

JUNE 2025

PENNSYLVANIA LINES

One Step at a Time

Local Walking Groups Pave the Way for Better Living

**RELIABLE POWER:
WHY DIVERSITY
MATTERS**

**COOPERATIVE
KITCHEN: GET
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ON THE COVER
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PHOTO BY PETER KUTBAY

Wildfires Aren't Just a Problem Out West

Rural Electric Cooperatives Are Taking Action to Extinguish the Risks



STEVE BRAME

IN APRIL, TWO WILDFIRES SCORCHED more than 2,700 acres of the Michaux State Forest in south-central Pennsylvania — an area most of us don't associate with massive fires. The blazes burned across rugged mountain terrain just outside Shippensburg in Cumberland and Franklin counties, and while no one was injured or buildings damaged, the scope and speed of the fires took many by surprise.

Days later, crews also contained a small wildfire near Raystown Lake, where quick action by our staff at Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc., who oversee the hydroelectric plant at the dam, and local firefighters kept flames from damaging a transmission line that helps power the region.

These events are reminders that wildfire risk isn't confined to the West anymore. Drier seasons and the loss of millions of trees due to invasive species like the emerald ash borer have resulted in decades of fuel buildup on public lands, turning Pennsylvania's forests into potential tinderboxes. What we're seeing now is a new normal — and it calls for smart, coordinated action.

That's exactly what Pennsylvania's rural electric cooperatives are pursuing on the ground and in the halls of government.

In recent weeks, more than 120 co-op leaders from across the Commonwealth gathered in Harrisburg for our annual Legislative Event to speak directly with state lawmakers about wildfire risks and other issues. Many also traveled to Washington, D.C., this spring for a major grassroots lobbying event hosted by our national organization. The message we delivered was clear: Electric co-ops need state and federal policies that keep pace with the challenges we face.

A top priority is commonsense wildfire mitigation. Co-ops are already investing in vegetation management, system inspections and right-of-way maintenance to reduce fire hazards. However, outdated permitting processes — especially on federal lands — can drag some mitigation projects out for months, even years.

That's why we're backing bipartisan federal legislation like the Fix Our Forests Act. This bill would ease the regulatory gridlock, allowing cooperatives to remove hazardous vegetation within a wider buffer zone around power lines and streamline approvals for vital grid-hardening projects.

At the state level, we're advocating for policies that encourage proactive land management on public lands to reduce the fuel load that makes wildfires more likely and more destructive here. We're also asking lawmakers to work with co-ops to ensure wildfire costs aren't unfairly shouldered by rural communities and the people who live there.

These efforts aren't just about protecting electric infrastructure; they're about protecting the people, homes, farms and forests that define our state.

They also reflect the values at the heart of the cooperative model, including the principles of education and concern for community. We're educating policymakers, consumer-members, and the public about the very real wildfire risks we now face in Pennsylvania. And we're doing everything in our power to protect the communities we serve — from the grid we manage to the forests that surround us.

Because no matter how the environment changes or the risks evolve, our responsibility stays the same: to power our communities safely, reliably, and with care. And we're ready to do that in the same way cooperatives have always done things: driven by innovation, collaboration, and a deep commitment to the people and places we call home. 🌲

STEVE BRAME
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ALLEGHENY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

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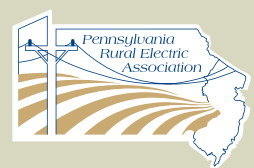
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MAPS AND LEGENDS

I love maps, always have. As a child, I even made my own pirate maps, inspired by Robert Louis Stevenson's "Treasure Island" and his legendary tales of buried booty. Maps have always stirred my imagination, but I learned early on that they don't always tell the story of what's happening on the ground.

During my Army training days, I had to take a land navigation test where I was handed a map, a compass, and some grid coordinates. To pass the test, I had to locate a number of precise checkpoints on a course within a specified period of time.

This was at Fort Leonard Wood in Missouri – or, as we trainees called it: Fort Lost in the Woods in the State of Misery. Soon after hitting the course, I began to understand how it got its nickname. There sure were a lot of trees out here. And I was lost, and feeling pretty miserable.

With the clock ticking, I knew I had to focus on my training and not panic. I had to see the forest and not just the trees in front of me. Once I did, terrain features began revealing themselves – the story on the ground. Contour lines took the shape of hills, and I recognized a ridge here, a valley there. Finding the first checkpoint gave me the confidence to navigate the rest of the course, and I was soon out of the woods – just under the time limit.

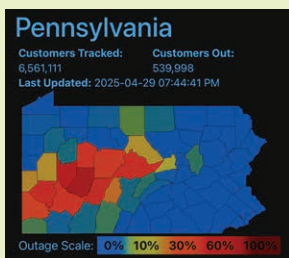
Even with today's advanced GPS technology, maps still don't reveal what's happening on the ground. They can't show us the in-person beauty of our rural areas – or the challenging terrain our line crews encounter in servicing our cooperative regions.

Radar images and outage maps can show up-to-the-minute information about a storm, but they can't tell you about the snapped poles, fallen trees, and impassable roads lineworkers face when responding to a power outage.

Maps can't show you the mutual support from sister co-ops arriving to help a cooperative in need. They also can't show you the dedication and perseverance it takes to respond to a storm and not quit until the lights are back on. That's the story on the ground.

As summer storms roll in, I'll be paying attention to maps. They still stir my imagination, but it's the story on the ground that inspires me.

PETER A. FITZGERALD
EDITOR



THE HERSCHEY ARCHIVES

KISSED WITH FAME: Filming has started in Pittsburgh for "Hershey," which is all about the life of famed chocolate pioneer – and Hershey Kiss creator – Milton Hershey and his wife, Catherine. Extras are needed for the shoot, which wraps up June 27.

LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION!

'Hershey' filming in Pittsburgh, extras needed

Have you ever dreamed of being in a movie? Well, you may get your chance IF you're available this month and plan to be in or around Pittsburgh.

The makers of "Hershey," an upcoming motion picture about chocolate pioneer Milton S. Hershey, are looking for extras of all ages, and no acting experience is necessary. Set in the late 1800s and early 1900s, the film reveals how a man who failed in business multiple times created an iconic chocolate empire and channeled his success into education and the community. Filming began in May and continues through June 27.

Extras, who will portray townsfolk, factory workers and community members, need to be available for 12 to 14 hours on shoot days (hours are shorter for minors). The pay is \$225.

Directed by Mark Waters, the film stars Finn Wittrock as Milton Hershey and Alexandra Daddario as his wife, Catherine, and is set for release in 2026.

For more information and to apply, go to nancymossercasting.com/post/extras-needed-for-feature-film-hershey.

ROOTED IN PRESERVATION

Two Pennsylvania forests added to old-growth network

Two forests in the Pennsylvania Wilds have been added to the National Old-Growth Forest Network (OGFN), the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) says.

Colton Point State Park in Tioga County and **Bark Cabin Natural Area** in Lycoming County are the 37th and 38th Pennsylvania forests, respectively, to be inducted into the network and the first in their counties.

Colton Point is on the west rim of Pine Creek Gorge, the 358-acre park also known as the Pennsylvania Grand Canyon. Bark Cabin was established to protect an 82-acre grove of old-growth hemlocks.

DCNR says that while all forests are essential to a healthy ecosystem, old-growth sites are particularly valuable for their unique structure. These areas retain more carbon and nitrogen than younger forests, which improves water and air quality.

