animals.

Most of the current crossings are in the Commonwealth's northern and western counties, but some are in the more-developed southeastern part of the state, where hunting is limited and deer populations are increasing. State officials say animals that use the crossings include deer, bear, turtles and salamanders.

Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) staff will help identify appropriate locations for the crossings and "green chutes," which are corridors of fencing and plantings that direct animals into the crossings. The study should take about 18 months.

Two locations are already under consideration for new wildlife crossings: Route 219, between Meyersdale and Old Salesbury Road in Somerset County, and the State College Area Connector, between

Potters Mills Gap and the Mount Nittany Expressway.

OUT WITH THE OLD Is it time to adopt a new state song? Lawmakers think so

Pennsylvanians may soon be singing a different tune.

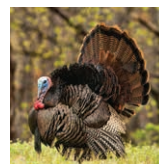
In a 138-64 vote, the state House of Representatives recently voted to establish an independent commission to review the history of the state song, solicit public suggestions and make recommendations for a new song. The resolution is now with the state Senate for concurrence.

The current state song, "Pennsylvania" by Eddie Khory and Ronnie Bonner, was adopted in 1990 by a similar commission and begins with the lyrics, "Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania. Mighty is your name." Proponents of changing the song say it's outdated and not well known by Pennsylvanians.

If you want to hear the current state song in its entirety, a quick search on your favorite internet browser will turn up examples.

TURKEY TIME Public asked to report wild turkey sightings

The Pennsylvania Game Commission is seeking the



public's help in surveying wild turkeys this summer.

The annual Pennsylvania Wild Turkey Sighting Survey opened July 1 and extends through Aug. 31. Public participation is important for population management, officials say, noting data collected will allow the game commission to monitor turkey productivity and long-term reproductive success.

Turkey sightings can be reported at pgcdatcollection.pa.gov/turkeybroodsurvey.

BUG OFF

Going outdoors? Protect yourself against disease-carrying ticks

State officials are encouraging nature lovers to protect themselves against Lyme disease and other vector-borne illnesses this summer.



"Whether visiting one of our 124 state parks or the Commonwealth's more than 2.2 million acres of state forestland, outdoor enthusiasts must

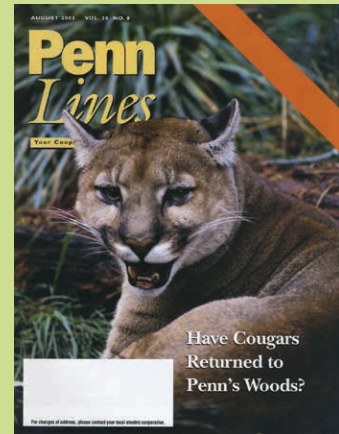
be cognizant of their surroundings when enjoying Pennsylvania's great outdoors," says Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Deputy Secretary Mike Walsh. "Just as strong sun or severe weather demand vigilance, Lyme disease requires the hiker and hunter, angler and birder, all to be prepared and proactive."

Walsh noted the first line of defense against Lyme disease and any other tick-borne illnesses is avoidance of tick-infested habitats, such as areas dense with shrubbery or tall grass. Repellents and protective clothing should also be used.

Pennsylvania reported 2,900 cases of Lyme disease in 2021. Over the last several years, the Commonwealth has consistently recorded one of the highest counts of suspected Lyme disease cases in the United States.

To learn how to protect yourself, your family and pets, visit the state Department of Health's website, health.pa.gov. (Go to "I'm looking for" in the top right corner, choose "Diseases & Conditions," and click on "Tick Diseases.")

TIME LINES



AUGUST 2003

By all accounts, the last eastern cougar was shot in Pennsylvania in 1891. Fast forward to 2003, however, and it seems the felines – once referred to as "panthers" and "catamounts" by homesteaders – were making a return to rural parts of the state. A number of eyewitnesses in cooperative territories were reporting encounters with the animals, which included hearing "woman-like" screams at night, finding paw prints and discovering suspicious livestock kills.

AUGUST



A MELTING POT OF FESTIVALS

Many of Pennsylvania's summer festivals celebrate its melting pot of cultures. Upcoming events include: St. Paul's Italian Festival in Erie, the Mount Jewett Swedish Festival in McKean County, and the San Rocca Festa in Monaca, all slated Aug. 11-13; and the Ukrainian Folk Festival and Summer Concert in North Wales, Aug. 27.

DID SOMEONE SAY ALE?

Set aside Saturday, Aug. 12, for the Somerset Antiques, Artisans & Ales event, which has been going strong for 52 years. Walk the borough's streets, visit with juried artists and antique dealers, and sample local ales and spirits. The free event will be held 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., rain or shine. Learn more at somersetcountychamber.com.



RELEASE YOUR INNER CHILD

Skipping stones at the local creek and summer go hand in hand. At the Rock in River Fest/2023 Pa. Stone-Skipping Championship in Franklin's Riverfront Park Aug. 19, this childhood pastime will get taken to a whole new level. Learn more at franklinpa.gov.

SUPPORT THE SQUONK

Regular *Penn Lines* readers may remember the Squonk from our October 2022 issue highlighting paranormal Pennsylvania. Squonkapalooza, a free, one-day, all-ages festival Aug. 26 at Johnstown's Central Park, celebrates this sad little cryptid and many others. Details at squonkapalooza.com.



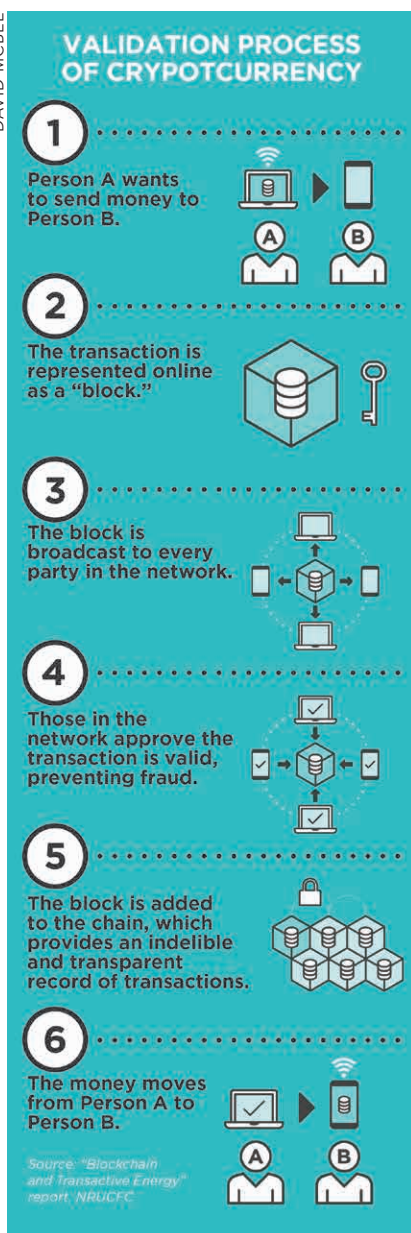
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Why Bitcoin Uses More Electricity Than Finland

Cryptocurrency has created a new class of companies, known as bitcoin miners – while also creating controversy

PAUL WESSLUND

DAVID MCBEE



THERE'S A NEW INDUSTRY YOU may have heard about that uses huge amounts of electricity — as much as all the refrigerators in the United States. And it may be coming to a town near you.

Cryptocurrency has been around less than 15 years, so if you're not familiar with bitcoin and other forms of digital currency, what you're about to read will likely sound strange.

Cryptocurrency is a form of money that exists only in the virtual world of the internet, and the annual amount of electricity required to support it already compares to the amount of electricity used in Finland. The U.S. Department of Energy compares its electricity use to 19 coal-fired power plants and foresees that increasing by at least 40% annually.

