

AUGUST 2026

PENNLINES



Youth Tour

ONE WEEK,
A LIFETIME
IMPACT



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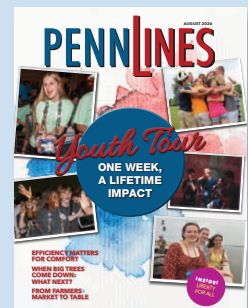
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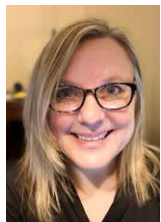


ON THE COVER

Students make memories
and friendships that last a
lifetime during Youth Tour,
which sends the best and
brightest on a weeklong
trip to Washington, D.C.

PHOTOS BY
MICHAEL T. CRAWFORD &
COLIN P. MCGUIRE

Youth Tour: A Meaningful Investment in the Next Generation



STEPHANIE M. OKUNIEWSKI

EVERY JUNE, I HAVE THE privilege of watching something remarkable happen.

High school juniors board buses for Washington, D.C., excited, nervous and unsure of what the week ahead will bring. Some arrive eager to meet new people. Others stay quietly in the background, content to observe. By the time we head home, the students have changed. They have found confidence, discovered new perspectives and realized they are capable of more than they imagined.

That transformation is why the Rural Electric Youth Tour continues to matter.

This year marked my 20th year participating in this event and my fifth as the Pennsylvania/New Jersey director. While every group is different, one thing never changes: Given the opportunity to step outside their comfort zones, young people almost always surprise themselves.

In 2026, nearly 1,800 students representing electric cooperatives across the country took part in Youth Tour, including 88 delegates from Pennsylvania and New Jersey. They joined a tradition that began in 1964. The program was the brainchild of Lyndon B. Johnson, who while serving in the Senate in 1957 encouraged electric cooperatives to bring young people to the nation's capital to learn about American history, government and the cooperative way of doing business.

Since then, more than 4,400 students from Pennsylvania and New Jersey have participated. While the itinerary includes iconic monuments, memorials and museums, the real value of the experience extends far beyond sightseeing.

The lessons students take home often come from the people they meet along the way. They learn to collaborate with peers from different backgrounds, speak up in unfamiliar situations and challenge themselves to try something new. Friendships form quickly, confidence grows naturally and students begin to see themselves as leaders, often without realizing it.

That is what I look forward to every year.

By the end of the week, the quiet student who hesitated to introduce themselves on day one is volunteering to lead a discussion. New friendships have formed across state lines, and students leave with a broader understanding of their communities, their country, and their own potential.

The impact of Youth Tour doesn't end when the buses return home. Former participants have gone on to become business leaders, including former Apple CEO Tim Cook, as well as authors, athletes and public servants. In Pennsylvania and New Jersey, alumni have become cooperative board members, employees and even a chief executive — all of whom are passionate advocates for rural communities. (See this month's feature, where I've interviewed some of our success stories.)

Those accomplishments are impressive, but they are not what defines the program. Success is just as often found in the student who returns home with the confidence to speak at a school board meeting, pursue a new opportunity or become more involved in their community. Those quieter victories matter just as much.

After two decades, I've learned that Youth Tour isn't simply about introducing students to the nation's capital. It's about helping them discover something within themselves. Long after the monuments fade into memory, that newfound confidence is what stays with them. And that's why Youth Tour is still one of the most meaningful investments our cooperatives can make in the next generation. 📖

STEPHANIE M. OKUNIEWSKI

PREA/ALLEGHENY MEMBER ENGAGEMENT SPECIALIST

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WHEN KANSAS TEXTS, YOU LISTEN

I was already in the basement with my family when I got the text from Kathy, warning me about a tornado heading our way. It was the July Fourth weekend, and storms were ripping through much of Pennsylvania.

A former *Penn Lines* editor, Kathy Hackleman is originally from Kansas. When you get a tornado warning from a Kansan, you know to take it seriously.

And we did. Already rattled by the emergency alerts on our phones – IMMINENT THREAT! SEEK SHELTER IMMEDIATELY! – we did as told.

It was the first tornado warning for us – my wife, our son, our daughter and me – and we weren't sure what to expect. Outside, the rain and wind picked up. We even had water coming into the basement.

I tracked the storm on my phone as the meteorologist highlighted the warning zone and circled our town. With the pounding rain and howling wind, we had a pretty good idea where the storm was. Still, it was unsettling to see our hometown singled out on a radar screen.

Fortunately, the storm passed without serious damage in our neighborhood, though large trees were down and the power was out across much of the surrounding area. PPL, our local electricity provider, called it one of its worst storms, with more than 260,000 outages. Electric cooperatives were hit hard, too, with thousands of outages over that weekend.

Early the next morning, our daughter left for work at the nearby hotel restaurant where she helps with breakfast service. When she got there, she found the parking lot full of utility vehicles – and lineworkers from all over. For us, it became a chance to “talk shop.”

I explained that while we were sheltering in the basement, those crews were on their way here, leaving their own homes and families to help our community recover. The hotel parking lot had become a staging area for that work. PPL brought in line crews from several states and even Canada. Across cooperative communities, similar mutual-aid efforts were underway as lineworkers traveled to help sister co-ops restore power.

We were fortunate the storm wasn't worse, and grateful for the line crews that came to help our community. And even though Kathy isn't in Kansas anymore, I'll still listen to her when it comes to tornadoes.

PETER A. FITZGERALD
EXECUTIVE EDITOR



VIRTUALLY THERE: A team from the Virtual/Augmented Reality Lab at Penn State Behrend recently created a high-resolution model of the Liberty Bell that the public can explore online at var.psu.edu/libertybell.

LET FREEDOM RING

Penn State team creates virtual reality model of Liberty Bell

Have you always wanted to see the Liberty Bell, but can't find time to make the trip to Philadelphia? Penn State Behrend has you covered.

As America is in the midst of its 250th birthday celebration, a renewed interest in the 273-year-old bell has taken hold of the public. So much so, a team from the Virtual/Augmented Reality (VAR) Lab at Penn State Behrend has created a high-resolution model of the iconic bell for the public to explore online.

By visiting var.psu.edu/libertybell, history buffs can now view the bell from multiple angles, including close-up views of its surface details, shape, and historic features, including portions that aren't typically visible. Virtual visitors can also take an interactive tour of the Liberty Bell Center and its exhibits.

The project began when the Erie-based VAR team realized no public scan existed for the bell. In late May, they worked after hours at the center in Philadelphia to complete the scanning and photography. The team then reviewed and edited the images and developed digital assets for public education, preservation, and future exhibits.

Recast in 1753 in Philadelphia, the 2,080-pound bronze bell was rung regularly for nine decades before its iconic crack in the 1840s. Currently, it's on display at the center in the city's Independence National Historical Park.

ON THE RISE

Pennsylvania measles outbreak tops 100 cases

Pennsylvania is experiencing a growing measles outbreak, with 109 confirmed cases reported across multiple counties as of mid-July. At press time, Lancaster County had the most cases with 67, and Lebanon County was second with 20.

Health officials say most of those infected are unvaccinated, which has allowed the highly contagious virus to spread. Measles can cause fever, cough, runny nose, red eyes, and a rash and small white spots in the mouth. The disease can lead to serious medical complications, especially in the young and those with weakened immune systems.

The state Department of Health encourages anyone who is not vaccinated

to get the recommended two doses of the measles, mumps, and rubella vaccine. After two doses, people are immune to the virus. Officials are also identifying possible exposure locations and asking anyone who

notifies symptoms or becomes ill to contact a health provider.

For more information, visit pa.gov/agencies/health/diseases-conditions/infectious-disease/measles.



WE WANT YOU!

With our 60th anniversary in full swing, we're looking to feature even more of our readers in *Penn Lines*.

► **Are you feeling reflective?** Answer one of the following questions – and the best responses will be featured in the magazine:

1. Where were you and what were you doing in 1966? (50-100 words)
2. What would you put in a time capsule to be shared with readers in 2026?
3. Write a letter to the future: What do you hope rural life looks like in 2026? (50-100 words)



Please email your name, response to the question, address, daytime telephone number, and the name of the cooperative serving your home, business or seasonal residence to PennLines@prea.com by **Wednesday, Aug. 19.**

TIME LINES



AUGUST 2016

A decade ago, *Penn Lines* took a look at the challenges of keeping rural volunteer fire departments up and running. Time-consuming training, growing commitments for potential volunteers, retirements, and rising equipment and vehicle costs were all taking a toll on local public safety providers. To compensate, remaining volunteers estimated they were spending 60% to 70% of their time fundraising. The challenges haven't gone away. "I think the number of firefighters in Pennsylvania – particularly looking at the volunteer ranks – is absolutely past crisis stage," one fire chief lamented at a recent hearing in Harrisburg. "We're on life support right now, quite frankly."