Founded in 2012 by Dr. Joan Maloof, OGFN includes more than 285 forests across 39 states. The organization educates the public about the ecological benefits of old-growth forests and speaks out against threats to specific ancient forests.

AND THE WINNER IS ...

Route 6 takes first place in byways competition

Pennsylvania Route 6 has been named the winner of Byways Madness 2025, the annual competition hosted by Scenic America to recognize and celebrate the country's most loved scenic byways.

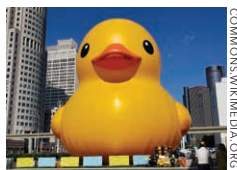
In the final round of voting, Route 6 had 2,913 votes compared to the Blue Ridge Parkway's 765 votes.

Route 6 crosses the state from east to west and includes areas served by a handful of rural electric cooperatives, including Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative (REC), Tri-County REC, Warren Electric Cooperative and Northwestern REC. The state's newest official scenic byway, Route 6 is known for its rolling hills, charming small towns and access to natural wonders, including the Pennsylvania Grand Canyon.

RUBBER DUCKY!

Oversized bath toy to make a splash at Idlewild

A six-story-tall bright, yellow inflatable — The World's Largest Rubber Duck



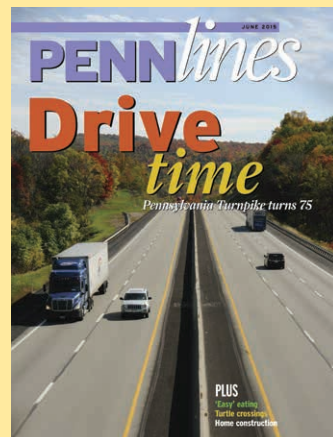
— will be waddling into western Pennsylvania later this month when it returns for a rare appearance. This time it will be making a splash at Idlewild & SoakZone in Ligonier June 27 to 29.

The last time the oversized bath toy, created by Dutch artist Florentijn Hofman, emerged in Pennsylvania was more than a decade ago — in 2013 — at the Pittsburgh International Festival of Firsts. More than a million onlookers showed up then for the duck's three-week stay.

This time, in honor of the inflatable's appearance, Idlewild will be hosting duck-themed activities, and you can always quack your wallet open for limited-edition merchandise.

Founded in 1878, Idlewild is the third-longest operating amusement park in the United States. 🦆

TIME LINES



A decade ago, *Penn Lines* was commemorating the 75th anniversary of America's first superhighway: the Pennsylvania Turnpike. Immortalized in songs and on postcards, the first section of the turnpike opened Oct. 1, 1940, and paved the way for the Interstate Highway System. Not only that, towns and cities sprouted up along the toll road, which created a faster, safer and more convenient way to move people and goods across the state. Today, the turnpike has stepped into the 21st century with Open Road Tolling replacing the iconic toll booths and their attendants.

JUNE



MARS MADNESS

The Mars New Year festival in Mars, Pa., promises to be an out-of-this-world experience. Slated June 6 and 7, the event will feature fun, immersive educational activities for all ages — including a Robotics Village — presentations by NASA and more. Get details at marsnewyear.com.

GO OUT OF YOUR GOURD

Take a trip to Lebanon, June 12 to 14, for the Pennsylvania Gourd Festival, a unique celebration that brings together artists, craftsmen, and enthusiasts to showcase the versatility of gourds. The event will be held at the Lebanon Valley Exposition Center. Admission is \$3 for adults and free for children under 12. Learn more at pagourdsociety.org.



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PIEROGIES: YUM!

If you love pierogies, you're gonna love the Edwardsville Pierogi Festival, June 13 and 14, at John Hopkins Park. Enjoy the Pierogi Parade, Pierogi Cookoff, petting zoo, live entertainment and more. Admission is free. Check edwpierogi.com for the latest details.

ENCOUNTER HISTORY

Those looking for a unique experience should check out the Encounters with History series, hosted by the Gettysburg Foundation. Join prominent historians, authors and battlefield experts for the free monthly campfire talks. On June 20, the discussion, held at the Rupp House, will focus on the children of Gettysburg. Learn more at gettysburgfoundation.org/exhibits-tours-events/special-events.



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One Step at a Time

Local Walking Groups Pave the Way for Better Living

KATHY HACKLEMAN

Penn Lines Contributor

“An early morning walk is a blessing for the whole day.”

- Henry David Thoreau

THE BELIEF THAT EACH JOURNEY begins with a single step is well accepted by most people.

But the path to a healthy life requires many more, according to Tasha Pratt, wellness director and personal trainer at the Tioga County YMCA in Mansfield, which is also home to Tri-County Rural Electric Cooperative (REC).

“The benefits of walking include a reduced risk for heart

disease, stroke and diabetes,” Pratt explains. “If a person with pre-diabetes or diabetes is eating right, walking will help them lose weight. It helps with balance, especially for older people with bad joints. It helps women at risk for osteoporosis, and also aids in digestion.”

Walking also has emotional benefits. “Even 10 or 15 minutes of walking here and there throughout the day,” she says, “can have significant health benefits for someone.”

While walking helps people of all ages — June 14 is Family Health and Fitness Day — Pratt says it becomes more important as people “age into the senior category,” a stage where they often become more sedentary after retiring. The beauty of walking is that it can be done at no cost and on any schedule.

Although you can walk on a treadmill, Pratt recommends

WALKING FOR WELLNESS: Staff and friends of the Tioga County YMCA in Mansfield enjoy a spring stroll for physical and emotional benefits. They are, from left, Tasha Pratt, wellness director and personal trainer; Heather Stocum, membership director; Sarah King; and Melissa Sentiff, executive director.

"You are talking to someone and wandering at the same time, and so you find you walk even longer because you are having a conversation."

walking outside, which provides the additional benefits of sunshine and nature, which are good for humans, too.

"Everyone should walk," she says. "It's beneficial from the time you take your first step through the end of life."

'Healthy in mind, body and spirit'

Melissa Underwood, executive director of the Mansfield Chamber of Commerce, believes so much in the power of walking that she helped to organize an informal group that brings like-minded friends and neighbors together. The group is an outgrowth of the chamber's Partners in Progress program. The first community walking event was held Jan. 1.

"A lot of us are focusing on getting people in the community to be healthy in mind, body and spirit," she

says, "so we encourage people to meet at the downtown Mansfield Hike and Bike Trail at 3:30 p.m. every Tuesday and Thursday."

It's a casual gathering and participants are invited to "come as they wish and walk as long as they wish," Underwood explains. Some participants walk a specific number of miles, while others walk for a specific length of time. Some also jog on the mile-long, paved path. All,

GROUP GOALS: Walking is good for your health, but there's a social aspect to it, too. Below, participants in the recent 5K walk/run, sponsored by the Mill Cove Environmental Center in Tioga County, make the trek with smiles and conversation.

PETER KUTBAY



however, are welcome, including “strollers,” who just want to connect with other people while getting a bit of exercise.

Underwood has always been a walker and hiker, but she especially enjoys this program because in addition to health benefits, there’s also a social aspect.

“It provides accountability and fellowship,” she says. “You are talking to someone and wandering at the same time, and so you find you walk even longer because you are having a conversation.”

While the Tuesday-Thursday walking group is a year-round casual event, Mill Cove Environmental Area and Education Center, also in Tioga County, recently hosted a formal 5K walk/run as part of its annual Earth Day celebration.