A new kind of mining industry

Cryptocurrency has created a new class of companies, known as bitcoin miners. It's also created controversy. At least one state has restricted bitcoin mining as a drain on local resources, while others are creating incentives to attract cryptocurrency jobs.

There are several cryptocurrencies, but bitcoin, launched by an anonymous founder in 2009, is the first and largest. There are some 200,000 bitcoin transactions a day, and about 420 million users of cryptocurrency worldwide.

Of course, the people exchanging all that currency want a guarantee of security — and that's what creates the heavy electricity use.

Bitcoin devised a method, known as "proof-of-work," that ensures the safety of its virtual money. It's a decentralized way of verifying a

transaction and decreasing the odds of fraud by creating a complicated mathematical puzzle for people on the internet to solve.

The impact of cryptocurrency

That idea might seem outlandish, but it's worked well enough that the proof-of-work market is valued at more than \$10 billion.

The technique calls for tons of electrically-powered computing capacity. Bitcoin miners often try to locate their data centers near a water supply, which is used as a coolant to keep the computers from overheating. Miners are also flocking to areas where electricity rates are low and regulation is likely to be less burdensome.

Bitcoin mining could potentially benefit electric utilities by making more efficient use of electricity. Data centers use power 24/7, including at night when excess electricity is available. And since the data centers aren't supplying a life-or-death service, bitcoin miners might be willing to accept a lower electric rate in return for having their power interrupted during times of peak electricity use.

The controversy over data mining's use of electricity could be resolved another way. Bitcoin's biggest competitor, ethereum, has changed its verification system from proof-of-work to something called "proof-of-stake." It's a similar technique that doesn't require solving a puzzle, which reduces energy use by more than 90%.

Whether cryptocurrency continues to use enormous amounts of electricity or finds less energy-intensive techniques will determine the future of a very young and very strange data mining industry.

LOTS OF POWER: Cryptocurrency is a form of money that exists only in the virtual world of the internet, and the annual amount of electricity required to support cryptocurrency already compares to the amount of electricity used in Finland.

PAUL WESSLUND writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives.

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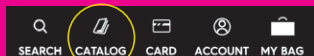
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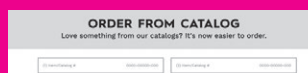
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KID WONDERS

Young Students Work to Change Their World

MICHAEL T. CRAWFORD



CONCERN FOR COMMUNITY DEFINES COOPERATIVES — it quite literally created the rural electrification movement, as everyday citizens here and elsewhere in the country rolled up their sleeves to deliver life-changing electricity to communities deemed unprofitable to investor-owned utility companies. To this day, these communities continue to labor to bring about a better tomorrow.

And it's never too early to start.

Tuukka Saari, the 8-year-old son of Bedford Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) member Tiffany Saari, saw an opportunity to help his community with a splash of fun — making tie-dye T-shirts.

“The reason I started is because I thought I would get money from it and give the money away to other people,” explains Tuukka, owner and CEO of Tie Dye by Tuukka. “I decided, ‘Let’s make a couple shirts. Hopefully they turn out good.’ They did, and we started selling them, made money, and donated it. I wanted to help and be nice to other people.”

The thought occurred to him after several of his friends were being bullied in school not long after his seventh birthday. Unable to convince the bullies to stop (he ultimately asked a teacher to intervene), he decided to find some way

BUSINESS MAN: Tuukka Saari, owner and CEO of Tie Dye by Tuukka, holds one of his tie-dye shirts at his own personal playground behind his home in Everett. Tuukka, the 8-year-old son of Bedford REC member Tiffany Saari, started the business to help others and is the youngest member of the Bedford County Chamber of Commerce.

PRODUCT DEMO: Tuukka Saari, 8, applies dye to a T-shirt on the front porch of his home in Everett. He has been producing tie-dye clothing out of his mother's kitchen for more than a year to raise money for local charities.

he could help others on his own. Equipped with countless tie-dye kits from his recent birthday celebration, Tuukka turned his kitchen into a tie-dye clothing production line.

"I thought we'll make some shirts for family, and that's as far as it would go," says Tiffany, who works at a veterinary medical center in Everett. "Well, then friends of family wanted some, and then their friends wanted some ... and it turned into 'The Kelly Clarkson Show' calling us.

"It turned into this huge thing we didn't really know what to do with, and he just wanted to keep doing it," she adds. "We've just been traveling down this road ever since."

Tuukka, now the youngest member of the Bedford County Chamber of Commerce, collects orders for his shirts on his website, tiedyebytuukka.com, which he launched after nearly 300 orders poured in from across the country following his appearance on the Clarkson show. He donates half the profits from the sale of his shirts to local charities and not-for-profit organizations. They include Your Safe Haven, a crime victim center for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault; the Special Olympics; Last Line, an organization that supports veterans; and the Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art.

He also sets aside a portion of his earnings for his dream car — a Lamborghini. As of mid-May, Tuukka had 1% of the dream-car money saved (the least expensive model of the luxury vehicle costs about \$200,000 new). But more than the hope of having a sleek sports car, Tuukka enjoys his work and the good causes his donations support.

"I want to help people," he says. "I want to be nice to people."

Hard work

As anyone who has wiped sweat from their brow knows, sometimes hard work — even for a noble cause — takes some getting used to.

It can also take courage and a fair amount of acting, or "faking it until you make it," according to Panther Press Editor-in-Chief LaWrynn "Zorian" Edwards, who from the age of 14, like Tuukka, has been trying to find a way to help his community.

Where Tuukka works with his hands in the business world, Zorian, the son of Catherine Edwards, works with his words at his school's award-winning student newspaper.



"I was nervous going in," he recalls of his freshman year as a budding journalist at Saegertown Junior-Senior High School, which lies within the service territory of Cambridge Springs-based Northwestern REC. "I'm not going to lie, that nervousness lasted me about halfway throughout my first year of being on the staff.

"There were only seven people, and I had no idea what I was doing, but the No. 1 rule here is, 'Always say yes.' My adviser would say, 'Can you cover this?' and I would say, 'Yes.' With that came me struggle-bussing my way to find out how to cover all these stories. I looked up YouTube videos — I watched a bunch of How-to-AP-Style videos. I'm not going to say I retained anything, but it kept me excited."

Zorian, now entering his senior year, continues to be excited about journalism and its power to motivate people to have a voice.

"Now more than ever, students' voices are being heard," says Zorian, 17. "With that comes people who are not being



LOOKING AHEAD: LaWrynn “Zorian” Edwards, 17, imagines the possibilities in store for him in his senior year at Saegertown Junior-Senior High School and beyond. Edwards, a Rural Electric Youth Tour alum from Cambridge Springs-based Northwestern REC, hopes to continue pursuing journalism after high school.



heard, and you’ve got to figure out how to get them to talk to you ... how to get them as engaged and excited about the story as you are. Once they’re excited or passionate about it ... they’re like, ‘Wow, this is really cool.’”

Zorian also knows what it’s like to witness bullying without a clear path to stop it. And like Tuukka, Zorian peacefully took matters into his own hands, joining the Saegertown Pride Alliance and becoming an officer. Now president, he has become a recurring figure at school board meetings, voicing support or opposition to policies, including — most memorably — a proposed book ban.

“I didn’t want to see this policy passed,” Zorian recalls. “Books give more perspectives to students. They open up worlds, allow you to learn about different cultures without even being a part of them, and this policy limited the amount of diversity we have. I wanted to make sure that other students were able to have that — essentially, being able to know that people are different than them and that people are like them in some ways as well.