AUGUST

KEYCITYSTEAMPUNK.COM



YESTERDAY'S TOMORROWS

History, science and fantasy will come together for the Key City Steampunk Convention in Gettysburg Aug. 7 to 9 at the Wyndham Gettysburg Hotel and Conference Center. Entertainment, educational panels, workshops, authors, tea dueling – a Victorian-inspired sport – and more will be offered. Daily passes are \$35. For more info, visit keycitysteampunk.com.

FAIR FUN

Puppy Pals Live. A Beatles tribute band. The Wild World of Animals. All these things and more can be found at the Warren County Fair in Pittsfield, Aug. 10 to 15. The event is open to all ages; tickets are \$15 at the gate and \$10 in advance. Those under 2 can attend for free. For more details, visit warrencountyfair.net.



WARRENCOUNTYFAIR.NET

WILDWOMENNEPA.COM



WOMEN UNITE!

The fourth Wild Women NEPA Festival, Pennsylvania's largest outdoor gathering for women, is set for Aug. 22 at Lazybrook Park in Tunkhannock, Wyoming County. Experience classes and workshops as feminine wellness, healing, creativity and connection with nature are celebrated. Learn more at wildwomennepa.com.

CELEBRATING ITALY

Wrap up August by celebrating Butler County's Italian heritage during Butler Italian Days, Aug. 28 and 29. Music, entertainment and an array of food will be available to those who stop by the free event on Main Street. To learn more, visit butleritaliandays.com.



FACEBOOK.COM

Youth

One Week, a Lifetime Impact

STEPHANIE M. OKUNIEWSKI
Member Engagement Specialist



2026 Youth Tour students had the opportunity to meet U.S. Sen. John Fetterman (D-Pa.), in back row, while touring the U.S. Capitol.

Tour



TO AN OUTSIDER LOOKING IN, Youth Tour is simply a weeklong journey to Washington, D.C., for the teens representing America's electric cooperatives.

However, for those who have experienced it firsthand, Youth Tour is so much more. Many say it changed the trajectory of their lives.

"I owe my whole career to my Youth Tour experience," says Sarah Hohman, a 2016 delegate who represented Mansfield-based Tri-County Rural Electric Cooperative (REC). "It sparked a love of policy and politics that I've followed ever since."

Kirk Shoemaker, a 2005 participant from Adams Electric Cooperative, says the trip had a similar impact on him.

"At that age, I never expected to meet state and national leaders in our nation's capital," he says. "The discussions, exposure, and increased awareness of policy, strategy, and local and national issues shaped my perspective and eventual path as a public servant."

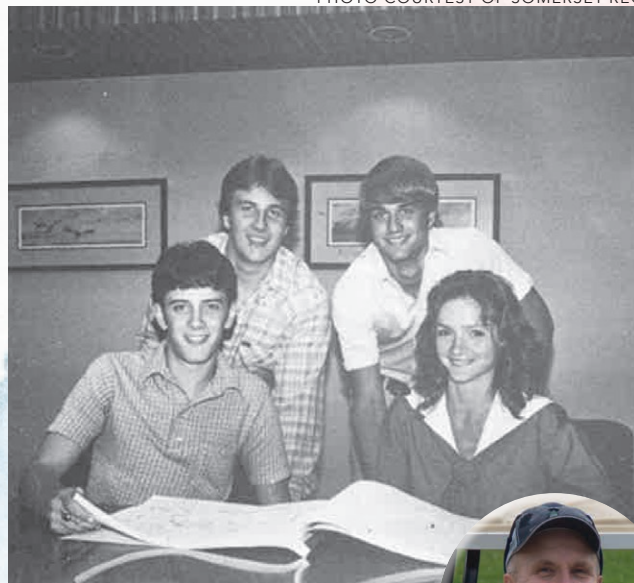
"I believe that the seed of service was cultivated by my Youth Tour experience."

Opening eyes and doors

Each June, high school juniors representing electric cooperatives across the country — this year, there were nearly 1,800 — venture to the nation's capital to learn about the cooperative business model, tour monuments, memorials, and museums, and learn more about themselves in one week than they ever thought possible.

"I never thought I'd be able to spend a week in

PHOTO COURTESY OF SOMERSET REC



THEN AND NOW: Doug Glessner, right, retired from Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative in 2024 as manager of outside operations. In 1982, Glessner, above, standing at left, and his fellow Youth Tour students had the privilege of gathering with President Ronald Reagan on the White House lawn.



Washington, D.C., with kids my own age from all across the U.S., experiencing the history and the impact our federal government has on our lives and on those who have helped



A LASTING IMPRESSION: Kirk Shoemaker was one of the 2005 Youth Tour participants, who are shown above. The trip, he says, provided him with new perspectives and led him to a career in public service.

shape who we are today,” says Doug Glessner, a 1982 Somerset REC delegate.

In 2026, attendees included 88 teens from Pennsylvania and New Jersey, which have sent more than 4,400 students on Youth Tour since it began in 1964. The event is hosted by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), which represents more than 900 local, consumer-owned electric cooperatives in the United States.

Famous alumni include former Apple CEO Tim Cook, authors, athletes and politicians. Among the Pa./N.J. ranks, there are cooperative board members, a cooperative chief executive, many co-op employees, countless advocates for rural America and cooperative supporters.

Shoemaker says the trip exposed him to a fascinating new world, one he wanted to be a part of.

“I felt the energy of D.C. — there seemed to be a palpable hum and crackle of electricity in the air. Important decisions were being made, every day, every hour — and many of those decisions affect people in rural America where I grew up, my family, friends, and neighbors,” he says.

“Now that I have been in and around D.C. for many years, I am more accustomed to this energy — but for someone from a rural, small town, my initial visit with Youth Tour made a lasting impression.”

For some students, the trip marks their first visit to our nation’s capital. There, they get the chance to witness and experience things they’ve only seen in textbooks and movies. Alumni say the experience opened their eyes — and doors, too.

“While I loved how many opportunities I saw in the city, [it] also reminded me of the strengths of my rural community: the way people look out for each other, the values it teaches and the benefit of knowing everyone you pass,” says Hohman, who now serves as director of government affairs for the National Association of Rural Health Clinics. In that role, she leads the legislative and regulatory efforts for the 5,700 rural health clinics across the country.

“Youth Tour,” she adds, “encouraged me to pursue internship opportunities at my local cooperative, NRECA, the Pennsylvania Office of Rural Health ... and all the way to my current role.”

While Youth Tour ushers some students into public

PHOTO COURTESY OF SARAH HOHMAN



THEN AND NOW: Sarah Hohman, right, oversees government affairs for the National Association of Rural Health Clinics. In 2016, Hohman, third from left, was a Youth Tour student sightseeing around Washington, D.C., where the seeds were sown for her career in rural advocacy.

service and federal careers, others find themselves accepting roles at one of Pennsylvania’s rural electric cooperatives.

“In 1983, I ended up coming back to the cooperative as a summer employee on the right-of-way crew before attending college in the fall,” Glessner says. “That led to a lifelong career with the cooperative, working my way up through the ranks — starting on the right-of-way crew, then onto the metering department, and finally as the manager of outside operations until my retirement in February 2024.”

Advocacy and family

Beyond influencing their career choices, alumni say Youth Tour introduced them to new people and perspectives and helped shape their view of the world.

“Youth Tour opened my mind and imagination,” Shoemaker says. “I will never forget how proud my parents, siblings, friends, and neighbors were of me. Do you know how awesome it is to experience all that trust, confidence and pride from a small, rural community? It’s incredibly important for a young person — it reinforces the idea that even people from rural areas can help improve their local and national policies.”

Each trip, students visit Capitol Hill, and if schedules allow, they meet with and often ask questions of sitting legislators. In 2026, students spent time with U.S. Sen. John Fetterman (D-Pa.) along with staffers representing U.S. Sen.

Dave McCormick (R-Pa.) and several other lawmakers. In 1982, teens came face to face with a president.