Sam Vanloon, Tioga County commissioner and president of the center’s board, said this was the first year for the walk/run, but the organization hopes to make it an ongoing part of its Earth Day activities. While the walk/run was timed, many participants just walked for fun and exercise. Medals were presented to everyone who completed the course.

Something for everyone

If your community doesn’t offer similar walking programs, you can still take part in an organized effort through the free “Everybody Walk Across Pennsylvania” program, an eight-week initiative sponsored twice a year by Penn State Extension.

Laurie Welch, an extension educator for Lycoming and Clinton counties — portions of which are served by Sullivan County REC, Tri-County REC and Claverack REC — coordinates the virtual exercise program.

“People do not get enough physical

WALKING WORKS WONDERS

Research has shown that walking can boost your heart and brain health and lower your chances of heart disease. Walking at a brisk pace for 150-plus minutes a week can help you think better, feel better and sleep better.

If you’re unable to walk, do what you can to get moving and improve your health, too.

All you need to get started.

For most people, walking is safe, easy to stick with and a low- or no-cost activity. Many people enjoy walking with family, a friend or a pet. Make a plan to take a walk on a lunch break if you’re having trouble finding time and tune into some music or a podcast.

Here are some other tips:

- ▶ Choose supportive shoes made for walking.
- ▶ Wear comfortable, weather-appropriate clothes.
- ▶ Drink plenty of fluids.
- ▶ Apply sunscreen and wear a hat and sunglasses.

Lace up, then warm up.

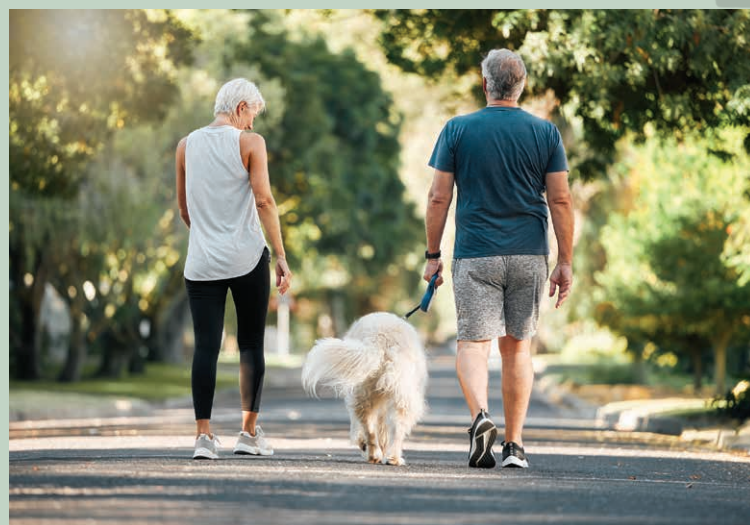
Start with a session that feels doable (say, 20 minutes), then gradually increase your time and distance. Stretch beforehand, warming up your hips, hamstrings and calf muscles. Begin with an easy pace, then try speeding up a little. When you finish, consider stretching again — your muscles may feel looser and warmer.

Take strides toward safety.

Using trails or sidewalks is best. (If you have to walk on the street, wear light colors and face traffic so drivers can see you, and vice versa.) Don’t forget your flashlight if walking in the dark. If you’re using headphones, keep the volume low enough so you can hear vehicles, bicycles and emergency sirens.

Find out more at heart.org/walking.

Information courtesy of the American Heart Association



Continued on page 20

A Diverse Fuel Mix is Essential for Reliable Power

MICHAEL LEITMAN

PROVIDING MEMBERS WITH SAFE, reliable and affordable power is the mantra for electric cooperatives across the nation. Co-op members can see the work necessary to supply reliable electricity locally when they encounter lineworkers maintaining utility poles and wires and repairing them after major storms.

At the regional and national levels, a diverse mix of power generation resources, transmission lines and pipeline infrastructure are essential cornerstones of reliable electricity.

The U.S. electric grid has undergone major changes over the last decade. The share of electricity generated from coal plants has declined significantly, while the share from natural gas and intermittent wind and solar generation has grown. Fuel diversity means your electricity is supplied by a variety of generation technologies, each with their own characteristics and performance capabilities as weather and seasons change.

When more is better

Dispatchable technologies can be turned on and off as needed. Large steam generation plants (most commonly using coal or nuclear fuels)

are generally considered “baseload,” meaning they are designed to run efficiently 24/7 as the base of the electricity mix. Steam plants, however, are less capable of ramping output up or down to meet grid peaks and dips.

Natural gas is the most versatile fuel, powering large combined-cycle plants that not only can operate as baseload but also are flexible enough to ramp up and down. These capabilities are essential for meeting demand on the hottest and coldest days and for balancing intermittent renewable energy sources, such as solar and wind.


Most hydroelectric power comes from generators inside large dams. In Pennsylvania, for instance, some of the electricity you use as a cooperative member comes from the hydroelectric plant at Raystown Lake in Huntingdon County. The facility, owned by your cooperative and the 13 others in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, is operated by Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc. (Allegheny), your co-op’s wholesale power supplier. Allegheny has also invested in nuclear power, another carbon-free resource, to meet the energy needs of your co-op.

Over the last decade, the share

of electricity generated from wind and solar plants has increased dramatically. These beneficial, “no-fuel-required” plants can deliver low-cost electricity — but they only generate electricity when the wind blows and the sun shines. The production patterns of solar and wind are complimentary to one another. Solar generates during the day and wind tends to generate more at night. Across seasons, wind output is typically higher during the colder months when there is less sunshine. Deployed together, wind and solar technologies can offer a good balance.

While battery energy storage technology is being used more often to store renewable energy and then release it when needed, natural gas plants remain the primary method for “firming” these resources.

Ultimately, our electric grid is most reliable when a wide range of technologies is available. When conditions lead to lower generation from one, others can help compensate.

While the types of power plants used from region to region vary based on weather and infrastructure, America’s electric cooperatives work diligently to ensure a diverse and reliable power supply for the communities they serve. 

MICHAEL LEITMAN writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing nearly 900 local electric cooperatives.

ALLEGHENY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC., based in Harrisburg, Pa., is the wholesale energy 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.



POWERING ON: The Raystown Hydroelectric Plant in Huntingdon County is owned by the 14 rural electric cooperatives in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. The hydropower generated here is part of a diverse mix of resources that keeps your lights on.

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Local Lore

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A Case of Mistaken Infamy

Rumors have circulated about ghostly encounters on the outskirts of Elton, an area of Cambria County served by Indiana, Pa.-based REA Energy Cooperative. At Snavelly Cemetery, one particular spirit, whose mortal shell met a fiery end, is said to appear so often that the site is often referred to as Becky's Grave.

But is it really Becky?

Rebecca "Becky" Kring — born Rebecca Wertz on March 18, 1807 — was believed to be a witch who was hung for practicing black magic, according to local lore. Becky's descendants, however, beg to differ.

Local newspaper accounts confirm Becky died along with her husband, Samuel, in a house fire in 1892. The village of Elton — population 200 at the time — "was thrown into a state of great excitement by the breaking out of a fire. Most villagers had retired for the night, and it was the men about Ickes' Hotel who, being still astir, first

discovered the flames."