"It's just really important for a student to have a voice in their curriculum and what they learn," he adds. "I didn't think that any student would be able to have a voice like that ... until two years ago, the first time I gave my speech to the school board. ... What I do is important. I will carry my experiences with journalism along with me for the rest of my life. I want to make a difference. In a way, I already have, and I want to continue to tell the stories that need to be told."

Different perspectives

Barely two months ago, Zorian had the chance to explore different perspectives during the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's (NRECA) Youth Tour, a weeklong trip to Washington, D.C., for thousands of high school seniors-to-be to explore the nation's capital and meet with their legislators. Also fresh from the nation's capital, Alissa Dunn — daughter of Coudersport Volunteer Fire Department (CVFD) Assistant Chief Glenn Dunn II, a member of Mansfield-based Tri-County REC — says she enjoys taking in new ideas and channeling them back into her community to make it stronger.

Alissa — the runner-up for Pennsylvania's seat on the NRECA Youth Leadership Council — works at Gary's Putter Golf and Jiffy Pup Restaurant in Coudersport, where she meets people from across the country. Often, she says, they talk about the kind locals and the town's beauty.

"It hit me," she recalls, "maybe if I strive to continue to make it better, everybody will be like, 'Wow, this is so awesome. I need to be here and bring my family and friends here.' It's just another thing to make people happy ... have smiles on their faces — and that just brings me joy."

To that goal, Alissa, 17, and her family regularly collect trash along roads as well as plant flowers and clean the town's gazebo. She also regularly visits local cemeteries to clean gravestones and lay flowers. When snow falls, she shovels sidewalks while her father plows the roads. And when fires rage, she's on the scene.

As a junior firefighter at CVFD, Alissa — when she's not training with full-fledged firefighters — cares for the equipment the adult firefighters use. She rolls hoses, cleans safety equipment, and makes sure water bottles and oxygen tanks are full and available. She also cares for the victims of the fires.

"While we're trying to stop the bad things from happening, we need to make sure the people affected are OK, too," she says. "I ask them if they need anything — water, coffee, something — just to make sure they're OK and that they will be OK."

In her myriad of activities, Alissa — a varsity cheerleader, basketball player and softball player — strives for the same

thing: to be a light in someone's day, much like others have been for her.

"A couple months ago, my fire captain, Dana Stevens, passed away," she says, her voice shaking. "It was a tough time. My dad and I ... we would talk about what Dana would do. Dana was my dad's mentor, so he would take what Dana did and use it to mentor me. Dana was always there for everybody, and my dad is being there for everybody the way he would have been."

Dana, in a way, lives on in the actions of her father, Alissa explains. And in her own way, she hopes she can become someone else's "Dana."

"When I do something for somebody else," she says, "and it makes their day ... it makes me a thousand times more happy and grateful to be here, helping people." 🧯

ASHLYNN DUNN



FAMILY EFFORT: Alissa Dunn, 17, center, stands with her father, Glenn Dunn II, left, and grandfather, Glenn Dunn Sr., in their firefighter gear. As a junior firefighter at the Coudersport Volunteer Fire Department, Alissa ensures equipment used by adult firefighters is properly maintained and ready for use.

In & Around

Sullivan County Rural Electric Cooperative

Tucked away amid the Endless Mountains, Sullivan County is home to serene and pristine natural wonders as well as welcoming villages and towns. Much of the county and the edges of those around it receive their electricity from Sullivan County Rural Electric Cooperative, which serves more than 6,000 homes, farms and businesses across nearly 900 miles of line.

If you like the great outdoors, Sullivan County has two state parks within its borders — Worlds End and Ricketts Glen — both perfect for a day of hiking. If you're really into hiking, there's also the Loyalsock State Forest, which has 200 miles of trails that meander into neighboring Bradford and Lycoming counties.

If you're more of a history buff, the Eagles Mere Air Museum has 35 vintage aircraft built between 1917



CANYON VISTA: The Canyon Vista Trail at Worlds End State Park in Forksville, Sullivan County, explores the eastern half of the park and offers a view of the Loyalsock Creek Gorge.

and 1944, as well as hundreds of other aviation-related items of that era. Take a 15-minute drive south to Sonestown and you'll find the Endless Mountains War Memorial Museum, housing one of the largest collections of military memorabilia in the state.

There's always more to explore. Know of a hidden gem or generally cool place to see in your area? Tell us about it!



Main Office: Forksville, Pa.
Consumer-members served: 6,145
Website: screc.com

Co-op Q&A

PLEASE EMAIL YOUR ANSWER and a photo of yourself to CommunityCorner@prea.com. Include your full name, the name of your cooperative and a daytime telephone number.

OCTOBER'S QUESTION

Let's have some Halloween fun. What's the spookiest thing that's ever happened to you?

Send your response by **MONDAY, AUG. 21**, with "October 2023 Q&A" in the subject line.

NOVEMBER'S QUESTION

No matter what life throws at you, there's always something to be thankful for. What made you grateful in 2023?

Send your response by **MONDAY, SEPT. 18**, with "November 2023 Q&A" in the subject line.

AUGUST'S RESPONSES

With 121 state parks, Pennsylvania has a lot of choices for outdoor lovers. Which state park is your favorite and why do you love it?



"Pennsylvania has so many beautiful state parks. But none are as enchanting as Trough Creek State Park. Trough Creek has so many wonderful aspects that any outdoor lover can enjoy. There are hiking trails, picnic areas, camping and fishing available. Even for the slower-paced enthusiast, one can watch birds and other wildlife while visiting the park. After a long, stressful week of work, I can take a mini vacation to Trough Creek to get my emotions and body fully recharged. There is no place like it."

— KATRINA HAWN, VALLEY RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE



"I feel pretty safe in answering that my favorite state park is Presque Isle, and I don't see that changing. Lake Erie is such a special and unique part of the state, with diverse and amazing ecosystems and wildlife. A day on the beach, a canoe trip in the lagoons, a bike ride along the 13-ish miles of the peninsula, and the sunsets — oh, the sunsets. I've found so much beauty in other parks. Ricketts Glen and its amazing waterfalls, Leonard Harrison's Turkey Path, and the Pa. Grand Canyon ... each park has something worth visiting, but Presque Isle will always shine as Pennsylvania's premier park and my personal favorite."

— HOLLY JACOBS, NORTHWESTERN RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE



SWIMMING POOL SAFETY

Make sure that any lighting equipment in your pool is up to code and regularly examined by a professional. To change or repair a light, ensure the electricity to the pool is first turned off at the circuit breaker.

*If you are in the water and feel electric current, which can cause a tingling sensation, shout to let others know, try to stay upright, tuck your legs up to make yourself smaller, and swim away from anything that could be energized. **Do not use a metal ladder to exit the pool.***

*Remember, water and electricity are a dangerous mix, even outside the pool. **Never touch any electrical appliances or outlets when you are wet or standing in water.***

Learn more at

 **Safe**
Electricity.org[®]



Teach Your Children Well

MIRANDA BOUTELLE

DEAR MIRANDA: I'm making an effort to reduce my energy use, and I want my kids to start energy-saving habits as well. How can I encourage them to use less electricity at home?

A: When I was a kid, I dreamed of one day having a home, where I could pay my own electric bill ... said no one ever. While it's not the most fun way to spend money, people typically want to live in a home with electricity. Educating kids on energy use and costs can help engage them in your family's goal to use less electricity. They can be electric conservation champions if you ask them to help. Here are some ways you can teach kids to use less electricity.

Show them how to read the electric bill. Focus on what you can control: kilowatt-hour (kWh) use. If they are old enough, teach them how to do the math. You can calculate kWh use by

multiplying wattage by hours used and dividing by 1,000. Multiply this by the kWh rate found on your electric bill to estimate how much you spend on power for each household appliance.

