

OCTOBER 2023

PENNLINES

Life Lessons

4-H Offers Something for Everyone

**NO NEED TO BE
'UNDER BULBED'
ANYMORE**

**FIVE REASONS
ELECTRIC CO-OPS
ARE GREAT PLACES
TO WORK**

**ENJOY AN
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**INSIDE!
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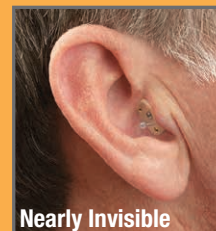
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Last Call for 2023 Photos

Get your photos to us by Oct. 31



ON THE COVER

Somerset County 4-Her Samantha Hayman (also shown above) and County Council Leader Carol Pyle show their love for the youth development program.

PHOTO BY
JILL M. ERCOLINO

Something to Celebrate



ONE FISHING TRIP, TWO BROTHERS — that's all it took to bring power to the people in a rural pocket of Pennsylvania. And their legacy continues today amid the pristine beauty of Raystown Lake.

As the story goes, enterprising locals George and Warren Simpson were casting lines for bass along the Raystown branch of the Juniata River when one of them had a lightbulb moment: Why not harness the power of the water to bring electricity to Huntingdon County? The year was 1905. Soon after, a group of locals formed the Raystown Water Power Company to put this idea to work, completing the dam in 1912.

As seeds like this were planted, the movement to electrify rural America grew. And by the 1930s, pioneering Pennsylvania farmers and their neighbors were forming electric cooperatives to bring this vital service to places that had long been ignored by utility providers.

These collective efforts, both small and large, helped to transform the nation's countryside, opening the door to a whole new way of life. It happened in communities powered by our rural electric cooperatives, and it happened in Huntingdon County with the construction of the Simpson brothers' dam and "powerhouse."

In the early 1970s, Huntingdon County would undergo another major change when the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers acquired 8,300 acres to build a new dam and what would become Raystown Lake, the Commonwealth's largest manmade waterway.

This month marks the 50th anniversary of the dam's completion and kicks off a year-long celebration of the lake's rich heritage. Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc. (Allegheny), which supplies wholesale power to the 14 rural electric cooperatives in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, is proud to be part of that history.

For 35 years, Allegheny has operated the Raystown Hydroelectric Plant along the lake's shores in coordination with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The plant was developed with the recreational and environmental interests of the lake in mind. Because it can draw water from different levels of the lake to get different temperatures, the plant can extend the spawning season for some fish along with the fishing season for anglers — something the Simpson brothers would have appreciated.

The Raystown plant is also Allegheny's first wholly-owned generation facility and a key part of its generation fleet. Established by its member cooperatives in 1946, Allegheny also has a stake in the Susquehanna Steam Electric Station, a nuclear power facility in Luzerne County. These carbon-free facilities are part of the portfolio of resources that provides safe, reliable and affordable energy to more than 600,000 rural electric cooperative consumers in Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

Before forming Allegheny, cooperatives were buying individually from private power companies — and were paying some of the highest rates around. Allegheny was established to negotiate power contracts on behalf of these cooperatives. To further control costs, the cooperatives, through Allegheny, eventually invested in their own generation sources, including the Raystown Hydroelectric Plant. Today, cooperative generation rates are among the lowest — and most stable — in the entire region.

Allegheny was formed in the same cooperative spirit that brought electricity to our rural areas. It was people pulling together for the benefit of all. Whether it was to build a small dam and powerhouse in Huntingdon County or string thousands of miles of power lines to light up rural America, these visionaries built the foundation that empowered our future. Now, that's something to celebrate. 🎉

STEVE BRAME

PRESIDENT & CEO
PENNSYLVANIA RURAL ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION /
ALLEGHENY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

PENNLINES

OCTOBER 2023
Vol. 58 • No. 10

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Penn Lines (USPS 929-700), the news magazine of Pennsylvania's electric cooperatives, is published monthly by the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association, 212 Locust Street, P.O. Box 1266, Harrisburg, PA 17108-1266. *Penn Lines* helps 167,000 households of co-op consumer-members understand issues that affect the electric cooperative program, their local co-ops, and their quality of life. Electric co-ops are not-for-profit, consumer-owned, locally directed, and taxpaying electric utilities. *Penn Lines* is not responsible for unsolicited manuscripts. The opinions expressed in *Penn Lines* do not necessarily reflect those of the editors, the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association, or local electric distribution cooperatives.