"We not only got to tour the White House," Glessner says, "but we were also fortunate enough to have President Ronald Reagan address the whole Youth Tour group on the front lawn of the White House."

This up-close-and-personal look at government in action encouraged Nick Isenberg, a 1995 Youth Tour student from Valley REC, to explore one of his passions.

"I like advocating for a cause," says Isenberg, an agriculture science instructor at Milton Hershey School, "whether it's rural electric cooperatives, or now, ag education. Youth Tour gave me the tools to take a passion and advocate for it."

For Glessner and many others, Youth Tour has also become a family experience. In fact, it's not unusual for several generations of a family to go through the program.

"All three of our sons as well as one of our daughters-in-law were also fortunate enough to participate as Youth Tour delegates," he says. "It is a very special experience, and I would highly encourage anyone who can to take advantage of this opportunity."

'More to life'

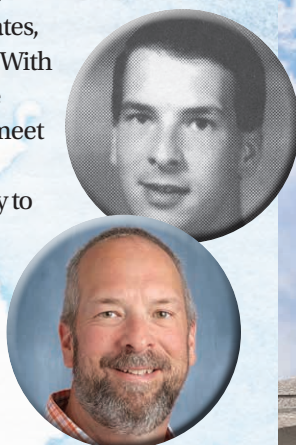
2026 marked my 20th year participating in Youth Tour and fifth year as the Pennsylvania/New Jersey director. Besides being a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for most students, Youth Tour is a place where teens are encouraged to find their voices, step outside their comfort zone, try new things and go back to their hometowns knowing they can make a difference.

Every year, I see that shift in delegates, and it is truly remarkable to witness. With Youth Tour, it is not always about the places you visit, but the people you meet along the way.

"Youth Tour gave me an opportunity to explore the country outside the small town I grew up in," Isenberg says. "There is more to life than the land you grew up on. Everyone needs to go explore and see what makes this country great."

"I genuinely believe the world would be a better place if all students had the opportunity to experience a trip as impactful as Youth Tour," Hohman adds. "There is something so uniquely powerful for a student to have your future believed in and championed."

To learn more about participating in the 2027 Youth Tour, call your local electric cooperative, visit its website and look for updates in *Penn Lines*.



NICK
ISENBERG



YOUTH TOUR 2026: STUDENTS MAKE THEIR MARK

Eighty-eight students from Pennsylvania and New Jersey took a once-in-a-lifetime trip in June when they traveled from their electric cooperatives across the two states to Washington, D.C., for the Rural Electric Youth Tour.

While there, they toured monuments and memorials, visited museums and Capitol Hill, met with lawmakers and their staffs, and networked with nearly 1,800 other students from across the United States.



Local Lore

Sullivan County Rural Electric Cooperative

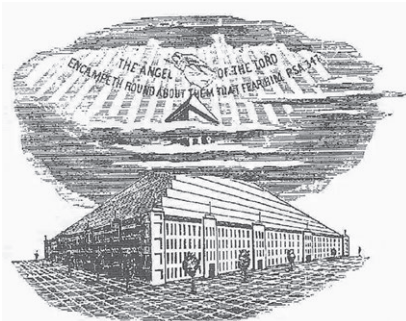
What Happens When 'He's' Late in Paying Taxes?

If you ever find yourself in a position to deed your land to God, just make sure He understands the ins and outs of property taxes.

Peter Armstrong learned this lesson the hard way in the mid-1800s after purchasing 600 acres of land between Laporte and Lewis Lake in Sullivan County, home today to Sullivan County Rural Electric Cooperative.

There, in 1860, Armstrong fulfilled his dream of establishing a religious community, which he called Celestia and where true believers could "join themselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant." He even convinced President Abraham Lincoln to exempt its residents from military service as the Civil War took shape. According to Armstrong, the town's inhabitants were "peaceable aliens and wilderness exiles" from the rest of Pennsylvania.

SULLIVAN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



A HOLY GATHERING: Peter Armstrong founded Celestia in Sullivan County during the 1800s.

That was all well and good until he chose to take his separation from the secular world one step too far: As the 1870s unfolded, Armstrong executed and recorded a deed transferring his land to God himself. In doing so, the Celestia founder believed the area would be considered sacred and, of course, free from property taxes.

The problem? County officials didn't agree.

And so around 1876, the county demanded someone — anyone — pay back taxes on the land. Armstrong refused, and at the tax sale that

followed, one of his sons bought the property. By the time Armstrong died in 1887, the community had almost entirely folded.

At the end of the day, perhaps even Armstrong would concede that his town's fate was, as they say, all part of God's plan. 🙏

(Editor's note: These days, Celestia is mostly wilderness, but a section of the site along Route 42 in Sullivan County does feature a historical marker and some remaining foundations. To take a self-guided tour, go to scpahistory.com/celestia and download the brochure.)



Main Office: Somerset, Pa.
Consumer-members served: 13,922
Website: somersetrec.com



CALLING ALL KIDS, ages 5 to 17: Show off your artistic skills!

Each month, we'll feature the artwork of our young readers (or our readers' youngsters), inspired by something they've read in *Penn Lines*. Paints, pencils, crayons, clay, sand — any physical medium is OK! You may send digital photos of the creation to CommunityCorner@prea.com, but please: no digital artwork.

Please include the artist's name, age and electric cooperative, plus a 25- to 50-word description of the art.



A Summer Scene

This month's artwork comes from Ranita Burkholder, 7, granddaughter of Irma Zimmerman, a member of Adams Electric Cooperative. Ranita decided to depict a scene on a summer day around her grandmother's house. "I like to swim in Grandma's creek," she says. "I also like to read books and draw." Thank you, Ranita, for sharing your artwork with us!

Ranita Burkholder, age 7, Adams Electric Cooperative

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Ebensburg Office: 7 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
Monday, Wednesday and Friday
Closed Tuesday and Thursday

Understanding Your Electric Bill



**STACY
HILLIARD**

AUGUST IS TYPICALLY ONE OF the warmest months of the year, and that means air conditioners across our community are working overtime to keep homes comfortable. During periods of extreme heat, many members may see an increase in their electric bill and wonder what factors contribute to the cost of electricity.

At REA Energy, we believe understanding your electric bill is an important part of being an informed member. While the total amount due may seem like a single number, it actually reflects several different costs associated with delivering reliable electricity to your home or business.

The largest factor is often the amount of energy you use. Electricity is measured in kilowatt-hours, and the more energy your household consumes, the higher your bill will be. During the summer, air conditioning is typically the largest driver of increased energy use. When temperatures climb into the 90s and higher, our cooling systems run longer and more frequently, consuming significantly more electricity than they do during milder weather.

Another major factor is the cost of generating or purchasing electricity. REA Energy, like the other rural electric cooperatives in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, purchases its electricity from our statewide generation and transmission provider, Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc. The cost of producing electricity fluctuates based on fuel prices, including those for natural gas, coal and other energy resources used to generate power. Changes in wholesale power costs influence the price of electricity delivered to members.

Transmission costs also play a role. Before electricity reaches your home, it must travel across a network of high-voltage transmission lines that connect power plants to local distribution systems. Transmission equipment requires ongoing maintenance and upgrades to ensure reliability, especially as electricity demand grows.

Closer to home, REA Energy maintains the local electric distribution system — utility poles, power lines, transformers, substations and other essential equipment that safely deliver power to members. The cost to maintain this equipment is covered through the monthly access fee. This is a flat fee that all members pay, regardless of how much electricity they use. It ensures all members pay a fair share of the basic, operational costs required to keep the power grid reliable and ready to serve your home or business. Whether a member uses a little or a lot of electricity, we must maintain infrastructure and have crews, equipment, and resources available to provide electricity around the clock.

Summer temperatures can also influence costs in less obvious ways. When the demand for electricity is high across a region, wholesale power prices can increase. Utilities and grid operators must make sure enough generation is available to meet peak demand, and those costs can be reflected throughout the electric system.

The good news is that simple steps to lower energy use can make a meaningful difference. Setting your thermostat a few degrees higher when you're away, replacing dirty HVAC filters, using ceiling fans, sealing air leaks and avoiding the use of major appliances during the hottest parts of the day can help reduce energy consumption, lower your bill, and reduce strain on the local grid during peak demand.