For example, if you have a space heater that uses 1,500 watts and is on for four hours a day for a month, it uses 180 kWh. The average kWh rate in the United States is 13.7 cents, which means the space heater costs about \$25 a month to operate. That same space heater costs about \$74 a month if it is on for 12 hours per day.

For household appliance wattage, look for the amount stamped on the bottom, back or nameplate. If the nameplate does not include wattage, figure it out by multiplying the voltage by the amperage.

To teach children the impact of saving energy, have them help you conserve with the household's biggest energy-consuming appliances: heating and cooling. Teach kids to dress appropriately for the seasons, even when they are indoors, which allows you to set the thermostat to balance comfort and savings.

You can also leave the house during the hottest times of the day to go for a swim or play outside. Before you go, nudge up the thermostat a few degrees to avoid wasted energy cooling an empty house. Turn off fans when you leave a room.

The second-highest use of electricity is typically the electric water heater. Use a shower timer so bigger kids can monitor how long they are in the shower. Teach them to wash their clothes with cold water. If you have a gas water heater, look at the gas bill to find opportunities to save.

Other ways to save include turning off the lights when you leave the room. Also, consider switching to LED lighting because even little changes like this can add up to savings throughout the year.

Powering down gaming stations and computers is another way to save. In the kitchen, keep the refrigerator door shut. Teach kids to take a quick peek and shut the door while they think about their snack options.

After teaching your kids about electric bills and showing them how to save electricity, make a game out of your family's energy conservation efforts. Challenge the family to use less energy than last month or the same month last year. Use the savings to reward them with a treat or let the winner pick the game night activity or film for family movie night.

You can also teach children where the electricity for their home comes from. Check out your electric co-op's website or give them a call to find out what energy sources power your home. 🌱

MIRANDA BOUTELLE is the chief operating officer at Efficiency Services Group in Oregon, a cooperatively owned energy efficiency company. She has more than 20 years of experience helping people save energy at home, and she writes on energy efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives.

PNW PRODUCTION



SNEAK PEEK: In the kitchen, keep the refrigerator door shut. Teach kids to take a quick peek and shut the door while they think about their snack options.

May 29, 2023
through
Sept. 4, 2023

Open 7 days a week
Memorial Day through Labor Day

WE WELCOME TO:

MOUNTAIN RIDGE

ATV Park

2023 Hours of Operation

Regular Season Hours of Operation

Memorial Day-Labor Day: Open 7 days a week 9AM-6PM
Labor Day-October 29th: Open Friday, Saturday & Sunday 9AM -5PM
Season passes can be purchased ahead of time or at the office.
<https://www.mountainridgeatvtrails.com/>

info@mountainridgeatvtrails.com
517 Boone Rd, Central City, PA 15926



814.279.3147

Park Info:

3,000 Acres
150 miles of trails
40 miles of single track
Kids Track
MX Track
Mud Bogs
Campsites and Cabins

When a Chore is More Than a Chore

ABIGAIL ZIEGER

I'M STANDING IN THE KITCHEN filling a bucket with soapy water, getting ready to mop. I hear the quick plod-plodding of tiny feet coming from the living room, and soon my 4-year-old is hanging on my leg. "Can I help you, mama?" she asks with bright, eager eyes.

I sigh, half-happy she wants to work with mama, half-exasperated because now the job will take three times as long. I tell her she can help, and soon she's slopping a soaked mop-head onto the kitchen floor and spreading puddles haphazardly. I follow behind on hands and knees, scrubbing the floor and silently reminding myself of an important truth: Children gain so much from taking part in real, valuable work.

Though many kids balk at household work and other everyday tasks, having them participate is actually empowering them with tools they'll use for a lifetime. There are some basic life skills that nearly everyone has to learn: cooking, cleaning, basic maintenance and financial literacy, to name a few. When we teach our kids these skills, we help them build their confidence and self-esteem, hone problem-solving skills, and increase resilience. What's more, they become more independent, helpful members of the family — and that's a win/win for both kids and parents.

At my first job as a food service worker, I had to ask a lot of seemingly stupid questions: "How do I turn on this dishwasher? How do I cut the bell pepper?" Over time, however, I learned the skills I needed to function in a commercial kitchen and became proud of how well I could do my job. It's the same for our kids. When we teach them necessary life skills, they are less likely to be left feeling helpless and embarrassed. This, in turn, increases their confidence and self-esteem because they are better prepared to face a variety of situations.

Learning life skills also provides opportunities to practice problem-solving. Maybe the vacuum stops working in the

middle of chores, which presents a perfect opportunity to find the solution with your kids. Did the plug come out? Is the hose clogged? Did the belt break? We can model by example that it's OK to try many different possible solutions before finding the one that works. Over time, new challenges and unknowns become less frightening as kids realize they can figure them out.

Practicing life skills also teaches our children resilience. It's a fact of life that things don't always go the way we planned. Maybe your teen hasn't been checking the fluid levels in the car, and it overheated on the way to work. Perhaps your middle-schooler burned his batch of cookies because he forgot to set a timer. Instead of berating their

errors, we can teach our kids to ask, "What can I learn from this?" When we let children fail, learn, and try again, then they can build on that experience and bounce back from mistakes more easily.

Finally, teaching life skills to our children allows them to be more independent. As they take responsibility for more portions of their lives, they will also be more helpful, functional members of the household. Then, when they're ready to

launch into the "real world," they'll be more prepared to be productive members of society.

After the morning of mopping, my 4-year-old proclaimed to my husband, "I help-ded mama to mop the floor!"

I see her proud grin, and I'm so happy I let her help. As a mom of four kids, I will readily admit that sometimes it's much easier to just do it myself than to have to guide little hands as we work on the tasks. However, I know that starting small and continuing to teach life skills is a gift that will help my kids thrive for years to come. 🍷

ABIGAIL ZIEGER is a music teacher and singer by trade, but also enjoys capturing life experiences through writing. When not singing, teaching or typing, she can be found working in her kitchen, helping her kids with school or consuming copious amounts of coffee. A member of Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative, Abigail lives with her husband and four children in northeast Pennsylvania.



REA Energy Cooperative, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives
serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

REA ENERGY COOPERATIVE, INC.

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OFFICE HOURS

Indiana Office: 7 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Ebensburg Office: 7 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Monday, Wednesday and Friday
Closed Tuesday and Thursday

Factors that Impact Electricity Prices



ONE COMMON QUESTION MANY PEOPLE have is what impacts electricity prices. These rates, along with the daily cost of living, seem to have increased across the board.

Just as inflation has impacted everything from the price of gasoline to the price of eggs, costs for the fuel required to produce electricity have also risen. This is a timely topic, so I wanted to help explain some of the factors that impact electricity prices (and energy bills) in this month's issue of *Penn Lines*.


A few key factors affect electricity prices and rates. Some of these factors REA Energy Cooperative (REA) can manage, some of them you can, and other factors are beyond our control. So, let me break it down.

There are two primary parts to your monthly electric bill: a service charge and an energy consumption — or kilowatt-hour (kWh) — charge. To understand your total energy costs and what impacts your bill, let's unpack one piece at a time.

The first is a fixed monthly service that covers the costs associated with providing electricity to your home. This includes equipment, materials, labor and operating costs necessary to serve each meter in REA's service territory, regardless of the amount of energy used. To ensure the reliable service you expect and deserve, we must maintain the local system, including power lines, substations and other necessary equipment. Like many other businesses, we've experienced supply chain issues and steep cost increases for some of our basic equipment. For example, the cost for an average 15 kVA distribution transformer (which looks like a long metal can at the top of a power pole) increased from \$842 in 2021 to \$2,025 this year, and wait times to receive this essential equipment are up to 50 weeks. Because we are a not-for-profit cooperative, some of these expenses must be passed on to our members. It should be noted that all rate classes (residential, small commercial, large commercial) pay a monthly service charge so that costs are distributed fairly across the membership.