To this day, the origin of the fire is uncertain. What is known is that the smoke rendered Samuel, 79, and Becky, 83, helpless and unable to escape the flames.

According to a letter submitted to the Laurel Highlands Historical Village, Becky isn't even buried in the cemetery that has her name attached to it. Her grave is instead a few miles away in Dunmyer Cemetery. The Southwestern Pennsylvania League of Apparition Technologists has investigated Snavelly Cemetery but hasn't found any conclusive signs of a haunting there.

Who, then, is this mystery ghost?



Main Office: Indiana, Pa.
Consumer-members served: 22,700
Website: reaenergy.com

Let us know your theories (with supporting evidence, please) at communitycorner@prea.com.

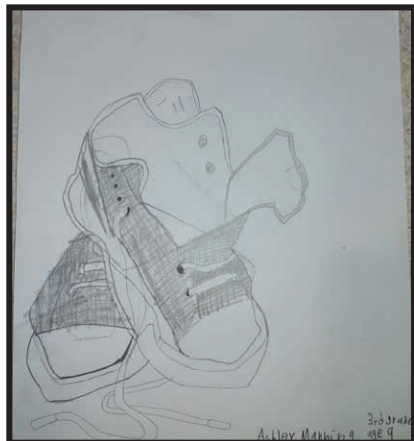


REST IN PEACE: Rebecca "Becky" Kring's actual grave is in Dunmyer Cemetery in Salix, Cambria County. Believed to be a witch, Becky passed away with her husband, Samuel, in a house fire. Oddly enough, Becky's ghost reportedly haunts Snavelly Cemetery in Elton, which is several miles away.

Two Talented Sisters

This month's artwork comes from Ashley and Allison Manning, ages 9 and 11, respectively. Allison, in honor of the first deer she shot, painted a buck. Ashley, excited to learn she could participate in Community Corner, drew some sneakers. Thank you both for sharing your artwork with us!

*Ashley Manning, age 9,
 REA Energy Cooperative*



*Allison Manning, age 11,
 REA Energy Cooperative*



CALLING ALL KIDS, ages 5 to 17:

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 okay! 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.

REA Energy Cooperative, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



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Monday, Wednesday and Friday
Closed Tuesday and Thursday

When the Lights Go Out, We Spring into Action



CHAD CARRICK

WHEN THE STORMS ROLLED ACROSS western Pennsylvania in late April, very few could have predicted the scope of damage that would be left in their path. Winds exceeding 70 mph splintered poles, uprooted trees and brought down spans of power lines, sending thousands of homes into darkness. For REA Energy Cooperative, the next several days became a true test of resilience, teamwork and dedication.

I've seen storms and other bad weather come and go in the past 23 years. Over the last few months, however, we've witnessed frequent storms with unprecedented severity. At the height of the outages following the April 29 storm, nearly 21,000 out of more than 25,000 meters were without power. That alone is a once-in-a-career event. However, over the next several days, storms continued to hit the same areas, causing repetitive damage and outages.

Immediately after the April 29 storms passed, REA Energy sprang into action. Outside crews and office staff assembled at both cooperative offices to create a plan of action. Assessing the damage, crews reported multiple spans of downed lines, upward of 100 broken poles, trees laying across lines all over, and other broken equipment. Adding to the damage, roads were blocked in multiple places, limiting access and creating hazardous conditions.

Most outages were initially due to the cooperative losing transmission supply at 20 of our substations. However, we still knew the damage to our system was catastrophic. This prompted a call for mutual assistance to help with the repairs.

We effectively quadrupled our outside workforce with the help of fellow cooperatives, contractors and tree-trimmers. Restoration work like this is not about downed wires and poles — it's about our members and communities. We understand the challenges members face without power, and that's why crews worked around the clock.

By May 5, we had restored power to all but a few members where damage was most severe. As restoration efforts wrapped up, we were already looking ahead, focused on reliability and continuous improvement.

I want to personally thank REA Energy crews and office staff for their hard and relentless work during this restoration period. Also, thank you to the other cooperatives and contractors that helped turn the lights back on.

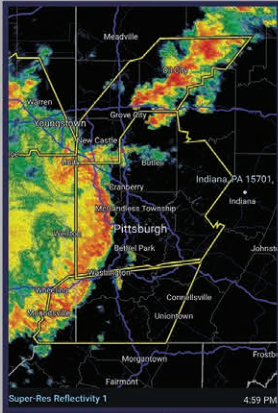
I would especially like to thank our consumer-members for their patience and understanding. We truly appreciate your kind words and messages.

We are more than an electric utility. We are part of this community. And, together, we weather the storms and come out stronger. 🇺🇸

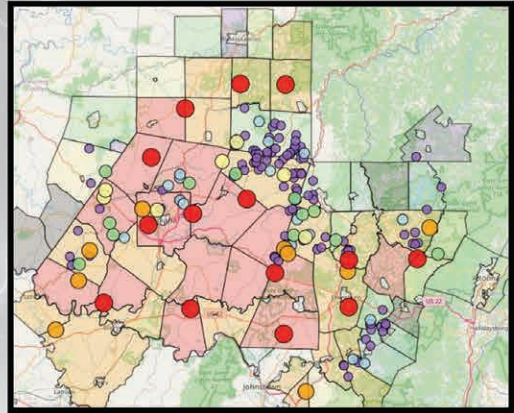
CHAD CARRICK, MBA, CFPC
PRESIDENT AND CEO

APRIL 29: A STORM RECAP

On April 29, a severe storm swept through REA Energy Cooperative's service territory, downing trees and utility poles and leaving approximately 17,600 members without power.



Around 6 p.m. Tuesday, April 29, a severe storm accompanied by extremely strong winds swept through our service territory.



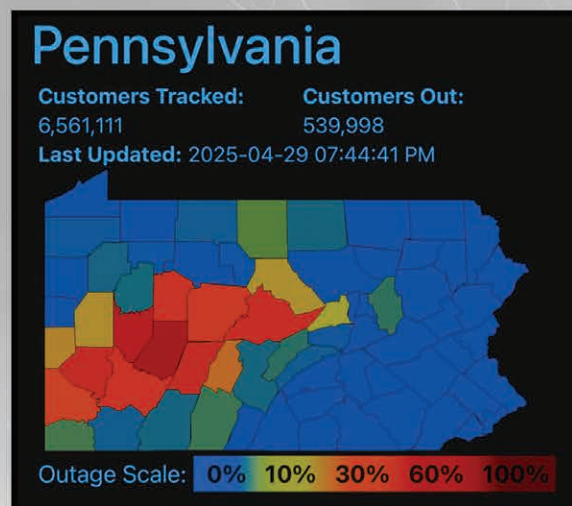
- Twenty of REA Energy's substations lost power from our power delivery company, FirstEnergy.
- The downtime of these substations ranged from 16 minutes to 74 hours.
- Ninety-nine broken poles were discovered in the restoration process.
- Restoration continued into the following week, with the last member's power restored on May 5.



Photos supplied by REA Energy employees

Not only did our electrical grid experience catastrophic damage, but REA Energy's communications lines were also damaged in the storm. This caused outage reporting systems to go offline intermittently during the first 72 hours after the storm hit.

REA Energy has not seen this amount of damage in more than 30 years. During the weeklong restoration process, our service territory experienced several more storms that caused additional damage to the grid.



More than half a million customers across Pennsylvania lost power due to this vicious storm, including 90% of REA Energy's total meters.