REA Energy's mission is to provide safe, reliable and affordable electricity while

Continued on page 16D

Youth Tour: A Tradition of Leadership and Cooperation

KAYLA KING, CCC, MARKETING AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT SPECIALIST

EACH JUNE, HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS from across the country travel to Washington, D.C., through the Rural Electric Youth Tour, a leadership program sponsored by electric cooperatives nationwide. More than just a sightseeing trip, Youth Tour gives students the opportunity to learn about the cooperative business model, develop leadership skills, meet elected officials and gain a deeper understanding of their communities.

The program traces its roots back to 1964, when Sen. Lyndon B. Johnson challenged electric cooperatives to give young people the opportunity to experience government and leadership firsthand. Inspired by his vision, electric cooperatives began sponsoring educational trips to the nation's capital. Throughout the decades, the program has grown into one of the most successful youth leadership initiatives in the country, introducing thousands of students to the values and principles that guide electric cooperatives.

Today, Youth Tour continues to reflect several of the Seven Cooperative Principles, including education, training and information, cooperation among cooperatives, and concern for community. These principles are woven throughout the week as students learn and build relationships with peers from across the country.

This year, REA Energy was proud to sponsor seven outstanding students from our service territory to participate in the 2026 Rural Electric Youth Tour. Along with fellow delegates from Pennsylvania and New Jersey, the students embarked on a week-long adventure filled with learning opportunities, historical landmarks and unforgettable experiences.

Learning, growing, discovering

The journey began on Monday, June 15, as students boarded buses and traveled to Washington, D.C. After arriving at the Gaylord National Resort and Convention Center, delegates participated in orientation activities that introduced them to the week's events and helped them connect with fellow participants. The evening concluded with a ride on the Capital Wheel, which offered breathtaking views of the Potomac River and the Washington skyline. For many students, it was their first glimpse of the nation's capital and the start of an exciting week ahead.

Tuesday continued the focus on leadership and cooperative education while also giving delegates a first-hand look at government in action. Students began the day with a co-op advocacy class, where they learned

about the role electric cooperatives play in serving rural communities and advocating for their members. Delegates then listened to speeches by Youth Leadership Council (YLC) candidates and participated in the voting process, gaining valuable insight into democratic participation and leadership development.

Following these sessions, students traveled to Capitol Hill to meet with congressional representatives and staff members. These conversations provided a meaningful opportunity to discuss issues impacting rural communities, energy policy and the future of the electric cooperative industry. The day concluded with the Marine Corps Sunset Parade at the Iwo Jima Memorial and a visit to the Pentagon Memorial, a powerful tribute to service and sacrifice.

Wednesday gave students the opportunity to connect history with government while exploring some of Washington, D.C.'s most notable landmarks. The day began at Arlington National Cemetery, where the teens reflected on the sacrifices made by generations of Americans. Students then visited both the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History and the National Museum of American History, expanding their understanding of the nation's scientific and cultural heritage.

Later, they toured several iconic memorials, including those dedicated to Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR), Martin Luther King Jr. and Thomas Jefferson. The visit to the FDR Memorial served as a reminder of the important role the Rural Electrification Act played in bringing electricity to rural America and helping launch the electric cooperative movement. The day concluded with an evening of fun and fellowship at the Boardwalk Arcade, where students strengthened friendships with fellow delegates.

Thursday's activities centered on leadership, communication and personal growth. Students participated in the Leadership in Action program, an interactive experience designed to build confidence and strengthen leadership skills. They also visited the Planet Word Museum, which celebrates language and communication.

Later that afternoon, delegates toured the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, one of the week's most impactful stops. The museum's exhibits encouraged students to reflect on history, human rights and the importance of civic responsibility. The evening brought together students from across the country for NRECA's Youth Evening and Camp Co-op, where they celebrated the cooperative spirit while building friendships that often

last long after the trip ends.

Friday offered a blend of education and entertainment. Students explored the National Zoo and visited the Museum of Illusions before gathering for the Co-op Connections Evening. The event served as a celebration of the relationships formed throughout the week and highlighted the principle of cooperation among cooperatives. By bringing together students from different states, backgrounds and communities, Youth Tour demonstrates how cooperatives achieve more when they work together toward common goals.

Before departing for home on Saturday, delegates visited the Lincoln Memorial, World War II Memorial, Korean War Veterans Memorial and Vietnam Veterans Memorial. These final stops provided an opportunity to reflect on the history, leadership and service that shaped our nation, as well as the lessons learned throughout the week.

The next generation of leaders

While the monuments, museums, and landmarks make Youth Tour memorable, the true value of the program lies in the experiences students gain and the connections they make. By investing in young leaders and introducing them to the principles that have guided electric cooperatives for generations, REA Energy and electric cooperatives across the country are helping prepare the next generation to lead, serve, and strengthen their communities.

Now 62 years after its founding, the Rural Electric Youth Tour continues to fulfill its original purpose: providing young people with opportunities to learn, grow and discover how they can make a positive impact on the world around them. For REA Energy's delegates, the memories made and lessons learned during the 2026 Youth Tour will undoubtedly last a lifetime. 📸



REA Energy 2026 Youth Tour students are, from left, Adelyn Burns, Carissa Adkins, Susie Patterson, Nico Cusimano, Kaitlyn Houser, Katie Bertolino and Bethany Smith.



YOUTH TOUR 2026
Make Your Mark

UNDERSTANDING YOUR ELECTRIC BILL

Continued from page 16A

being transparent about the factors that impact energy costs. We understand every dollar matters, and we are committed to making smart investments that keep the lights on and support the communities we serve.

If you ever have questions about your electric bill or are looking for energy efficiency tips to help you save,

please reach out. We're here to help you make informed decisions that work for your household.

Thank you for allowing REA Energy to serve you. 🙏

STACY HILLIARD, CCC, CKAE
COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING MANAGER

ANNUAL MEETING NEWS

5:30 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 22

ONLINE ONLY

The annual meeting of the members of REA Energy Cooperative, Inc. will be held online Tuesday, Sept. 22. The business meeting will begin at 5:30 p.m. Those who attend the virtual meeting for the entire time will receive a \$15 bill credit and be entered for a chance to win door prizes.

To register for the virtual meeting, visit reaenergy.com and click on the button that says "Annual Meeting Registration." Registration will open on Aug. 10. Please register by noon on Sept. 22.

REA Energy offices will be closed at 11 a.m. Thursday, Sept 3, for employee training.

The offices will reopen for business on Friday, Sept. 4.

To report an outage or to make a payment, please call 844-920-3395.

REA Energy offices will be closed on Monday, Sept. 7, in observance of Labor Day.

The Indiana office will reopen for business on Tuesday, Sept. 8, and the Ebensburg office will reopen on Wednesday, Sept. 9.

To report an outage or to make a payment, please call 844-920-3395.

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 Smithport substation service territory, in addition to emergency maintenance areas. Members in the areas affected will be notified. Contractors will perform all right-of-way work per REA Energy specifications. All contractor employees will carry 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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District 8



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District 6



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District 2

REA Energy is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

KEEP KIDS SAFE AROUND

Trees and Power Lines

When kids take a break from gaming or other devices, they may head outdoors to play. If they will be climbing trees, scope out the area first to ensure that the treetops do not have power lines running through them.

Not realizing power lines are energized, children may reach up to grab a line or accidentally come too close to it when they are playing or sitting high up in a tree.



Even if the power lines are not touching the tree, contact could happen once weight is added to the branch.

In addition, teach kids to fly kites, drones and remote control planes or toys in open areas free from power lines.

If a toy or other object lands in a substation, please call your electric utility to retrieve the item. Never approach the fence or try to enter the area.

Take time to teach children and teens how to respect and identify potential electrical hazards.

Learn more at [SafeElectricity.org](https://www.SafeElectricity.org)



What is FERC and Why Does It Matter to Electric Cooperatives?

CATHY CASH

RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES were formed to serve members with affordable, reliable and safe power. But what role, if any, does the federal government play in ensuring that happens?

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) is an independent agency in Washington, D.C., with authority over the transmission and sale of electricity in interstate commerce. It also regulates the interstate commerce of natural gas and oil and the siting of natural gas and hydropower facilities. Basically, FERC oversees how energy moves across the country via high-voltage power lines or large pipelines.

FERC doesn't regulate your local distribution cooperative, but it does exert authority over the wholesale energy markets where Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc. (Allegheny) — the wholesale power provider for cooperatives in Pennsylvania and New Jersey — purchases power. By setting transmission rates that

Allegheny and others must pay, the federal agency can ultimately influence electricity prices.