Another component of your monthly bill is the kWh charge, which covers how much energy you consume. You've likely noticed the amount of energy you use can vary from month to month and is typically impacted by extreme temperatures. When temperatures soar or dip, your cooling and heating equipment runs longer, which increases your home energy use. Regardless, energy consumption is an area you have some control over, and you can lower your monthly bill by actively reducing energy use. Your thermostat is a great place to start, so be sure to keep it close to 78 degrees during summer months.

I hope this information sheds light on some of the factors that impact electricity prices. While we can't control the weather or the rising costs of fuel, please know REA is doing everything possible to keep internal costs down.

We're here to help you, too. Contact us if you have questions about your energy bill or for advice on how to save energy at home. 

STACY HILLIARD, CCC, CKAE

COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING MANAGER



Camp, Sweet Camp

KAYLA KING, MARKETING & BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT SPECIALIST

HAVE YOU EVER DREAMED OF getting away and going back to nature, but don't want to travel too far from home? Want to experience the outdoors, but still have modern amenities available? Get to relax, but also be able to participate in fun events? Then Glendale Valley Campground in Fallentimber may be just what you're looking for!

The campground, a staple for campers in Cambria County since the 1960s, was expanded in the '80s. The grounds feature stunning wooded landscapes, full hook-ups (power, water and sewage) and is minutes away from Prince Gallitzin State Park.

Recently, the campground's new owner, Dave Gerlach, and its manager, Joe Wurzler, spoke of how they revitalized the site.

"We reopened Glendale Valley

in July 2022," Gerlach says. "There were a lot of things that needed to be renovated and changed to entice new campers to the campgrounds."

Some of those renovations included the addition of a full laundry shed, which features washers and dryers for campers, along with refurbished bath houses.

"Each camper is assigned their own code or can use their fingerprint to enter the bath houses," Wurzler explains. "The bath house doors lock behind you, so there is safety and security while using them. Each bath house is also handicapped accessible."

Not only are campers close to area attractions like DelGrosso's Amusement Park, Rock Run Recreation Area, horseback riding, kayaking and much more, but the campground also has its own schedule of events. Movie nights, live music, wood carving demonstrations, and Christmas in July have seen large turn-outs, and the campers are connecting with each other as a small community. With the addition of campgroundwide Wi-Fi, campers feel even more at home while away from home.

Whether you are a tent or RV fan, camping enthusiasts have a variety of options when it comes to Glendale Valley Campground. There are overnight spots as well as seasonal spots available May through October. Fishing fans have the month of April, and hunters can stay October through November for hunting season. Each RV or camper at one of the seasonal sites is unique, with many of the RVs sporting decks, patios, gardens, fire rings and other personal touches.

Gerlach and Wurzler are currently working on a new project for the campground — a camp store. The main building of the campground

holds offices, firewood, mailboxes and an upstairs apartment for the Wurzler family to live onsite year-round. The camp store will feature camping staples, like milk, eggs, ice cream, popcorn and toiletries. This means less traveling for visitors to purchase last-minute items and more time enjoying the great outdoors.

Gerlach and Wurzler agree that their favorite thing about owning and operating the campground is the residents.

"I just love seeing everyone happy and receiving positive feedback from our campers," Wurzler says.

He even gets invited to dinner several times a week with the seasonal residents. One thing is certain: Great things are happening at Glendale Valley Campground. With many modern conveniences, everyone can enjoy camping in Fallentimber. If you're looking for a place that is local for excellent camping, whether it's overnight, for a week, or the whole season, Glendale Valley is the place to be. 📍



WOODWORK: Wooden sculptures sit on display as part of a wood carving exhibition held at Glendale Valley Campground.



GLAMPING: A pair of rocking chairs and an end table rest outside of one of the stunning campsites at Glendale Valley.



AMENITIES ABOUND: Glendale Valley Campground has many amenities, like its own laundry shed.

Reach out to Glendale Valley Campground by calling 814-660-0951 or visit GlendaleValleyCampground.com. Glendale Valley Campground is located at 108 Front St. Fallentimber, PA 16639.

WARNING!

BEWARE OF SCAMMERS

In today's world you can never be too careful. Recently, a member experienced a common scam: Someone came to their door claiming to be an REA Energy employee who was there to change out their water heater. Fortunately, they did not let the person in and went to find another family member. When they returned, the person had left. REA Energy employees and contractors will ALWAYS have a cooperative identification.

Always ask to see their ID!

Here are five additional tips to help you spot a scammer posing as an REA Energy representative:

Did you request service from REA Energy?

Unless there is a true emergency, REA Energy lineworkers and load management technicians usually visit customers only upon request, most often with a confirmed appointment.

Contractors working for the cooperative may visit the property without a prior appointment to complete work for the company. Vehicles will have the REA Energy Cooperative or REA Energy Services logo on them. Contractors will also identify logos on their vehicles.

What time is it?

REA Energy employees work during the hours of 7 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Any visits by REA Energy employees to your property after hours or on weekends would be due to an emergency.

Contractors' hours may vary.

Did you pay your bill?

REA Energy employees may visit properties without a confirmed appointment to turn electricity off for non-payment. And if we are visiting to turn the power off, we don't knock on doors or ask to come inside.

Always ask for ID!

All REA Energy employees and contractors carry a photo ID issued by the cooperative, and they will gladly allow you to inspect it upon request. REA Energy employees will be wearing clothing with our logo on it.


Call REA Energy to confirm!

Even if the employee or contractor shows ID, if you're still not sure or something seems off, contact REA Energy to confirm they are doing work for the cooperative and the reason for their visit.

To reach REA Energy, call 800-211-5667

Example of Official REA Contractor ID Card





Local News

REA Energy Offices will be closed on Monday, Sept. 4, in observance of Labor Day. Please call 844-920-3395 to report any power outages. Payments can be placed in the drop box at both locations, by calling our payment system at 844-920-3395, or via SmartHub at reaenergy.com.




ATTENTION MEMBERS!!

WE HAVE A NEW PAYMENT AND OUTAGE NUMBER.

 **844-920-3395**

⚠️ PLEASE CALL 844-920-3395 TO MAKE PAYMENTS OVER THE PHONE. ****PAYMENTS CAN BE MADE BY CREDIT CARD OR BANK ACCOUNTS.****

⚠️ TO REPORT ANY OUTAGES OR EMERGENCIES, MEMBERS MUST CALL 844-920-3395.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PATIENCE AND UNDERSTANDING!



REA ENERGY 2023 ANNUAL MEETING

REA Energy's 2023 Annual Meeting is Thursday, Sept. 14, at the Kovalchick Center in Indiana. Doors will open at 4 p.m. for REA members. We have Take Two as entertainment prior to the business meeting. They will start at 4:30 p.m., lasting until 5:15 p.m. The meeting will begin at 5:30 p.m. Stop by for an update on your cooperative and receive some REA-sponsored gifts!

Right-of-Way Management/ Facility Construction News

REA Energy contractors will be completing tree-trimming work in the following areas in August: Contractor crews from Penn Line Tree Service will be trimming the rights of way of the Birtle and Summerhill substations, in addition to emergency maintenance areas.

Members in those areas will be notified about the work. Contractors will perform all right-of-way work per REA Energy specifications. All contractor employees will carry employee identification cards, and their vehicles will display their company name.

If you have any questions, call 724-349-4800 or view the specifications at reaenergy.com.

Your Board of Directors



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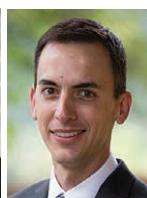
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REA Energy is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Will This Strange Antarctic Squid Solve America's Memory Crisis?