We made the call for help, and many sister cooperatives, tree crews, and contractors answered it. Our outside workforce quadrupled in size to get the damage repaired.

Our storm restoration team worked 16-to-24-hour shifts to get the power back on.

This was a historic event for REA Energy. We thank our members for their patience and understanding as we continue to work on fully repairing the damage.



REA Energy thanks Adams Electric Cooperative, Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative (REC), New Enterprise REC, Northwestern REC, Somerset REC, BNF Powerline Construction, Inc., The Tri-M Group, LLC and Penn Line Tree Service for their help during the restoration process.



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MyREAEnergy SmartHub Update

****Important Update for Your Stored Payment Information****

Starting Monday, June 23, you may be prompted to enter your card's CVV code — the three- or four-digit number found on the back of your debit or credit card — when using a stored card to make a one-time payment on SmartHub or the IVR phone. This added step helps to ensure secure transactions.

Please note: this change does not affect members on Auto Pay.

Payments processed directly from a bank account will not be affected. Please contact the cooperative with any questions.

Right-of-Way Management News

REA Energy contractors from Penn Line Tree Service will be trimming the rights of way near the Livermore and Georgeville substation areas and emergency maintenance areas in June.

Members in the affected areas will be notified. Contractors will perform all right-of-way work per REA Energy specifications. All contractors 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.

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In rare cases you may need to exit your cab due to smoke or fire. If you must get out, make a solid jump out without touching any part of the tractor or vehicle, and hop away as far as you can, keeping both feet together as you hop.

For more information visit **SafeElectricity.org**.



Safe
Electricity.org

Air Cleaner Options for Your HVAC System

JAMES DULLEY

DEAR JIM: I need to select an air cleaner for my new HVAC system. We use our fireplace often, and our son has allergies. What type of air cleaner should we consider? – *Kathy H.*

DEAR KATHY: Allergen sizes vary significantly, and this will impact the selection of the best air cleaner or filter for your family.

Installing the highest-filtration air cleaner is not necessarily the best choice for every home. Some can

increase the air-flow resistance in the ducts to the point where the HVAC efficiency drops. With lower air-flow rates, fewer allergens will make it to the air-cleaner element to be removed.

What is a 'MERV'?

The minimum efficiency reporting value (MERV) rating is a good guide for comparing air cleaners. The value is determined by testing how many various-sized particles the filter blocks and can range from 1 to 16. A typical cheap 1-inch-thick fiberglass filter is about MERV 2 at best. A filter used in hospitals for surgery may be MERV 16. My own geothermal heat pump uses a MERV 11 filter.

Many common allergens (pollen, pet dander, dust mites) are relatively large and can be removed by a MERV 4 filter. Mold spores vary in size, but a MERV 7 filter can remove most of them. Removing fireplace and tobacco smoke requires a minimum of MERV 13.

High-MERV replacement filters cost more and must be replaced more often. If your son's allergy tests indicate a high-MERV filter is needed, have your heating contractor install a large air cleaner. Again, this will be more expensive, but each filter should last longer without causing air-flow resistance. The MERV 11 filter in my geothermal heat pump is 30-by-32-by-2-inches.

Most of the filters above MERV 7 use some type of pleated media. This is folded back and forth like an accordion in a stiff paper frame, often with some reinforcing wire mesh. Two-inch thick is most common. Thicker filters, up to 6 inches, do not necessarily filter better, but they can hold more particles before needing to be replaced. This may save some money in the long term.

Keep in mind, a central filter only removes allergens that reach it. This

is why also running a small-room air cleaner is important when trying to manage allergies.

Other filter options

For families without allergies, installing a 1-inch-thick pleated media filter is adequate. Its main purpose is to keep dust and dirt from getting into the heat exchanger coils inside the heat pump. Dirty coils can inhibit heat transfer and reduce the system's efficiency.

Washable electrostatic air cleaners can be effective, too. The air flowing over the filter media creates a natural static charge, causing particles to stick to it. Rinsing it in the bathtub neutralizes the charge and the particles wash away. These air cleaners are somewhat more expensive, but can last and be effective for years.

The Cadillac of air cleaners uses a combination of thick-pleated media and electrostatic grids, offering the advantages of both. Most furnace manufacturers offer these combination systems which are programmed to work with their computerized thermostats.

Another effective air cleaner option uses electricity to charge collector plates, which particles will then stick to. When the plates get dirty, the assembly can be slipped out and washed with soap and water.

Electronic air cleaners are thick and require extensive duct modifications. The initial cost is high, but there are no regular replacement costs and they use very little electricity. These are most effective for removing tiny smoke particles, rather than larger allergens. 📧



DUCT WORK: Because it's much thicker than a standard fiberglass filter, a pleated media air cleaner usually requires professional installation because duct modifications are necessary.

HAVE A QUESTION FOR JIM? Send inquiries to James Dulley, Penn Lines, 6906 Royalgreen Drive, Cincinnati, OH 45244 or visit dulley.com.

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Summer Fun: Saving Money While Making Memories

ABIGAIL ZIEGER

AH, SUMMERTIME. FREEDOM FROM SCHOOL, from waking up early, from homework and from a long list of other activities our kids deem undesirable. With that freedom comes many fun and — let's face it — often expensive alternatives. The cost of camps, amusement parks, pool memberships, trips to the beach and other typical bucket-list activities can add up quickly, especially if you have more than one child.

Thankfully, there are lots of frugal ways to have fun together this summer as a family while also making memories. I asked my family to help me come up with a list of favorite warm-weather pastimes that were either free or inexpensive. They did not disappoint.

Woods, water and local adventures

The first idea my kids had was going for a hike. Pennsylvania is home to more than 100 state parks and 2.2 million acres of state forest, none of which charge an entry fee. These state lands are wonderful places to explore endless miles of trails, but they also offer plenty of other fun things to do. You can visit natural features like beautiful waterfalls or giant boulders, pack a picnic, or try a new sport like disc golf or canoeing. They're also a great place to learn about wildlife, conservation, traditions and regional history through park programming.

Another one of my kids' favorite summer activities is water fun. Every summer, I put out a cheap kiddie pool along with a hose and some squirt guns. Even though they can't really swim in the shallow water, the kids jump in and splash around to cool off. We've also gotten great deals on Slip 'N Slides and similar things in years past. Our absolute favorite, however, is the creek that runs behind our house. Not much can beat the hours spent floating, hunting for crayfish, and skipping stones — and it's sure hard to beat the price.

Our kids also enjoy going to local events. Small-town summer festivals are a great way to get to know your

neighbors and enjoy activities like car shows, taste tests, live entertainment, and more. Sometimes, historical sites and museums hold special events with re-enactments, demonstrations, and educational talks for little-to-no cost. We are lucky to have a small historic theater in our town that offers free movie days, classes and day camps for kids. And don't forget your local library; ours holds lots of free summer programming for everyone from toddlers to teens.

Sometimes, we go on an adventure to a nearby town. Pennsylvania small towns are known for their charm, and driving just a short distance from home can unveil new treasures. We personally enjoy perusing antique shops,

visiting small museums and checking out local landmarks, whether they're colorful painted statues or covered bridges. Even if your budget isn't large, you can have a ton of fun just exploring a new place.

Or maybe stay in?