The commission works to maintain fair prices within wholesale electricity markets run by six regional transmission organizations, such as PJM Interconnection, which manages the electric grid for Pennsylvania, 12 other states and Washington, D.C.

Overall, FERC sides with conserving energy and encourages utilities to find ways to reduce demand, which eventually can place downward pressure on monthly bills.

The commission largely lacks authority over electric transmission in terms of siting and construction. That falls under state and local authorities.

FERC's authority over building generation is also limited to only approving, licensing and inspecting hydropower plants, such as the Raystown Hydroelectric Plant in Huntingdon, which produces approximately 2% of Allegheny's annual energy needs.

When it comes to grid reliability, the buck stops with FERC. The commission directs the national grid watchdog — the North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC) — and enforces its mandatory reliability rules and requirements on grid operators and owners of the U.S. bulk power system, including utilities and energy producers.

NERC became the electric reliability organization for the continental United States after the historic blackout of Aug. 14, 2003, which left more than 50 million people in the Northeast and parts of the Midwest without electricity from several hours to several days. FERC can require NERC to set new reliability standards or update current rules as needed to protect the grid's ability to serve today's increased demand.

FERC is made up of five commissioners appointed by the president and confirmed by the U.S. Senate for five-year terms. The chair presides over open, public meetings on the third Thursday of the month, where the commission votes on orders to act on or approve projects or set precedents. You can even watch these meetings at home live on [ferc.gov](https://www.ferc.gov).

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

ALLEGHENY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC., based in Harrisburg, Pa., is the wholesale power provider for the 14 rural electric cooperatives in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. The cooperative has a proud history of investing in sustainable energy solutions to benefit the communities it serves while providing reliable energy at an affordable price.



LIMITED POWER: The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission holds limited authority over approving, licensing and inspecting hydropower plants, such as the Raystown Hydroelectric Plant in Huntingdon. The run-of-river facility generates approximately 2% of energy produced by Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc., the wholesale power provider for the 13 rural electric cooperatives in Pennsylvania and one in New Jersey.

NEW PODCAST

SUBSCRIBE TODAY!



Check out **Inside the Lines**, a monthly podcast from the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association that spotlights issues facing rural electric cooperatives in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Look for policy updates, plus insights from cooperative leaders and the people who make our rural communities special. Listen on Apple Music, Spotify or wherever you get your podcasts! Subscribe today at prea.com/podcast.



LISTEN NOW



TIME FLIES

The Stories After the Story

COLIN P. McGUIRE
SENIOR EDITOR/WRITER



AS WE CONTINUE *PENN LINES'* 60th anniversary celebration, we catch up with two readers who once graced our pages.

From cave to cover

Being a *Penn Lines* cover star can lead to so many things: exposure, notoriety, fame. And yet, in the case of

Valley Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) member George Bange, it led to even more.

“Oh, yeah, I got rich off being on that cover,” he says — tongue in cheek — with a laugh. “To be honest, I don’t remember getting my photo taken. It was such a long time ago; I don’t even remember what I had for breakfast today.”

PHOTO COURTESY OF GEORGE AND KAREN BANGE



CAVE'S CAREGIVER: George Bange, a member of Valley Rural Electric Cooperative, continues to give tours of Rupert Cave in Mifflin County. He and his wife, Karen, purchased the property and their story was chronicled in the November 2001 issue of *Penn Lines*. Above, Bange recreates the cover image of that issue, which was taken 25 years ago.

Bange appeared on *Penn Lines*' cover in November 2001, offering a wry smile as he sat in a cave, providing the leading image for the cover story, "A Craving for Caving." The article chronicled the story of Bange and his wife, Karen, who purchased the property surrounding Rupert Cave in Mifflin County, which people have been visiting for more than 140 years — based on records and etchings on its walls.

The couple has since devoted much of their lives to improving and preserving the site while also leading tours.

"The biggest change for me since that photo was taken was that we got older," George says. "The cave itself hasn't changed, but we can't do as much caving anymore. I just turned 67, and that's a young person's activity."

"For 25 years, Karen and I led every trip into that cave," he adds. "But we're starting to really slow down, and we're trying to get other people involved who can protect the cave and show people around."

George's longtime goal was to travel to the very back of the cave, even as he hit 60 years old. Not only did he achieve that, but he's also made the trip each year since then.

His policy since the article's publication has been to schedule six trips per year with six people per trip (To learn more, visit karst.org/index.php/rupert-cave-preserve/).

As for his star turn as the November 2001 "cover boy," George says he was happy to spread the word about caving within *Penn Lines*' pages, if only to help educate folks near and far about the importance of keeping caves functional and pristine.

"It's been a treat to meet so many people through the years," he says. "We've had clubs come from all over, so it's been fun. We'll always love owning that property."

A photo and a turning point

Adams Electric Cooperative's Tom Knaub didn't find himself on the cover of *Penn Lines*, but he does have fond memories of being featured in one of its earliest issues.

The edition was published in May 1968, only two years after *Penn Lines* released its inaugural issue. Knaub was 8 years old.

"The article was about the first York County 4-H Electric Club Roundup [sponsored by Adams Electric]. They were teaching kids about basic electricity; I look a little younger in the picture than I look right now," he says, laughing.

Knaub was photographed for the magazine after receiving a blue ribbon for his exhibit. He says a career in electricity wasn't in the cards until that day, which turned out to be a huge turning point in his life.

Knaub went on to serve a four-year apprenticeship through IBEW Local 229, a York-based electrical workers

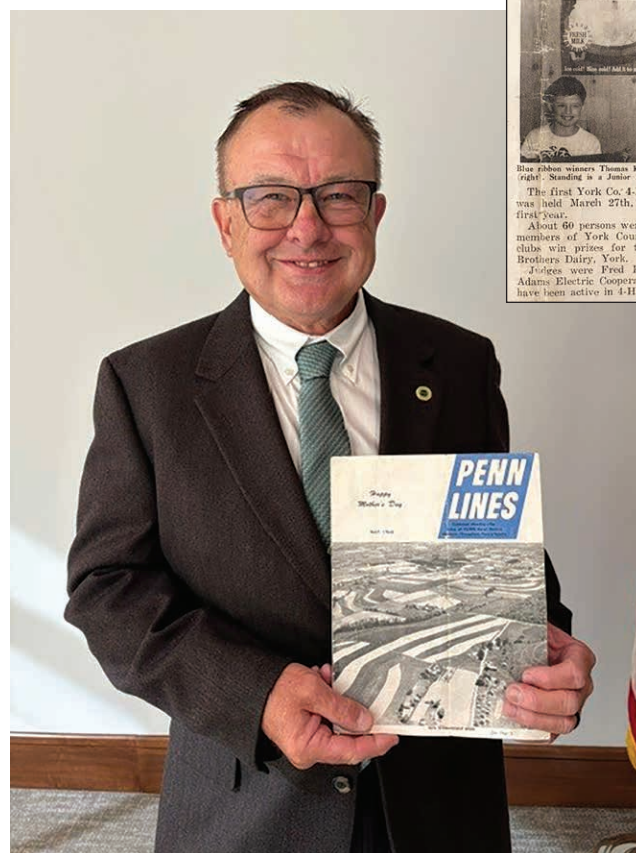
union, on his way to becoming a job foreman and then the regional superintendent for I.B. Abel, Inc., an electrical contractor in York, where he was employed for almost 40 years. Today, he is a director for Adams Electric and Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc., the co-op's wholesale energy provider.

"My career probably started that day when I was 8 years old," Knaub says. "It got me interested in electrical things — I loved seeing sparks fly."

Among the memories he cherishes of being featured in *Penn Lines* is the impact it had on his mother, who he had a special relationship with. She passed away in 2000.

"She was really excited to see me in there," Knaub says. "She had a diary from age 7 to 70 and all these other personal things we didn't know she had, including this copy of *Penn Lines* with the article I was in. Both my parents always loved reading the magazine."

Now retired, Knaub appreciates the journey he's taken since that moment in 1968. 📖



BLUE-RIBBON WINNER: Tom Knaub didn't know it at the time, but a winning electrical exhibit — and a shout-out in *Penn Lines* nearly 60 years ago — would change his life. It led to a career in the electrical field and his current role as a board member for Gettysburg-based Adams Electric Cooperative. He is also a director for Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc., the co-op's wholesale energy provider.