New Deep Sea Discovery Proven to Be The #1 Natural Enhancer of Memory and Focus

Half a mile beneath the icy waters off the coast of Argentina lives one of the most remarkable creatures in the world.

Fully grown, they're less than 2 feet long and weigh under 10 pounds...

But despite their small size, this strange little squid can have a bigger positive impact on your brain health than any other species on the planet.

They are the single richest source of a vital "brain food" that 250 million Americans are starving for, according to a study published in the British Medical Journal.

It's a safe, natural compound called DHA – one of the building blocks of your brain. It helps children grow their brains significantly bigger during development. And in adults, it protects brain cells from dying as they get older.

Because DHA is so important, lacking enough of it is not only dangerous to your overall health but could be directly related to your brain shrinking with age.

With more than 16 million Americans suffering from age-associated cognitive impairment, it's clear to a top US doctor that's where the problem lies.

Regenerative medicine specialist Dr. Al Sears, says thankfully, "there's still hope for seniors. Getting more of this vital brain food can make a life changing difference for your mental clarity, focus, and memory."

Dr. Sears, a highly-acclaimed, board-certified doctor—who has published more than 500 studies and written 4 bestselling books—says we should be able to get enough DHA in our diets... but we don't anymore.

"For thousands of years, fish were a great natural source of DHA. But due to industrial fish farming practices, the fish we eat and the fish oils you see at the store are no longer as nutrient-dense as they once were," he explains.

DHA is backed by hundreds of studies for supporting razor sharp focus, extraordinary mental clarity, and a lightning quick memory... especially in seniors.

So, if you're struggling with

focus, mental clarity, or memory as you get older...

Dr. Sears recommends a different approach.

THE SECRET TO A LASTING MEMORY

Research has shown that our paleo ancestors were able to grow bigger and smarter brains by eating foods rich in one ingredient — DHA.

"Our hippocampus thrives off DHA and grows because of it," explains Dr. Sears. "Without DHA, our brains would shrink, and our memories would quickly fade."

A groundbreaking study from the University of Alberta confirmed this. Animals given a diet rich in DHA saw a 29% boost in their hippocampus — the part of the brain responsible for learning and memory. As a result, these animals became smarter.

Another study on more than 1,500 seniors found that those whose brains were deficient in DHA had significantly smaller brains — a characteristic of accelerated aging and weakened memory.

PEOPLE'S BRAINS ARE SHRINKING AND THEY DON'T EVEN KNOW IT

Dr. Sears uncovered that sometime during the 1990s, fish farmers stopped giving their animals a natural, DHA-rich diet and began feeding them a diet that was 70% vegetarian.

"It became expensive for farmers to feed fish what they'd eat in the wild," explains Dr. Sears. "But in order to produce DHA, fish need to eat a natural, marine diet, like the one they'd eat in the wild."

"Since fish farmers are depriving these animals of their natural diet, DHA is almost nonexistent in the oils they produce."

"And since more than 80% of fish oil comes from farms, it's no wonder the country is experiencing a memory crisis. Most people's brains are shrinking and they don't even know it."

So, what can people do to improve their memory and brain function in the most effective way possible?



MEMORY-RESTORING SENSATION: The memory-saving oil in this Antarctic squid restores decades of lost brain power starting in just 24 hours.

Dr. Sears says, "Find a quality DHA supplement that doesn't come from a farmed source. That will protect your brain cells and the functions they serve well into old age."

Dr. Sears and his team worked tirelessly for over 2 years developing a unique brain-boosting formula called **Omega Rejuvenol**.

It's made from the most powerful source of DHA in the ocean, squid and krill — two species that cannot be farmed.

According to Dr. Sears, these are the purest and most potent sources of DHA in the world, because they haven't been tampered with. "Omega Rejuvenol is sourced from the most sustainable fishery in Antarctica. You won't find this oil in any stores."

MORE IMPRESSIVE RESULTS

Already, the formula has sold more than 850,000 bottles. And for a good reason, too. Satisfied customers can't stop raving about the memory-boosting benefits of quality-sourced DHA oil.

"The first time I took it, I was amazed. The brain fog I struggled with for years was gone within 24 hours. The next day, I woke up with the energy and mental clarity of a new man," says Owen R.

"I remember what it was like before I started taking **Omega Rejuvenol**... the lack of focus... the dull moods... the slippery memory... but now my mind is as clear as it's ever been," says Estelle H.

"My mood and focus are at an all-time high. I've always had trouble concentrating, and now I think I know why," raves Bernice J. "The difference that **Omega Rejuvenol** makes couldn't be more noticeable."

And 70-year-old Mark K. says, "My focus and memory are back to age-30 levels."

These are just a handful of the thousands of reviews Dr. Sears regularly receives thanks to his breakthrough memory formula, **Omega Rejuvenol**.

WHERE TO FIND OMEGA REJUVENOL

To secure bottles of this brain-booster, buyers should contact the Sears Health Hotline at **1-800-966-7619**. "It takes time to manufacture these bottles," says Dr. Sears. "The Hotline allows us to ship the product directly to customers who need it most."

Dr. Sears feels so strongly about this product, he is offering a 100%, money-back guarantee on every order. "Send back any used or unused bottles within 90 days and I'll rush you a refund," says Dr. Sears.

The Hotline is taking orders for the next 48 hours. After that, the phone number may be shut down to allow for inventory restocking.

Call **1-800-966-7619** to secure your limited supply of **Omega Rejuvenol**. Readers of this publication immediately qualify for a steep discount, but supplies are limited. To take advantage of this great offer use Promo Code **OMPL723** when you call.

Thanks for the Memories, **YOUTH TOUR**

JILL M. ERCOLINO

THEY LAUGHED, THEY CRIED, BUT most important, they learned and made memories.

In June, nearly 60 students representing rural electric cooperatives in Pennsylvania and New Jersey — all members of the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association (PREA) — boarded buses for Washington, D.C., site of the 2023 Youth Tour.

It's been four years since teens from the two states participated in the weeklong tour, hosted by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA). The group arrived ready to discover new things and make an impact along with 800 other high school juniors and seniors from across the country. A student from a cooperative in neighboring New York also joined the Pa.-N.J. contingent.

"Our goal is to make this trip something they'll remember for the rest of their lives," says

Stephanie Okuniewski, PREA's Youth Tour coordinator and member engagement specialist. "We want the students to be inspired — and then become inspirational."

In meetings with members of Congress, the students posed questions on issues that matter to them, such as book bans and military service requirements. On trips to memorials and monuments, they heard personal stories — one from a veteran and chaperone, Brian Zeidner of Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative (REC), who lost a fellow soldier and friend to war, and others about 9/11 and how it changed the world before they were ever born.

In addition, NRECA staff schooled the students on rural electric cooperatives, and the difference co-ops continue to make in rural America.

"It was a busy week, full of activities meant to make the students think

not only about the world around them, but also about their own communities and the influence they can have there," Okuniewski says. "Today's Youth Tour students are tomorrow's leaders, and our cooperatives are thrilled to give them this wonderful opportunity to grow as young adults."