Subscriptions: Electric co-op members, \$5.39 per year through their local electric distribution cooperative. Preferred Periodicals postage paid at Harrisburg, PA 17107 and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes with mailing label to *Penn Lines*, 212 Locust Street, P.O. Box 1266, Harrisburg, PA 17108-1266.

Advertising: Display ad deadline is six weeks prior to month of issue. Ad rates upon request. Acceptance of advertising by *Penn Lines* does not imply endorsement of the product or services by the publisher or any electric cooperative. If you encounter a problem with any product or service advertised in *Penn Lines*, please contact: Advertising, *Penn Lines*, P.O. Box 1266, Harrisburg, PA 17108. *Penn Lines* reserves the right to refuse any advertising.

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THE GIFT – AND REWARD – OF BEING PRESENT

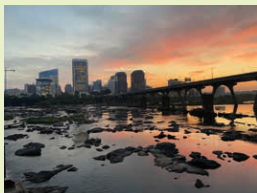
I had plenty of reasons not to show up for a 6 a.m. run, not the least of which being: It was a 6 a.m. run. The previous day had reached 101 degrees in Richmond, Va., where I was attending a conference of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA). The lingering humidity promised another punishing day of triple-digit temperatures – not ideal conditions for a business conference, never mind a run. Still, I laced up and headed out into the steamy streets of Richmond.

It was still dark when I met Tony Anderson, who had organized this run. Tony is the board president of NRECA, the association that represents the nation's 900-plus rural electric cooperatives. An avid runner, he has completed 51 marathons – one in each state and Washington, D.C. For years, Tony has enjoyed welcoming anyone who shows up for these early morning runs at cooperative conferences across the country.

As we trotted off at a thankfully leisurely pace, I learned that showing up is pretty important to Tony, the former CEO of Cherryland Electric Cooperative in Michigan. When he was just 18 months old, he lost his father in a car accident. His paternal grandfather became his mentor, and Tony has never lost sight of how important it was to have that guidance. Having that presence in his life is a gift he has tried to give to others. It drove him to get involved in the Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northwestern Michigan, where he turned his marathon running into charity events that raised more than \$500,000 for the organization. His reward has been in giving others hope for a better tomorrow.

Today, Tony is on another mission to be there for kids who have lost a parent. In 2022, he was behind the launch of the Cooperative Family Fund, an initiative to provide support for children of electric cooperative employees who have experienced the loss of a parent. The fund provides a financial contribution, along with a memory book from the cooperative about the child's parent. (For more information, visit cooperativefamilyfund.com.)

Dawn breaks as we turn back toward Richmond proper. The heat is already climbing, but I'm feeling good about having shown up. Presence can be a gift, I've learned. But as the sun rises over the James River, I see it also has its own rewards.



Peter A. Fitzgerald

PETER A. FITZGERALD
EDITOR



WHERE DID THEY GO?: That's the question some Pennsylvanians were asking as they noticed a steep decline in spotted lanternflies this past summer. Experts are baffled by the sporadic decreases in the central and eastern parts of the state. They're also unsure if the decline will continue or if there will be another resurgence.

GOOD RIDDANCE

Parts of state see decline in spotted lanternflies

The number of spotted lanternflies is declining in central Pennsylvania, mirroring an earlier trend that occurred in the eastern part of the state.

Despite this, 51 of the Commonwealth's 67 counties remain under quarantine for the pest. Residents are being asked to take precautions to prevent the bug from hitching a ride into new areas.

While the population drop is consistent across central and eastern Pennsylvania, the number of reported pests continues to increase in the western part of the state. Experts aren't sure what the sporadic decreases mean for the future — whether the numbers will continue to decline or if they will rise again. However, they are recommending people continue to take steps to slow the spread of the invasive insect, including killing them and checking vehicles and equipment for unwanted hitchhikers before traveling.

contest. Rory Ehrlich won the kids' division of the "business in the front, party in the back" hairstyle during the USA Mullet Championships, an online competition.