What about rainy nights? Those are the perfect time to stay in, grab some favorite snacks and sit on the couch watching a favorite movie. At times, we opt to dig through memories, looking at old photos or using our "vintage" record player. When thunderstorms hit and the power goes out, we love to break out candles and headlamps and

play a board or card game. Family read-alouds, drawing or even indoor catch are other personal favorites.

As you can see, there are a multitude of fun and frugal activities to try with your family this summer. I bet you can think of even more ideas!

Big family vacations and excursions are wonderful, but if you're looking to save a buck, you often don't have to look much farther than your own town. It doesn't cost a dime to make memories that will last a lifetime. 🍷



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.

IT'S CONTEST TIME!

Penn Lines has a big birthday coming up, and we want you to be a part of our 60th anniversary celebration. Before the confetti flies in 2026, though, **we're kicking off a handful of photo contests this year; enter one — or all three.**

CONTEST NO. 1 – OLDEST ISSUE OF PENN LINES! If you have an oldie but a goodie around the house, take a photo of it with you. Please make sure the publication date is visible.

CONTEST NO. 2 – MOST WELL-TRAVELED PENN LINES!

Take your favorite copy of *Penn Lines* beyond the borders of the Commonwealth. Send us a photo of you holding the magazine at your destination in front of a recognizable landmark or a sign that tells where you are. Also include a 50- to 100-word essay about where you were and why you brought that issue.

CONTEST NO. 3 – A DATE WITH PENN LINES! We'll be honest: We like it when we get to go to some place nice. Take your favorite issue of *Penn Lines* to a special place in your community and take a photo of yourself with it.

FOR ALL CONTESTS, WE WILL NEED: your name, address, daytime telephone number, the month and year of the magazine, and the name of the cooperative that serves your home, business, or seasonal residence.

PRIZES: \$50 gift card for each contest winner; the winning photos will be featured in a 2026 *Penn Lines* issue.

DEADLINE:
Friday, Oct. 31

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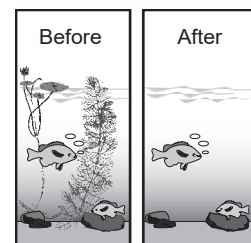
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Continued from page 11

activity,” Welch notes. “We wanted a fun event that all Pennsylvanians could participate in.”

In addition to being an exercise program, Everybody Walk Across Pennsylvania is an educational effort that focuses on different health resources offered by Penn State Extension. Each week, participants receive an email with nutrition information and health tips.

Operating for more than 10 years, the program has many repeat participants. Also, a chart is available that converts other types of exercise into walking so that people who swim, for example, can calculate how many miles they would have “walked” to get the same benefit. Participants are encouraged to average 10 miles of walking or exercise per week.

Walkers can go it alone; however, many sign up in teams of three or five. Each team logs its miles, and members can compare their progress to other teams, setting up some friendly competition. Welch says a number of businesses have multiple teams, based on departments, that compete head-to-head.

“Most people are more likely to exercise if they are

accountable to others on a team,” Welch says.

The virtual program is offered once in the spring and once in the fall, and each session focuses on a different theme. One year the theme was state parks, and Route 66 was highlighted another year. The spring program is currently underway, but registration for the fall session begins this month with a start date in September. Interested participants are encouraged to sign up at extension.psu.edu/everybody-walk-across-pa.

Over the last three years, Welch reports the program had 3,555 registered participants from throughout the United States. Of those, 65% have been part of the program for one to three years. In addition, 97% report increased physical activity; 88% consistently accessed health and wellness articles; 77% explored recipes provided by Penn State Extension; and 49% were motivated to adopt healthier eating habits.

Welch says the program’s statistics speak for themselves: “It’s a fun, educational way to get people more active and involved.” 📌



TAKE A HIKE!

Visitpa.com, the state's official tourism website, recently released a list of trails in Pennsylvania worth exploring on foot or by bicycle. Many are in counties served by rural electric cooperatives.

Here's a sampling:

- ▶ **The Great Shamokin Path in Armstrong County:** Tracing a section of the abandoned Rural Valley Railroad corridor, this trail parallels the Cowanshannock Creek for 3.5 miles. Once a major trail that connected two of the largest Native American towns in Pennsylvania, it offers beautiful views of western Pennsylvania.
- ▶ **Standing Stone Trail in Huntingdon, Mifflin and Fulton counties:** The 84-mile trail – named the 2016 Trail of the Year – traverses central Pennsylvania ridges and valleys from Cowans Gap State Park in the south to the Mid-State Trail in the north. More than 80% of the trail passes through state-owned forests and game lands.
- ▶ **Pine Creek Rail Trail in Tioga and Lycoming counties:** This trail offers a spectacular, 62-mile journey through Pine Creek Gorge, better known as the Grand Canyon of Pennsylvania.
- ▶ **The Allegrippis Trails in Huntingdon County:** Built by the International Mountain Bicycling Association, this trail system wanders around Raystown Lake. At Trough Creek State Park, trek to Balanced Rock, a boulder that has hung on the side of a cliff for thousands of years, and Rainbow Falls, which is along the footpath to Balanced Rock.
- ▶ **D&H Trail at Lehigh Gorge State Park in Lackawanna, Susquehanna, and Wayne counties:** This 38-mile path traces the route of the former Delaware and Hudson Railroad, a small but vital rail line during the 1800s. The multi-use trail runs for several miles along the Lackawanna River and alternates between tree-lined sections and open stretches with vestiges of the region's coal-mining heritage.
- ▶ **Heritage Rail Trail County Park in York County:** The 21.5-mile trail runs from York to the Maryland border and includes the Howard Tunnel, four railroad bridges, New Freedom Train Station and the Hanover Junction Train Station, all of which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
- ▶ **Great Allegheny Passage in Allegheny and Somerset counties:** One of the nation's most popular rail trails, this trail begins at Point State Park in Pittsburgh and crosses into Maryland, eventually reaching Washington, D.C. Spanning 150 miles from Pittsburgh to Cumberland, Md., the scenic trail connects with the 184.5-mile C&O Canal Towpath, creating a 333-mile non-motorized route between Pittsburgh and the nation's capital.
- ▶ **Montour Trail in Washington and Allegheny counties:** The 63-mile multi-use trail system follows the route of the former Montour Railroad and Peters Creek Branch of the Pennsylvania Railroad between Coraopolis and Clairton. It connects with Pittsburgh International Airport, the Panhandle Trail and the Great Allegheny Passage.
- ▶ **Jakes Rocks Epic Mountain Bike Trail System in Warren County:** These professionally designed and constructed trails, which provide opportunities for all skill levels and ages, wind through natural boulders and scenic forests in Allegheny National Forest. Jakes Rocks was named Pennsylvania's Trail of the Year in 2024.
- ▶ **Laurel Highlands Hiking Trail in Fayette, Somerset, Westmoreland and Cambria counties:** Enjoy the picturesque Youghiogheny River and Laurel Mountain during a hike along this 70-mile trail that offers both challenging sections for seasoned backpackers, as well as reasonably easy, level sections for the casual hiker. A must-stop regardless of hiking prowess is the Ohiopyle State Park with breathtaking views and waterfalls.
- ▶ **Allegheny National Forest in Elk, Forest, McKean and Warren counties:** Pennsylvania's only designated national forest celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2023. At 96.3 miles, the North Country National Scenic Trail is the longest in the forest and one of three National Scenic Trails in Pennsylvania. It takes visitors to vistas of the Allegheny Reservoir, passing through rock outcroppings, open hardwoods, old-growth forests and stands of hemlock.
- ▶ **Pine Grove Furnace State Park in Cumberland County:** Nestled deep in Michaux State Forest near Chambersburg, this park features 4 miles of looping trails, scenic overlooks, and Laurel and Fuller lakes. The park's wooded, mountainous terrain attracts hikers of all skill levels.
- ▶ **Ricketts Glen State Park in Columbia, Luzerne and Sullivan counties:** A National Natural Landmark, this park is best characterized by the Falls Trail System, a difficult, 7.2-mile trail that provides views of 22 waterfalls. Other trails traverse the park's 13,193 acres, including the short Beach Trail that runs by the park's swimming area and the Grand View Trail, which leads to the highest point on Red Rock Mountain.
- ▶ **Quehanna Trail in Clearfield, Cameron and Elk counties:** This 72.6-mile loop hiking trail in the Moshannon and Elk state forests passes through some of the most wild and beautiful country Pennsylvania offers. The main, orange-blazed trail begins on the western end at Parker Dam State Park. From there, the trail goes east into the Quehanna Wild Area toward Karthaus and Piper, then north toward Sinnemahoning, and finally west through the Marion Brooks Natural Area back to Parker Dam.
- ▶ **Presque Isle State Park in Erie County:** The state park offers 11 miles of hiking trails with scenic views of Pennsylvania's only seashore. These sandy trails offer a glimpse at the beautiful coastline of this National Natural Landmark, known as a favorite spot for migrating birds.