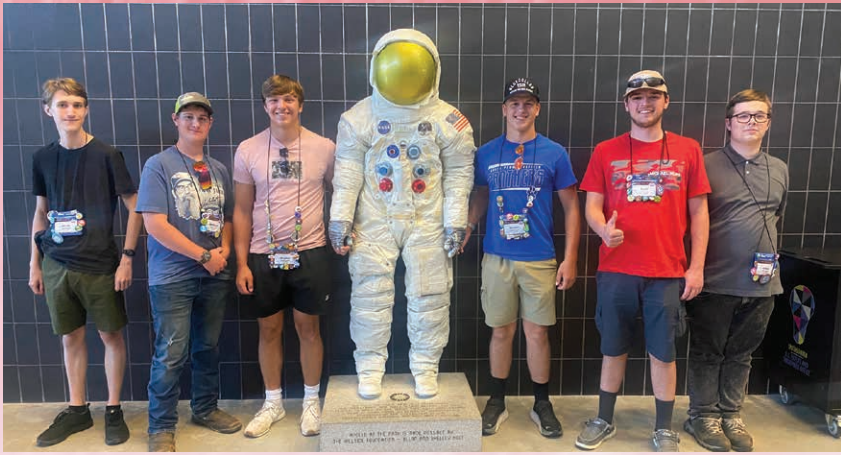
The teens appreciated the experience.

"Youth Tour is amazing for giving students the opportunity to experience things they might never get to on their own," says Elizabeth Berry, who represented New Enterprise REC.

Alyssa Richard, who represented Somerset REC, agrees: "My experience was life-changing. I have been to D.C. before, but I have not seen as many things as I saw on this trip. Now that I am older, I understand and appreciate the history and true meaning behind the monuments and memorials." 📸



A LIFE-CHANGING EXPERIENCE: Students representing rural electric cooperatives in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York visit the U.S. Capitol during the 2023 Youth Tour in June.



MOMUMENTS, MEMORIALS AND MUSEUMS: Youth Tour students enjoy the sights in Washington, D.C., where they spent time at the Udvar-Hazy Air and Space Museum, the National 9/11 Pentagon Memorial and the Thomas Jefferson Memorial, among others.



CONGRESSIONAL VISITS: Students let their voices be heard while on Capitol Hill. ABOVE: A group of Youth Tour teens visit with U.S. Rep. John Joyce of Pennsylvania (R-13th). BELOW: U.S. Rep. Glenn "GT" Thompson of Pennsylvania (R-15th), chair of the House Agriculture Committee, answers students' questions about upcoming legislation.



GOOD TIMES: Meeting other students from across the country is part of the fun of Youth Tour. The high-schoolers get to know each other while trading state pins and other objects, such as necklaces and bracelets. Iowa's corncob necklace was among the tokens in high demand at this year's event.

Enjoy Flavor on a Budget

ANNE M. KIRCHNER

SUMMER IS COMING TO AN END. Many are shifting spending from family vacations to back-to-school needs. Now is a good time to consider budget-friendly menus. Planning weekly menus will save you time and money. You will also avoid impulse shopping and reduce food waste.

Pasta, rice and potatoes are inexpensive pantry ingredients and offer many menu options. Casseroles are easy to assemble and will feed a hungry crowd. Fried rice is healthy and quick to prepare. Soups are filling and often use ingredients already in your kitchen. No matter what dish you make, prepare extra for tasty leftovers. 🍴

ANNE M. KIRCHNER focuses her writing on human connections, travel and culinary arts, researching food origins, exploring cooking techniques, and creating new recipes.

PHOTOS BY ANNE M. KIRCHNER



CHICKEN NOODLE CASSEROLE

- 3 cups uncooked rotini pasta
- 12-ounce bag frozen, chopped broccoli
- 3 cups cooked chicken, diced
- 1 10.5-ounce can cream of mushroom soup
- ½ cup sour cream
- ½ teaspoon garlic salt
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- 2 cups shredded cheddar cheese, divided

Cook rotini pasta in a pot of water for 1 minute less than package directions. Drain and transfer the pasta to a mixing bowl. Add the broccoli, chicken, cream of mushroom soup, sour cream, garlic salt, black pepper and 1 cup cheddar cheese. Toss the mixture then spoon into a 9-by-13-inch greased casserole dish. Top the mixture with the remaining cheddar cheese. Cover the pan with foil and bake for 30 minutes at 350 degrees. *Makes 6 to 8 servings.*



EASY FRIED RICE

- 2 tablespoons olive oil, divided
- 4 eggs, beaten
- ½ cup diced yellow onion
- 1 cup diced carrots
- 1 cup diced celery
- 1 cup frozen peas
- 1 cup shredded red or green cabbage
- 3 to 4 cups cooked rice
- 3 tablespoons soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon sesame oil

Heat 1 tablespoon olive oil in a wok or large skillet on medium-high heat. Add the eggs; stir constantly until fully cooked. Remove the eggs and set aside. Heat the remaining olive oil in the wok or skillet. Add the onions and carrots and cook for 3 to 5 minutes, stirring constantly. Add the celery, peas and cabbage. Continue to stir until the vegetables are cooked to desired tenderness. Return the eggs to the pan. Add the cooked rice, soy sauce and sesame oil. Stir until heated through and serve. *Makes 6 to 8 servings.*



BAKED POTATO SOUP

- 8 strips bacon, diced
- 1 small yellow onion, chopped
- ¼ cup flour
- 1 cup chicken stock
- 3 to 4 cups whole milk
- 4 large Idaho potatoes, peeled and diced
- 2 teaspoons garlic salt
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese
- ½ cup sour cream
- 4 green onions, diced

Sauté the bacon in a large stockpot over medium-high heat until brown and crispy. Remove the bacon and set aside. Leave 2 tablespoons bacon grease in the stockpot. Add the onion and sauté for a few minutes. Stir in the flour until a paste forms. Slowly add the chicken stock and blend with a whisk. Slowly stir in the milk. Add the potatoes, garlic salt and black pepper. Increase the heat to high until the soup is almost boiling. Reduce the heat to medium low; cover the pot with a lid. Cook for 15 minutes or until the potatoes are tender, stirring often. Remove from heat and mash the potatoes with a potato masher. Stir in the cheddar cheese, sour cream and cooked bacon. Garnish with green onions. *Makes 4 to 6 servings.*

How to Tame a Steep Bank

GEORGE WEIGEL

GARDENING IS HARD ENOUGH ON flat ground, but it gets even harder when you have to plant and work on a steep bank.

Banks aren't any easier for plants than people. They often struggle in thin, eroded soil and suffer from lack of water when rain scurries downhill instead of soaking in.

Grass is doable when the grade is mild, but when the mowing gets tough, the tough get going. Specifically, most get going to plant something else in the spot before they roll down the hill with a whirling Toro in hand.

What doesn't work very well is what most people try first — covering the whole bank with what they think will be a new no-care groundcover, such as ivy, pachysandra, vinca (i.e. periwinkle) or a mass of low, spreading junipers.

Unfortunately, these usually end up being overrun by weeds without regular weed-policing — if they survive at all. Their short heights allow weeds to quickly grow up and over, ultimately dominating the planting.

Laying weed fabric underneath, by the way, doesn't help. In addition to starving plant roots of oxygen, these blankets are almost always covered by mulch, which breaks down in a few years to create an excellent weed-sprouting medium on top.

Although there is no cheap and easy solution to a big, steep bank, there are better options than the groundcover route. Here are five of them:

1.) Terraces. It's the most amount of work up front, but if you cut the slope into two or more level terraces supported by retaining walls or timbers, you can plant whatever

Good Plants for a Steep Bank

Some of the best plants for a steep bank are "good rooters" that grow up enough and dense enough to out-compete weeds and cover bare soil.

These are some that fit the bill in a sunny to mostly sunny area:

Perennials: agastache, allium, amsonia, aster, baptisia, bee-balm, betony, black-eyed Susan, butterfly weed, catmint, coreopsis, daylily, gaura, goldenrod, hardy geranium, heliopsis, iris, lavender, liatris, mountain mint, mums, ornamental grasses, penstemon, perennial sunflower, purple coneflower, Russian sage, salvia, sedum, Shasta daisy, tall garden phlox, yarrow, yucca.