The popularity of the hairstyle hit its peak in the 1980s, but that hasn't stopped hopeful contestants from sporting the look. The winner is determined by a weighted score that combines votes from the public, fundraising and judges' scores. Money raised during the contest is donated to Jared Allen's Homes for Wounded Warriors, a nonprofit started by the former NFL defensive end. Rory raised \$6,635.81 for the nonprofit.

BACK TO NORMAL

Pa. declares victory in battle against bird flu

Pennsylvania has been officially declared free of the bird flu, according to the World Organization for Animal Health.

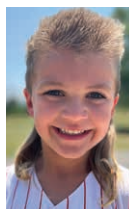
"Pennsylvania's coordinated, aggressive, and effective response to the hi-path avian influenza outbreak has brought us to this point," state Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding said. "Planning, coordination, and critical partnerships ... have made the difference in minimizing the impact of what has been the cost-



HAIR FOR IT

Montgomery County youngster wins mullet competition

A Pottstown, Pa., 6-year-old won a \$5,000 prize in a national mullet



liest animal agriculture emergency in U.S. history.”

The virus has killed more than 4.6 million chickens, ducks, and other birds since it was first detected in April 2022.

The last confirmed infection of the current strain in Pennsylvania was March 17, 2023, in Lancaster County.

WINNER, WINNER

***Penn Lines* takes home more 'Willies'**

Penn Lines recently received four awards — three for writing, one for photography — at the 2023 National Electric Cooperatives Statewide Editors Association (SEA) Willies Awards.

The magazine won two first-place honors: one for “Seeds of Support: Help Available for Farmers Fighting Depression” in the category of “Best News Feature” and another for “Thank You for Your Service” in the category of “Best Column.”

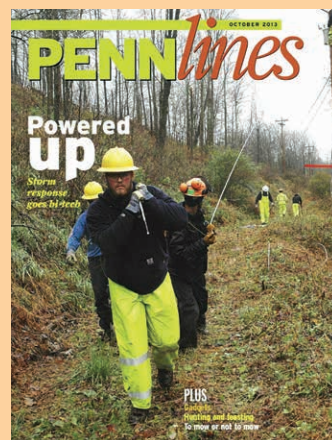


The column and article were published in April and May 2023, respectively. “Seeds of Support” explored depression, a well-kept secret in the agriculture community, and one farmer’s efforts to encourage others to seek help. “Thank You for Your Service,” which appeared as an Editor’s Desk column, was a tribute to rural electric lineworkers.

Penn Lines also received an Award of Excellence in the “Best Scenic Photo” category for an image taken at the Hillsgrove Bridge in Sullivan County. The photo accompanied the August 2022 feature, “Sweet Spots of Summer.” Another Editor’s Desk column, “The Butterfly Effect,” which appeared in the March 2023 issue, also earned an Award of Merit in the “Best Column” category. That column explored the theory that small events can have a significant influence on the future.

Each year, the Willies Awards — named in honor of Willie Wiredhand — draw more than 300 entries from cooperative publications nationwide. 📸

TIME LINES



OCTOBER 2013

A decade ago, *Penn Lines* was exploring how cooperatives were using technology to speed up their response to outages after major storms. Using state-of-the-art outage management systems, cooperatives could quickly pinpoint widespread power losses, deploy crews and turn the lights on faster for consumers. Despite these advances, one tried-and-true method for outage restoration — mutual assistance — continues to be a valuable tool, then and now, when Mother Nature throws cooperatives a curveball. Or should that be a snowball?

OCTOBER



EMBRACE THE SEASON

October is all about celebrating the arrival of fall. Upcoming events include the Bedford Fall Foliage Festival (bedfordfallfoliagefestival.com), the Jim Thorpe Fall Foliage Festival (poconomountains.com/jim-thorpe/fall-foliage) and Adams County's National Apple Harvest Festival (appleharvest.com).

A RARE OPPORTUNITY

The public is invited to take a rare behind-the-scenes tour of Raystown Dam in celebration of its 50th anniversary. Tours will be given every weekend in October, and preregistration is required. Go to raystown.org/raystown50.