Efficiency Matters for Comfort

MIRANDA BOUTELLE

EVERYBODY WANTS A COMFORTABLE home. Energy-efficiency upgrades can help lower your electric bill and make your home more comfortable, too. If you can't find relief from heat on summer days, take it as a sign that your home needs an efficiency upgrade.

Energy-efficiency upgrades often start with the same basic principle: Keep outside air from coming inside and inside air from leaking out. Insulation, air sealing, duct sealing, and heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) upgrades can dramatically improve the comfort of your home.

A fully insulated home, including attic, walls and floor, is more comfortable: It's like a blanket for your home. It can also offer a surprising reduction in noise from outside. Air sealing is a lesser-known efficiency upgrade that keeps air

from entering and exiting the home through cracks and gaps. Some air sealing can be done from inside the home, such as using expanding foam around plumbing under sinks, adding gaskets to outlets on exterior walls, caulking around windows or weatherstripping around doors.

Attics and crawl spaces offer additional opportunities to reduce air leakage and increase comfort. In the attic, sealing gaps around top plates, open soffit areas, cove ceilings and balloon framing can help keep conditioned air where it belongs. In the basement or crawl space, seal around pipes, drains, vents and electrical wires. If you need help, contact a local contractor.

Duct sealing can also improve the comfort of your home. Your ductwork delivers heated or cooled air in a forced-air HVAC system. If there are disconnections or leaks in

the ducts, the air you paid to heat or cool may not end up where you want it. Disconnects and leaks can cause hot or cold spots in the home. An HVAC professional can inspect or test your ducts to make sure they are connected and sealed properly.

Air sealing and duct sealing can also improve the air quality in your home. Air leakage between the conditioned area of the home and the attic or crawl space can introduce dust, pollen, mold, or other allergens you don't want to breathe. Reducing air leakage can reduce the chance of these things circulating throughout your home.

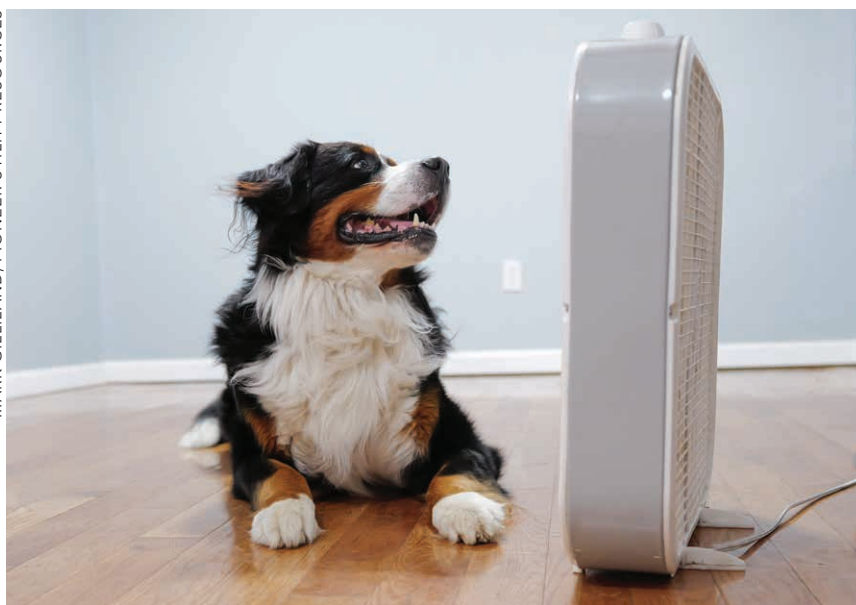
Upgrading to a heat pump can also boost comfort and efficiency. Heat pump technology is often about three times as efficient as electric resistance heat because it uses refrigerant to move heat instead of creating it. If you're upgrading from electric or gas heat, a heat pump can efficiently heat and cool your home, making it comfortable year-round.

If you already have a heat pump or any forced-air HVAC system, annual maintenance and regularly changing your filter maximizes system operation and comfort.

Consider improving your home with these energy-efficiency upgrades. Your family — and your electric bills — will be much more comfortable. 🐾

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.

MARK GILLILAND, PIONEER UTILITY RESOURCES



KEEP YOUR COOL: Energy-efficiency upgrades can help you and your two- and four-legged loved ones keep cool in the summer.

Awakening Curiosity

ABIGAIL ZIEGER

WHENEVER I COMPLAINED THAT I was bored as a child, my mother always gave me the same response: “Only boring people get bored.” Her point was that instead of blaming the world around me for being boring, I should look inward; perhaps the problem was my attitude. She taught me I could choose whether boredom would be a reason to complain or a catalyst for creativity. I eventually came to believe anything could be interesting if I allowed myself to be interested.

My mom’s saying became a personal adage, one I still use with my own children and my students. Unfortunately, most kids disagree with me. Students often zone out, complain about assignments or flat-out refuse to do work they don’t want to do. It can be a struggle even with the most fascinating topics.

It’s easy to blame an out-of-touch teacher or a dull assignment for lack of interest, but parents can foster an attitude of curiosity and a sense of agency in our children. As our kids’ first and most influential teachers, parents have more power to awaken curiosity than we realize.

One underused tool is to lean into our children’s interests, especially the ones we might not enjoy ourselves.

Some kids couldn’t care less about geometry, but they’ll talk your ear off about TikTok. When we listen and ask questions, we are both connecting with our children and helping them connect with the world around them. This habit may seem insignificant, but over time, it fosters the attitude that it’s worth paying attention to things.

Parents can also encourage a culture of curiosity at home. Ask questions, go down rabbit holes, extend conversations into meaningful discussions and debate. Check out library books or go experience a new place. This is organic learning in action; no textbooks required. There are whole worlds out there we know so little about, and exploring them alongside our kids is the first step to rousing their curiosity.

Additionally, we can help our kids become more

interested, engaged people by encouraging interaction in the real world. Let’s be honest — there’s no way a teacher or parent can compete with the pace of social media. Sometimes, we need to remove the electronics to let boredom do its work. Have your kids work with their hands or go on a screen-free adventure. When our kids are mentally and physically engaged in the real world, there is less listlessness and more investment in things that matter.

Despite our best efforts, the reality is that sometimes kids just need a little self-discipline. I often joke with my children that they don’t have to want to do a task — they just need to do it. In a world where instant gratification is the norm, our kids need to learn to accept the yucky feelings that come with tedious work. Set a timer, put on some music, make a cup of tea, do whatever you have to do to buckle up and get it done. After all, being able to complete tasks we don’t feel like doing is not just a homework skill, it’s a life skill.

There’s no magic formula to turn our children into academic enthusiasts. However,

growing up in a home where curiosity is modeled, interest is valued, and boredom is tolerated (dare I say, celebrated) can help form an outlook kids will take with them for the long haul. Children who are immersed in these habits at home are more likely to bring curiosity, interest and care into the rest of their lives. Will they eventually agree that “only boring people get bored?” Maybe not right away, but ask them again in 20 years or so. 📖



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.

From Farmers Market to Table

ANNE M. KIRCHNER

PHOTOS BY ANNE M. KIRCHNER



SUMMER'S END IS APPROACHING; it's time to play with tomatoes, sweet bell peppers and summer squash. Also, have fun with fresh herbs and onions. You can purchase these seasonal ingredients at the local farmers market to make the most of late summer cooking without spending hours in the kitchen.

Fresh tomatoes make a flavorful salsa. Use a one-bowl method for quick preparation and easy cleanup. Dress up black beans and rice with fresh bell peppers, yellow onions, and cilantro. Make a filling low-carb pasta substitute with spaghetti squash.

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

FRESH TOMATO SALSA

- 3 large tomatoes, chunked
- ½ small yellow onion, chopped
- ½ green pepper, chopped
- ¼ cup cilantro leaves
- 1 jalapeno pepper, diced
- 2 tablespoons lime juice
- ½ teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon garlic salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper

Place tomatoes, onion, green pepper, cilantro, jalapeno pepper – remove seeds for a mild salsa – and lime juice in a food processor. Pulse ingredients until desired texture is achieved. Season with cumin, oregano, garlic salt and pepper. Let salsa set for 30 to 45 minutes to blend flavors. Serve with tortilla chips or use as a topping for tacos, enchiladas, or grilled chicken.

Makes 6 to 8 servings.