Shrubs: abelia, beautyberry, bush honeysuckle, caryopteris, deutzia, forsythia, lilac, ninebark, panicle hydrangea, shrub roses, spirea, St. Johnswort, stephanandra, sterile butterfly bush varieties, sumac, sweetshrub, viburnum, Virginia sweetspire, weigela, winterberry holly, witch hazel.

Evergreens: arborvitae, dwarf cryptomeria, fir (except disease-prone Douglas fir), greenthread/goldthread false cypress, Hinoki cypress, blue holly, grey owl and sea green juniper, nandina, spruce, yew.



gardens you like and work on level ground. Add steps with a path across on each level for access.

2.) Switchback. Build a mulched or crushed-stone path that winds back and forth up the slope, then plant the ground along each side of it with mixed plantings.

The looping path gives easier access than walking straight up, and it eliminates the need for steps and walls — although stone edging can be added if you like.

3.) A water feature. A cascading water garden is especially nice if the slope faces a back patio or window. Drain it into a buried, stone-covered vault at the bottom (a "pondless water feature") if you don't want to get into pond care.

This looks natural — like a spring is emerging from the top. Plant around it and backdrop it with a specimen evergreen or Japanese maple.

4.) A layered mixed planting. This involves planting several low-care plants in colonies and arranged with the taller ones at the top, mid-sized ones halfway down and shorter ones at the bottom.

Space so the plants touch at maturity, keep it weeded in the early years, and this can be the best, most affordable and lowest-maintenance solution.

5.) Trees and underplantings.

Return the slope to what it would try to do if left to its own devices — namely, become a tree-lined hillside.

Blend evergreens and flowering and shade trees if you like and underplant with some of the same low- to mid-sized plants you'd use in the option above.

The tree roots will help hold the bank soil in place, and the canopies will add shade to the bank and yard as they spread. The underplantings will add color and head off weeds.

Now is a good time to get busy fixing your "banking crisis" because, before you know it, winter will be here. ❄️

GEORGE WEIGEL is a retired horticulturist, author of two books about gardening in Pennsylvania, and garden columnist for The Patriot-News/PennLive.com in Harrisburg. His website is georgeweigel.net.

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October 2023	August 14
November 2023	September 14
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Bingo Trumps All Problems

JOHN KASUN

MY WIFE AND I WERE sorting through some old family photos when she singled one out. It was a photo of me standing between my parents. I was wearing a dress jacket, tie, and shiny shoes and holding a pristine purple and white stuffed elephant.

My guess is I was about 5 years old, and I assume it was a Sunday.

During the 1940s, Sunday drives were a common form of family recreation. Families visited relatives, friends or just drove to get ice cream. During those years, it was normal to get dressed up when going for a drive. Glancing at the photo, I said to my wife, "I was such a sweet child."

"Yes," she replied, "I wonder what happened to that kid?" Ignoring her remark I continued, "I think that was the year after I ran away from home."

"The year you WHAT?" she said excitedly.

Yes, at one point in my life, somewhere before age 5, I decided to run away from home. I don't remember what triggered the event. I certainly was never mistreated. We had no neighbors, so it couldn't have been fights with neighbors' kids. We had no phone or TV. We did have a radio that got one or two crackly stations if the weather was good.

Life was pretty basic, but I clearly remember deciding to run away. I had no secret plan. In fact, I approached my mother and father as they sat in the kitchen one evening and informed them I was leaving. There was not a lot of discussion or negotiations, no weeping or crying. I had no grievances to air. It was pretty straightforward.

My father got a suitcase from the attic as my mother bundled me in my snowsuit, boots, mittens and a warm winter cap. Thinking back on that night, if I had fallen over, I am not sure my feet or hands would have been able to touch the ground. I would have just laid there like a giant ball of cloth with my hands and feet sticking out like the sticks on a snowman.

A few minutes later, my mother kissed me goodbye and told me to write. Suddenly, the door closed behind

me, and I was alone. Slowly, I started down the path that wound through our yard and into the darkness.

It was a cold, crisp, clear winter night, and the air was so cold it seemed as if you could reach out and break off a piece. I quickly realized that running away in the summer might have been smarter. I was not tall enough to lift my suitcase, so I tried to pull it through the snow. Looking back, I could clearly see my parents through the kitchen window watching my progress. For whatever reason, I decided to open my suitcase, which I assumed was filled with toys and snacks. Imagine my horror when the lid popped open and it was empty. I struggled to close it and slowly began dragging it back toward the house.

In seconds, my mother opened the door and pulled me into the warm kitchen. I don't remember much of the conversation, but I seemed to forget why I had left home as I drank a glass of warm milk and munched on cookies.

Years later on a visit to the nursing home, I asked my then 98-year-old mother if she remembered what made me run away that winter night long, long ago. I was expecting some detailed story of pain and anguish that I might take to Dr. Phil to dissect.

What were the gentle words my mother said to make me see the errors of my ways? I waited for what seemed like several long minutes before she spoke. Looking in my direction she slowly said, "I don't ever remember you running away, but bingo starts in 20 minutes, and I want to get there early so I can get my regular seat. I will think about it and see what I can remember."

Pausing at the door to her room she looked back and said, "Why would you run away? I always thought you were smarter than that."

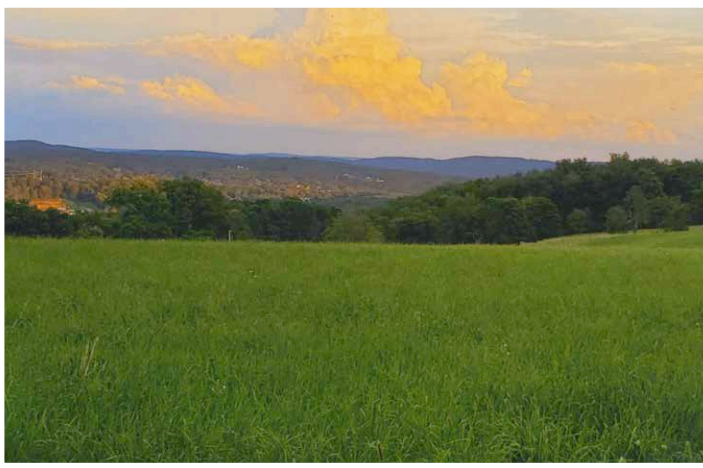
Mothers seem to have a simple way of putting things in perspective. 🍷



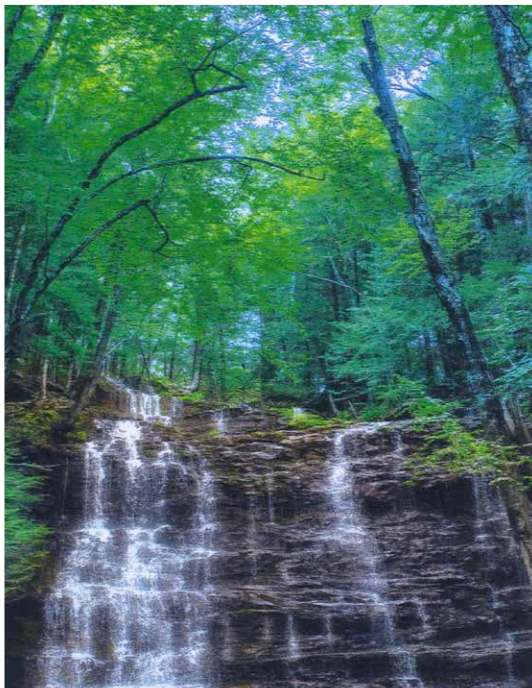
JOHN KASUN, a lifelong Pennsylvanian with more than 30 years of writing experience, looks for the humor in everyday life and then tells a story from that perspective. He is a member of Huntingdon-based Valley Rural Electric Cooperative.



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