ATTENTION, FILM LOVERS

The newly restored Milford Theater in Pike County will provide the setting for the 24th Annual Black Bear Film Festival, Oct. 13-15. The event celebrates the art of independent filmmaking with a number of screenings and salons over the weekend. Learn more at blackbearfilm.com.

TAKE A HIKE

The spotlight will be on outdoor adventures in western Pennsylvania when the Keystone Hike Fest rolls into Johnstown, Oct. 20-23. The event promises three days of exploration — the area is home to more than 110 miles of trails — learning and inspiration. Find out more at kta-hike.org/fallhikefest.



Five Reasons Electric Co-ops are Great Places to Work

The energy industry is changing, and it's an exciting time to be part of it

PAUL WESSLUND

ON THE JOB: PA. CO-OP EMPLOYEES SPEAK OUT



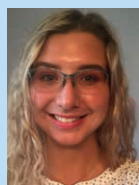
"The best thing about working for a cooperative is the opportunity it provides for me as an employee. Electric cooperatives have played a big role throughout history, and I am proud to be able to take part in representing everything we stand for."

Isaac Threadgill, Meter and Data Technician, New Enterprise REC



"The best thing about working at a co-op is the atmosphere. Co-workers become family, and members become friends, so it makes it easy to get up in the morning and come to work. Co-ops also provide opportunities for employees to be a part of organizations in the community. From high school musicals to sporting events, fire departments and fundraisers, Somerset REC cares about supporting their members and community."

Emily Baer, Director of Marketing & Member Services, Somerset REC



"The best part of working at our cooperative is supporting the community I grew up in. October celebrates my one-year anniversary at Sullivan County Rural Electric Cooperative, and I've enjoyed getting to know my co-workers, our members, and service territory."

Sarah Parrish, Cooperative Communicator, Sullivan County REC



"What's the best thing about working at a cooperative? Gosh, there are several reasons that come to mind. Co-ops truly value people – their members and their employees. I like to think co-ops take the first co-op principle, 'voluntary & open membership,' to heart. Despite any differences in beliefs, everyone is welcome. Being part of the LGBTQ+ community, I have always felt completely safe and at home working for Northwestern REC."

Amy Wellington, Director of Communications, Northwestern REC

RUNNING ELECTRIC UTILITIES TODAY takes just about every skill imaginable.

Some jobs call for the physical ability to climb a utility pole; others, the technical know-how to create intricate cybersecurity systems. Some require interpersonal skills to help co-op members understand how to lower their electric bills; others, the logistical knowledge to ensure essential equipment is delivered through a challenging supply chain.

An industry that depends on such a vast range of abilities offers job seekers a variety of career opportunities.

Careers in Energy Week is Oct. 16 to 20. It's also National Co-op Month. To highlight this unique industry and the many career paths it offers, here are five characteristics of electric cooperatives that make them great places to work:

1. They're stable. You can count on homes and businesses needing electricity now and in the future. One analysis predicts electricity demand will grow even faster in the 2020s than it has in the previous two decades. Energy careers offer paths for advancement. Employees typically stay in the industry more than 15 years.

2. They're exciting. While utility work is reliable, it's also at the cutting edge of innovation. Electrification is the centerpiece of the push for greener energy. The number of electric vehicles is doubling every year, which means new workforce skills are needed to figure out how to keep all those cars and trucks plugged in and charged up. Two of the 20 fastest-growing occupations are wind turbine technician and solar voltaic installer. More than \$120 billion a year is being spent to modernize the U.S. electric grid to manage new patterns of electricity use. The energy industry is changing, and it's an exciting time to be part of it.

3. There's variety. The skills needed

in the utility industry range from advanced college degrees to trade schools, apprenticeships and on-the-job training. And the range of positions is staggering, from accountants and social media managers to IT specialists, engineers, and human resources professionals. Utilities also need drone operators to inspect power lines, data analysts to coordinate the flow of electricity and power plant operators to oversee electricity generation.