SUMMER RICE & BEANS

- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- ½ cup yellow onion, diced
- 1 yellow or red bell pepper, diced
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 tablespoon lime juice
- 1 cup long-grain white rice, rinsed
- 1½ cups chicken stock
- 1 (15.5-ounce) can black beans, drained and rinsed
- ¼ cup cilantro, chopped

In a large skillet, heat olive oil over medium heat. Add onion, bell pepper and garlic. Saute for about 3 minutes or until onion is translucent. Season with salt and lime juice. Add rice and stir. Cook for 3 minutes or until the rice begins to toast. Add chicken stock and black beans; bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low and cover with a tight-fitting lid. Cook for 15 to 20 minutes or until rice is tender. Fluff rice with a fork and stir in cilantro.

Makes 6 to 8 servings.



SPAGHETTI SQUASH WITH CHICKPEAS

- 3 pounds spaghetti squash
- 4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, divided
- 1 small red onion, diced
- 4 tablespoons lemon juice
- 2 cloves garlic
- 1 (15.5-ounce) can chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 1 teaspoon Chinese five spice powder
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- ½ cup parsley, chopped
- ⅓ cup crumbled feta

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Using a sharp knife, halve spaghetti squash lengthwise and discard seeds. Rub 1 tablespoon olive oil on skin and flesh of each half. Place halves cut side down on a baking sheet. Bake for 30 minutes or until squash is tender. Meanwhile, combine red onion with lemon juice in a small bowl; set aside. Remove squash from oven and cool. Use a fork to shred squash strands and place in a serving bowl; set aside. On medium heat, warm 2 tablespoons olive oil in a small skillet. Add chopped garlic and saute for 2 to 3 minutes. Add chickpeas, Chinese five spice powder, salt and pepper. Cook for 2 to 3 minutes. Toss seasoned chickpeas with spaghetti squash. Stir in parsley and marinated red onion, including onion juice. Top with feta and serve at room temperature. *Makes 6 to 8 servings.*

When Big Trees Come Down: What Next?

GEORGE WEIGEL

WHETHER IT'S A STORM BLOW-OVER or a purposeful cut-down, the sudden loss of a big tree can have a huge impact on the surrounding yard.

A big tree is such a dominant landscape player that its leafy canopy dictates the light for everything underneath, and its roots determine what neighbors can stick around.

Over time, plants and grass within the tree's kingdom either adapt or die.

Astute gardeners know enough to plan for choices that can compete with a big tree's nutrient and water demands and limiting light.

A big-tree loss changes that dynamic; suddenly, sunlight floods a dry-shade yard.

Shade gardens filled with hostas, azaleas, hydrangeas, and ferns often wilt, bleach, and die from the shock, causing gardeners to fear they've lost everything along with the tree.

This scenario is especially worrisome if it happens during the growing season. Big-tree losses are happening more frequently due to more intense storms, wilt disease in oaks, emerald ash borer attacks on ash trees, and increased heat stressing cool-season preferers, such as sugar maple, lindens, and white birch.

However, the surrounding mayhem often looks worse than it turns out to be.

Many plant species can recover from the shock, although it may take some time. Erin Kinley, Penn State Extension's master gardener coordinator, advises gardeners not to hit the panic button and rush removal or transplanting.

"Transplanting in summer is really hard on plants," she says. "You might do more damage than just letting them alone."

In the long run, your job is going to be sorting out plants that are likely to adapt to the new light from those

TIPS TO HELP LIGHT-FLOODED PLANTS SURVIVE...

- ▶ Keep plants well-watered.
- ▶ Assemble temporary shade shields out of shade cloth, floating row covers, burlap, tarps or old sheets.
- ▶ Mulch the ground to help mitigate the increased soil temperature.
- ▶ Don't fertilize – it's counter-productive to stressed plants, especially during hot, dry conditions.

that are never going to be happy in full sun.

Some plants are versatile enough that they'll grow in shade or brighter light, such as oakleaf hydrangeas, boxwoods, coralbells, hellebores, Japanese anemone, and many hostas.

Woodland natives and thin-leaved plants, such as wild ginger, bleeding heart, trilliums, toad lilies, and many ferns, are most likely to wilt, brown, or die.

Plant catalogs and online growing sources are useful guides that list the

light preferences of different species. Since most plants aren't going to die if you don't take immediate action, you'll have time to watch and see what unfolds. Keep in mind: Just because a plant's leaves wilt or drop doesn't mean the plant has died. (Needled evergreens are an exception; if they brown all over and drop needles, they're usually dead.)

Give your shocked plants at least a few weeks to rebound. Waiting until next spring is even better. If the plants are still looking bad and/or going downhill instead of bouncing back, spring is a good time for transplanting.

You can move your shady stalwarts to another part of your yard that still has shade, or you can plant another tree and hope new shade develops fast enough to keep most of your shade garden alive. If neither of those work, try asking friends or neighbors with shady yards to adopt your sun-shocked plants. 🌳

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.



TREE TROUBLE: The loss of this big oak tree – blown over in a storm – will cause a sudden and marked change in the growing conditions for plants underneath.

GEORGE WEIGEL

ISSUE MONTH AD DEADLINE

October	August 14
November	September 14
December	October 14

Please note ads must be received by the due date to be included in requested issue month; ads received after the due date will run in next issue. Written notice of changes/cancellations must be received 30 days prior to issue month.

No ads accepted by phone/email. For more information, please call 717-233-5704.

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- ☐ Ad copy as it is to appear in the publication.
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ON SALE! – CO-OP COOKBOOK GIFT PACK FOR \$12, includes shipping. "Country Cooking" and "Recipes Remembered" are collections of recipes from electric co-op members of Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Payable to: Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association, P.O. Box 1266, Harrisburg, PA 17108. Write Attention: Cookbooks.

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LEATHER DOCTOR – Professional mobile leather and vinyl repair. Furniture, autos, boats, RVs. Rips, cracks, discoloration and more. For a quote, text photos of damage to 814-423-0684.

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FOR SALE: SEA CONTAINERS for storage, 20' and 40', used or new. One-trip use, also with side doors. Delivery available! Bedford County. Cove Container Sales, 717-475-1190.

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What's in a Name?

JOHN KASUN

MY NAME IS JOHN. My father's name was John, and his father's name was John. The first son often gets his father's name — not creative, but very common. My father was a junior, which made me, “the third.” Being “the third” is like not being unique enough to have your own name; no one cared enough to give you a name, so they gave you a number. If I were insecure, it might make me feel as important as those tiny tickets at the deli section in the grocery store — something the clerk behind the counter just shouts so he knows how much cheese to cut.

I've never given it much thought, but perhaps the naming process demonstrates a lack of creativity. Not the person being named, of course, because no one gets to pick their name.

In your earliest years, hearing your name called meant one of three things: You were lost, you did something bad or it was time to eat. For several years, that is all your name means to you, but when you mature and leave home, your name is the first thing new acquaintances learn about you. John is a common name, so at times I thought about what name I might have picked if I had the opportunity to choose. Maybe something like Moose, Timber or Maverick. Something to stand out a little and occasionally move myself to the front of the line.

The advantage of having an unusual name hit me recently as I sat in a waiting room that served several different doctors. Every few minutes a nurse would appear at the doorway and call out a name. Someone in the packed room would stand up and be escorted into the exam area. When your name was called, it was like winning the lottery. That is, until the nurse called for “John” and five guys stood up.

I understand there is a government regulation stating

that announcing a person's full name in a doctor's office is an invasion of privacy, which is interesting because the government has no problem tracking my bank deposits, what brand of cereal I eat or the size of my underwear. At least they draw the line at announcing my last name in the doctor's office. I think I would rather they use my last name as opposed to saying, “John, with the enlarged prostate, you're next.”

To all you soon-to-be parents or grandparents out there, consider using some creativity when selecting the child's name. It takes nine months for a child to develop, so spend some of that time coming up with a name that will help them stand out from the crowd.

Let me be clear: I have nothing against John, Joe, Bill, Tom, Mary, Ann, Patty or Ellen. All I am suggesting is that each child is unique. While their name does not define who they are or what they will become, it just might help them get established as an individual.

Just for fun, and to get them off to a good start, put some effort into a suitable name for your new family member and the next generation of

your family tree. Maybe Griffith, Frazier, Neal, Pierce or Chance? How about Hallee, Rilynn, Cinnamon or Elysia? There are plenty more to choose from.