PRESQUE ISLE STATE PARK



Get 'Dressed' for Summer

ANNE M. KIRCHNER

PHOTOS BY ANNE M. KIRCHNER



ELEVATE YOUR SUMMER SALADS with homemade dressings. Traditional vinaigrettes include olive oil for the base and a select vinegar. Dijon mustard is often used for flavor complexity and smoothness. Adding a sweetener, such as honey or maple syrup, balances the vinegar, and minced garlic offers a savory taste.

Creamy salad dressings offer a flavorful, mouth-watering option. The thick base works well with mixed greens and meats. Often, the base includes butter-milk or mayonnaise. Mix the base with an acid, such as vinegar or lemon juice. You can also enjoy creamy salad dressings as a vegetable dip. 🥗

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

VERMONT KALE SALAD

- 6 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 1 tablespoon maple syrup
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon coarse black pepper
- 8 to 10 ounces kale
- ½ cup dried cranberries
- 1 cup blueberries
- ½ cup pumpkin seeds

Whisk together the olive oil, vinegar, mustard, maple syrup, garlic, salt and pepper. Set aside. Tear the kale leaves into bite-sized pieces and place in a serving bowl. Pour the vinaigrette over the kale and massage gently. Add the remaining ingredients and toss. Serve immediately. *Makes 4 to 6 servings.*



STEAK SALAD WITH PEPPER PARMESAN DRESSING

- ¼ cup buttermilk
- ¼ cup lemon juice
- ½ cup sour cream
- ½ cup mayonnaise
- ½ cup grated parmesan
- 1 tablespoon Italian seasoning
- 1½ tablespoons coarse cracked pepper
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- 8 to 10 ounces mixed greens
- 1 pint grape tomatoes, halved
- 1 English cucumber, sliced
- ¼ cup red onion, thinly sliced
- 1 pound sirloin steak, grilled and thinly sliced

Whisk together the buttermilk, lemon juice, sour cream, mayonnaise, parmesan, Italian seasoning, cracked pepper and salt in a small bowl. Refrigerate the salad dressing until serving time. Serve the dressing over a bed of mixed greens topped with tomatoes, cucumbers, red onion and steak slices. *Makes 4 to 6 servings.*



BLT SALAD WITH THOUSAND ISLAND DRESSING

- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons ketchup
- 2 tablespoons sweet pickle relish
- ¼ cup yellow onion, minced
- ½ teaspoon sweet paprika
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt
- 8 to 10 ounces mixed greens
- 1 pint grape tomatoes, halved
- 8 ounces bacon, cooked and crumbled
- 1 cup croutons

Whisk together the mayonnaise, lemon juice, ketchup, relish, onion, paprika and salt in a small mixing bowl. Refrigerate the salad dressing until serving time. Serve the dressing over a bed of mixed greens topped with tomatoes, bacon and croutons. *Makes 4 to 6 servings.*

The 'Bad' Worm that Could Be Ruining Your Soil

GEORGE WEIGEL

EARTHWORMS HAVE LONG BEEN A gardener's friend: aerating the soil with their tunneling, breaking down organic matter and leaving behind nutritious "castings" in the process.

But there's a relatively new worm in town, and this one is as destructive to the soil as good ol' earthworms are helpful.

The newcomer is commonly known as the "jumping worm," an Asian species that gets its name from its distinctively hyperactive, thrashing habit.

If you're out there digging this summer and notice worms that seem to be agitated and writhing, you likely have jumping worms. Mid-to-late summer is when they're most active.

Fidgety, ravenous feeders

Unlike "normal" European earthworms that calmly squiggle and benefit the soil, jumping worms are fidgety, ravenous feeders that deplete the soil of organic matter and nutrition.

They're really not all that new to America, though, since they apparently first arrived on American shores in the late 1800s from Korea, China and Japan. However, it's only been the last five years that jumping worms have become a noticeable problem in Pennsylvania.

The state Department of Agriculture's Invasive Species Council has now classified jumping worms as an "emerging threat," while the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources reports sightings of this soil destroyer throughout Pennsylvania.

"If you poke them, pick them up or dig them up, they flail all about as a defense mechanism against predators," Penn State University entomologist Michael Skvarla says in a Penn State Extension video. "They'll flip all around. It's very obvious once you've seen it."

Also known as the "snake worm,"



DON'T BE FOOLED: At first glance, the "jumping worm," above, may look like a typical earthworm, which do wonders for soil. Don't be fooled: These worms are relatively new to Pennsylvania and are destructive.

"Alabama jumper" and "crazy worm," jumping worms consume leaf litter at twice the rate of European worms, Skvarla says.

That leads to the loss of the soil's protective cushion of decaying organic matter — opening forest floors and garden beds to bare spots, erosion and weed invasion.

Instead of a soft, healthy "duff" layer, jumping worms leave behind a soil texture that resembles coffee grounds.

What's more, Skvarla says, jumping-worm castings (i.e., poop) are slow to break down, locking nutrients that otherwise would feed the soil.

Taking over

Jumping worms grow and reproduce faster than European earthworms, allowing them to completely displace all other worms, according to University of Massachusetts researchers.

Unlike European earthworms that tunnel underground in winter and typically live for three to four years, jumping worms are an annual species. Adults lay egg-containing cocoons that overwinter in soil, then begin hatching in April once soil temperatures reach 50 degrees.

The adults die off in fall once temperatures drop below freezing.

Jumping worms are asexual, meaning they don't need a male

and a female to mate. Even just one jumping worm that rides into a garden on a potted plant or in a load of topsoil is capable of igniting a new colony.

How to head off jumping-worm trouble?