4. They're local. The thing about electricity is that maintaining the service needs to happen nearby. That means much of the work takes place near your hometown. And if you decide to move to another part of the country, there will likely be energy career opportunities there as well.

5. There's a sense of satisfaction. Any lineworker will tell you even when they've just climbed down from a pole in the middle of the night during a rainstorm, there's no better feeling than knowing you've just restored power — and heat and lights — to hundreds of homes. The same goes for the utility truck dispatcher back at headquarters, and the media specialist getting the word out about the status of power restoration. Utility workers are powering their neighbors and the nation, leading to even higher levels of job satisfaction.

Electric co-ops offer a unique business model that's led by the members who use the electricity. And each cooperative shares the same commitment to improving the community's quality of life, whether it's hiring people to bring broadband to or keep the lights on in rural areas. 🌱

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

No Need to Be 'Under Bulbed' Anymore

GEORGE WEIGEL

IF SPRING FLOWER BULBS HAD the good marketing sense to do something interesting right away, we'd be planting them all over the yard.

Even though tulips, daffodils, and their bulbous ilk are colorful, easy to grow, and about as cheap as any plant, they look like dead onions covered over by bare soil when the work is done.

Then you have to wait a good four to six months to get any kind of reward.

However, if you can get past the patience issue and are willing to invest in a bit of digging, bulbs can be one of the most versatile and welcome plant types in the landscape.

October is prime time in Pennsylvania's climate to beef up on bulbs. Here are seven ways and places to plant them.

Fill shrub gaps

The space between landscape shrubs is prime territory to fill with a few smaller clusters of bulbs.

This is especially true with shrubs that are late to leaf out in spring; the bulbs will poke up and flower by the time the shrubs are just waking up.

Cut the bulb foliage when it yellows heading into late-spring dormancy, and the shrubs will take over the space from there.

Interplant with perennial flowers

Bulbs and perennials also share space well.

When early bloomers, such as snowdrops, daffodils, crocuses, Siberian squill, glory of the snow, and hyacinths use the space, most perennial flowers are just starting to push up new shoots.

As the perennial foliage begins to take over, the bulbs have bloomed and are ready to be cut back for the season.

Sedum, hosta, daylilies, goldenrod, lilies, phlox, black-eyed Susans and coneflowers are some of the best bulb partners.

Under trees and shrubs

Most bulbs need full-sun locations, but when they're planted under trees and tall shrubs that lose their leaves in winter, they can usually take in enough early-spring sunlight to recharge themselves for years.

When the bulb foliage dies back as the tree/shrub canopy fills in, simply tramp down and mulch over the browning bulb foliage.

Daffodils, snowdrops, winter aconite, Siberian squill, and glory of the snow make some of the best under-tree groundcovers.

Share space with annual flowers

Annual flowers and spring bulbs also make some of the best tag-team partners.

About the time bulbs go dormant in late spring, it's time to plant new annuals for the season (typically around Mother's Day). They can go between or even right over top of the buried bulbs. Just be careful not to slice into the bulbs when planting.

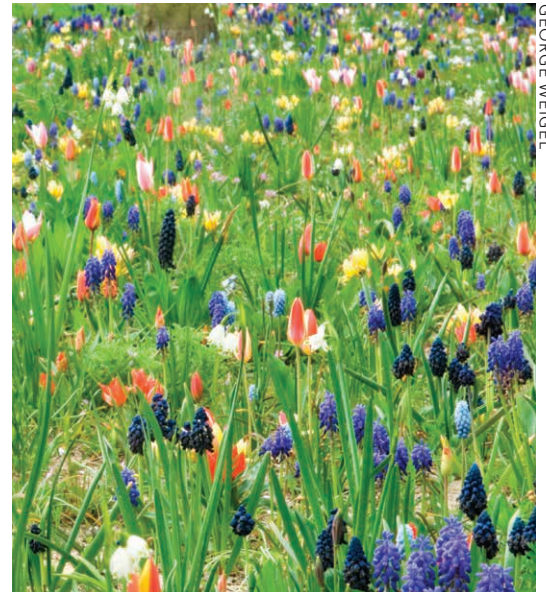
A bulb meadow

You don't have to pick just one type of bulb and mass it out.