The name you select is the first gift you give a child, and it could just be one of the most important. A unique name is also a great conversation starter, and you never know where that might lead in the future. You get the idea. Give it a shot, and have some fun with it. 🎲

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.



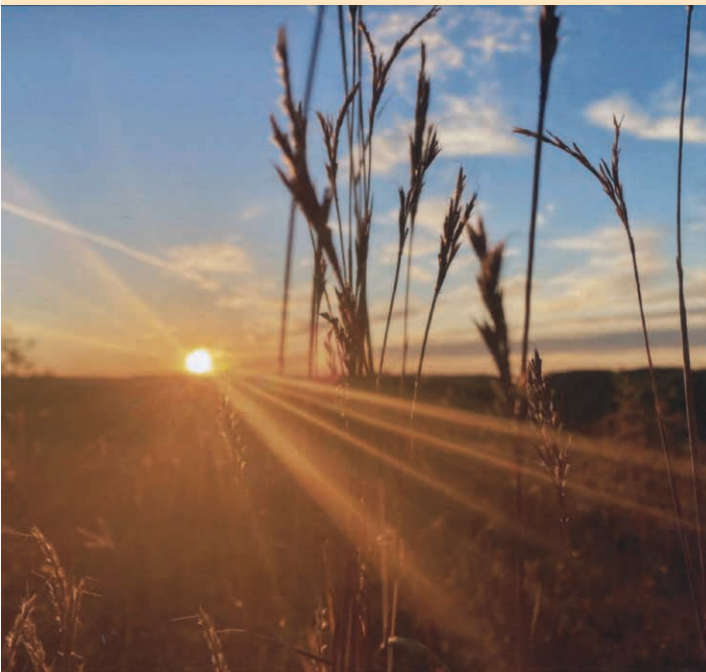
The Heart of Summer

With the arrival of August comes the heart of summer, a time when temperatures soar, outdoor activities take center stage and the beauty of the season undeniably shines through. From a sunrise to a sunset, a butterfly happy to spread its wings and the innocence of a child's smile — and accompanying hairdo — it's perhaps the best time of year to be anywhere but indoors.

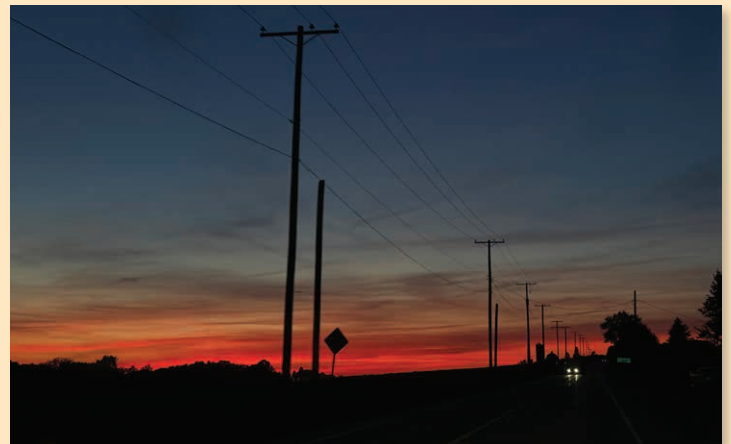
Happen to have a camera handy as you explore the heart of summer? Submit your photos to our Rural Reflections contest. The best photos in each of five categories (animal, artistic, human, landscape and editor's choice) will be featured in the January 2027 issue and receive a \$75 cash prize. Runners-up will appear in the February 2027 issue and receive \$25. 📷



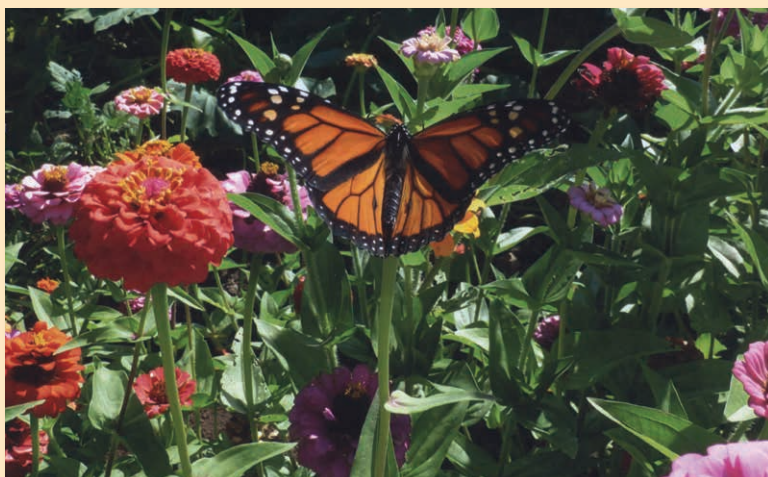
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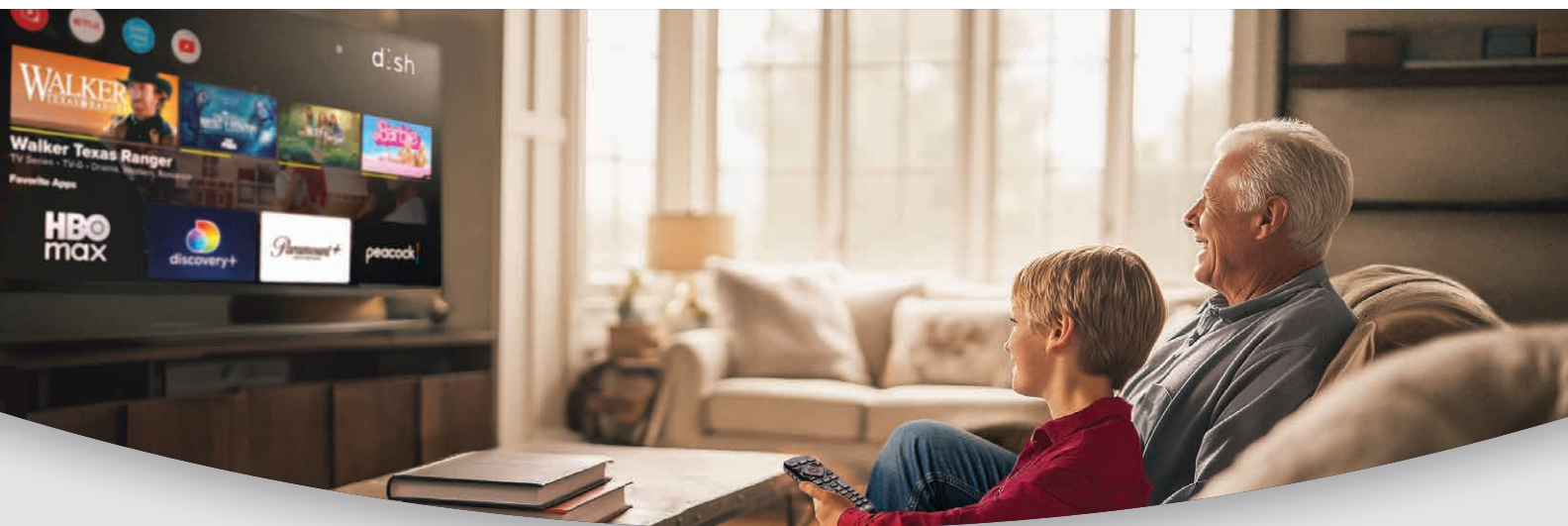
How to enter

TO SUBMIT ENTRIES, email your photos (no more than five digital images per person, per year) to photos@prea.com or send prints to *Penn Lines Photos*, P.O. Box 1266, Harrisburg, PA, 17108-1266. With your entries, be sure to include your name, address, daytime phone number and the name of the rural electric cooperative that serves your residence, business or seasonal home.

Remember, our publication deadlines require that we work ahead, so send your seasonal photos to us early. We will need winter photos before mid-September. *Please note:* Hard-copy, physical photos mailed to our office will not be returned. Therefore, if you mail a photo, please make sure it's a print, not an original.

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For change of address, please contact your local electric cooperative. For cooperative contact information, please visit www.prea.com/member-cooperatives



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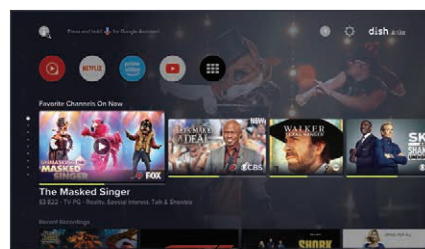
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