The University of Massachusetts and Penn State Extension offer these five bits of advice:

- 1) Inspect the pots of any new plants for jumping worms before planting. Bag and toss any jumping worms you find.
- 2) Inspect any bulk materials you buy (mulch, compost, topsoil, etc.) before spreading them. Ask suppliers if they've heat-treated the materials to a temperature of at least 130 degrees for at least three days. Otherwise, as a precaution, cover the pile with clear plastic for several days or stick with bagged materials.
- 3) Check your soil and compost for jumping worms, especially if you notice the coffee-grounds-like texture. The worms are usually close to the surface.

Hand-pick, bag and toss manageable populations. To drive jumping worms to the surface, drench the soil with a solution of one-third cup of dry mustard (ground yellow mustard seed) in 1 gallon of water.

4) For larger outbreaks, solarize soil in late spring. This involves stretching a sheet of clear plastic over bare areas for at least two or three weeks, baking the soil and killing overwintering cocoons.

5) Do not buy or use jumping worms for fishing bait or vermicomposting. Avoid releasing any unused bait into the garden. 🐞

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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August 2025	June 16
September	July 15
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The True Sign of Adulthood

JOHN KASUN

I OPENED THE MAILBOX and was greeted by the first swarm of something that arrives every year in late May and early June. No, not cicadas — high school graduation notices.

I am funny about graduation announcements. I like to match them up with the thank-you notes I've received from the sender for such things as Christmas, birthday, and Easter gifts and the tons of school fundraiser candy I have purchased over the years. With a few exceptions, I don't usually have many matches.

However, those who appreciated my past gifts enough to say thank you are rewarded for their thoughtfulness at graduation time. Those who didn't won't need to thank me now, either, because there will be no reward.

Graduation notices often contain a photograph of the graduate leaning against a tree, shooting pool, playing a guitar or some other leisure activity. I would be more impressed if I got a photo of them volunteering at a soup kitchen, pounding nails at a Habitat for Humanity project or cutting grass for the elderly widow living down the street.

Those little fancy name cards that often are included bug me, too. Did you ever notice these cards contain only the name? Normally, a business card lists some qualifications. For example, it might say, Bill McCall, Master Plumber; John Henry, Certified Electrician; Dr. Joe Smith M.D.; or something as simple as Butch's Hauling, No Job Too Small. I guess these name-only graduation cards are simply saying, unqualified and unemployed.

No, I don't hate kids, and I don't mind giving them a helping hand. I just want to put everything in perspective: Graduation is not the end of anything; it is the beginning of everything.

Graduation is celebrated with a commencement ceremony, and the word commencement means beginning. Graduation truly is the first day of the rest of their lives; however, some seem to have missed that point. Contrary to popular myth, opportunity does not always knock. Sometimes, you have to put down the remote, get off your

butt and open the door to see if it's there.

You know what would impress me when I receive a graduation notice? A note inside that said, "I am graduating and will be looking for a job. I would appreciate if I could use you as a reference;" or "Wanted to let you know I will be starting college in the fall. It will be difficult, but I intend to work hard and learn as much as I can." That would make me feel a lot better when I write the check. At least I would have a fairly good idea the money would not be used for a tongue piercing or tattoo.

I talked to a young man recently who has been out of high school for a year. When I asked him how his job search was going, he said, "I haven't decided what I want to do yet, so I haven't been looking that hard."

Using my life's experience, I asked, "Do you like to eat and take hot showers?" "Well yeah," he replied, a bit surprised. "Would you like to get a car?" I continued. "Yeah," he said, growing more puzzled.

"Then get off your butt and get a job so you can have those things while you decide

what you want to do with the rest of your life. Life is a trip," I added, "but it's not a free ride."

While many young people flap their wings and declare their independence, they do so from the safety of living at home. I have one rule when it comes to determining if someone is truly on their own: Show me your toilet paper receipt, because if you aren't buying your own toilet paper, you're not on our own.

To all the recent graduates: congratulations, the world is truly yours to conquer. Go out and find that job, learn a skill, continue your education, build a business, make the world a better place and do your parents a favor: Buy your own toilet paper. 🍑

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.

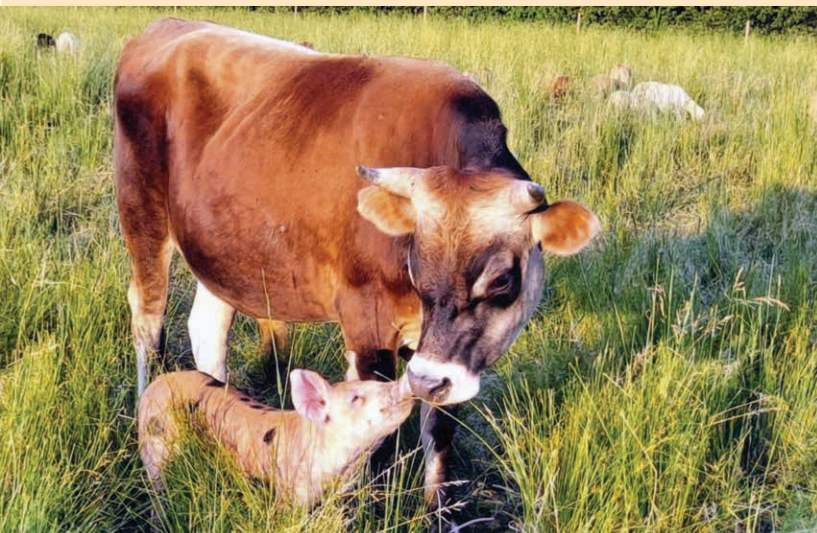




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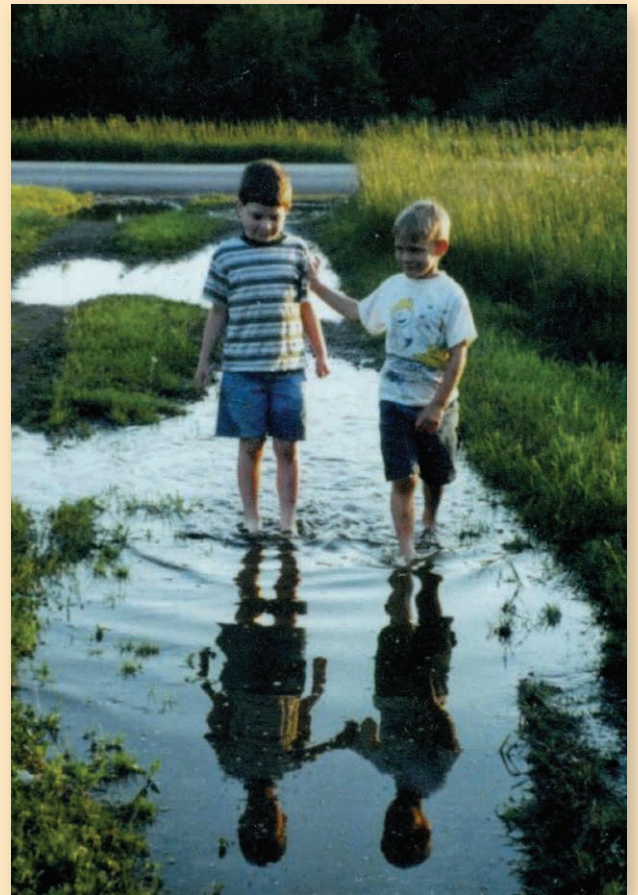


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Remember: Our publication deadlines require us to work in advance, so send your seasonal photos in early. Photos that do not reflect any specific season may be sent at any time. Photos will be returned one year after receipt if a self-addressed, stamped envelope is included.

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