If you lean toward an action-packed, less-formal look, buy a bunch of different bulbs and plant them randomly. In spring, you'll get a riot of consecutive color that looks a lot like a wildflower meadow.

Insert bulbs into groundcovers

The shoots of many bulb varieties are adept at finding their way up through short groundcover plantings,



GEORGE WEIGEL

A WELCOME SURPRISE: Planting a mix of leftover bulbs results in a spring garden that looks like a meadow.

such as vinca, pachysandra, creeping sedum, sweet woodruff, lamium, and leadwort.

Taller bulbs work best for this, such as daffodils, hyacinths, tulips, alliums, crown imperial, and Spanish bluebells.

Bulbs in pots

Bulbs can be planted in pots and left outside over winter, just as with in-the-ground plantings.

One caveat is that you'll probably have to water the pots during dry periods when the soil is thawed. Avoid that by simply burying the bulb-planted pots, then lifting them back above ground in spring when the shoots are up.

Place chicken wire over the top of pots to prevent rodent-digging.

Also be sure to use weather-resistant containers, such as foam or heavy concrete ones, so you don't end up with cracked terracotta pots at the end of winter. 🐭

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.

LIFE LESSONS



4-H Offers Something
for Everyone

KATHY HACKLEMAN
Penn Lines Contributor



A LEARNING EXPERIENCE: Livestock projects remain very popular with 4-H members in rural counties. These Sullivan County 4-H members show their projects at the Sullivan County Fair.

4-H LEADERS ARE LIKE GARDENERS, planting seeds, nurturing them and watching them bloom.

“Being a volunteer allows you ... to see the lightbulb moment when a child finally ‘gets it’ or becomes passionate about something and takes it, runs with it and excels at it,” says Sandy Pardoe, the 4-H extension coordinator for Sullivan County. “Volunteers love seeing their kids succeed.”

And often what emerges are young adults like Samantha Hayman, an accomplished 17-year-old who has grown up — and grown — with the 4-H program. She started as a Cloverbud, a group of children ages 5 to 7 who participate in non-competitive programming, and then joined as a regular 4-H member when she was 8.

The daughter of Jonathan and Holly Hayman, members of Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative (REC), Samantha says 4-H has had a significant impact on her young life. She recently started her senior year at Berlin Brothersvalley High School.

“I now put myself out there more in terms of speaking,” says Samantha, who also represented Somerset REC at the 2023 Youth Tour, hosted by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association in Washington, D.C. “And I have gained leadership skills through attending state [and national] leadership conferences.”

Locally, Samantha is president of the Somerset County 4-H Exchange Club, which promotes cross-country visits with similar 4-H clubs, and the Milksquirt 4-H Club, a livestock group. She also participates in shooting-sports projects and is in her second year as president of the Somerset 4-H County Council.

“All of these [opportunities],” she says, “have opened

up a whole new version of myself.”

A new kind of 4-H

Created for kids between the ages of 5 and 18, 4-H is the nation’s largest youth development program and has nearly 78,000 members in Pennsylvania alone. More than 3,200 adults are also involved as leaders, and clubs are available in all of the Commonwealth’s 67 counties.

Historically, 4-H, which was established in 1902, was considered to be for “farm kids” with an emphasis on livestock projects, but more recently, its scope has expanded into suburban and urban areas.

Amy Murphy, the 4-H area educator for northeast Pennsylvania in Coudersport, says no two county programs are the same. While livestock clubs remain the most popular in rural areas, members in suburban and urban areas tend

“Our mission is to help young people reach their full potential through learning, leadership, service, and friendship. 4-H members work with dedicated, caring adults to complete challenging, rewarding projects that develop real-world skills that will serve them for life.”

BELOW, LEFT: Sullivan County 4-H members hone their archery skills with guidance from trained 4-H shooting-sports volunteers.

BELOW, RIGHT: 4-H campers in Elk and Cameron counties race the boats they constructed in a team engineering design activity.



to focus on arts, crafts, science (such as rocketry, robotics, and engineering design), and pet-related projects.

Still, no matter where they live or what interests they pursue, 4-Hers all get the same benefits.

“Members learn life skills — how to get along and work with others — and leadership skills, as well as learning more about their interests in project areas,” she says. “You can see their confidence grow. That’s amazing to watch.

“And as they become teens, they are exposed to leadership opportunities at the local, county and state levels.”

As for adult volunteers, Murphy says 4-H offers a connection with today’s youth.

“One thing leaders have said is that they get their energy from watching kids explore and blossom,” she says. “There are a lot of personal rewards in watching kids and being a

part of their lives as they grow.”

Susan Alexander, a member of DuBois-based United Electric Cooperative, has spent much of her life involved in the organization.

At 9 years old, she joined 4-H, worked in the county extension office each summer as a teen and spent decades as an extension educator in Potter, Clearfield and Jefferson counties, including more than 20 years overseeing the 4-H program in Jefferson County. She also served as a “4-H mom” as her four daughters moved through the program.

Retired since 2016, Alexander now volunteers every summer to help with the local 4-H Fair. She says the 4-H of today is not the 4-H of decades ago.

“I remember that in 2011 at the national level and state level, there was a drive to introduce robotics into the 4-H program,” Alexander notes. “We attracted a totally different audience of young people.”

And that’s the beauty of 4-H: There’s something to pique any child’s interest.

“If a kid has an interest and can find an adult volunteer, we can get the project going,” Alexander notes. “If Pennsylvania doesn’t have a program the kid is interested in, they can work with that program through another state. All that is needed is guidance for the child to successfully complete the project.”

Something in common

Many leaders are relatives of current 4-H members and also went through the 4-H program themselves. Most of the leaders of the STEM programs (science, technology, engineering and math), however, are professionals in those fields, Murphy says.

Kim Phillips, a member and employee at Forksville-based Sullivan County REC, has been a 4-H leader for more than 20 years. Currently, Phillips and co-leader Tamara Heess head up beef, lamb, goat, poultry, rabbits and gardening projects, along with “Stir Up Saturdays,” a cooking project. Each club usually has 10 to 20 members.

4-H involvement runs in the Phillips family. Her sons — Robert, Jesse and Noah — were all 4-Hers, and Jesse is now a leader as well.

Phillips doesn’t have a favorite project; she just likes to be around what she calls “an awesome group of kids.” She is proud the members learn not only about their specific project but also gain life skills.

All 4-H members keep a record book for each project. The book includes such things as the cost of taking care of an animal and how much they make from selling the animal. They then compare their costs to the cost of products in grocery stores to see which is more cost-



LOOK AT IT GO: Sullivan County 4-H members and Cloverbuds activate the robot they built and programmed.

REA Energy Cooperative, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives
serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

REA ENERGY COOPERATIVE, INC.

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Monday, Wednesday and Friday
Closed Tuesday and Thursday

COOPERATIVE CONNECTION

Electric Co-ops Grow for the Communities They Serve



October is National Co-op Month, and your cooperative is joining with others across the U.S. to celebrate. Co-ops come in all shapes and sizes, but they each have a common goal to provide goods and services for their members.

Electric co-ops, including REA Energy Cooperative, Inc., exist to serve their members. Our priority is to provide affordable, reliable energy to our communities. Because we are led by you, the members we serve, we can evolve to meet your needs. One of our subsidiaries, REA Energy Services (REA ES), is an example of this.

REA ES was created in 1999 to provide electrical products and services, such as generators, tree trimming, HVAC systems, and electrical contracting to REA members and non-members. We have continued the tradition of providing additional services with the purchase of In the Stix Broadband, LLC, an independent service provider, in June 2022.

This October, as we celebrate National Co-op Month, we're focusing on the ways "co-ops grow" for their members. That includes the following:

Co-ops grow communities. Co-ops help communities grow by promoting economic empowerment, fostering community engagement and supporting the unique needs of co-op members. "Concern for community" is one of our core principles — and being community-focused is essential to everything we do.

Co-ops grow together. Co-ops are all about cooperation, not competition. That's why electric co-ops work together to share lessons learned, successful strategies and better ways to serve our members. We're better when we grow together!

Co-ops grow tomorrow's leaders. Electric co-ops serve as fertile ground for growing tomorrow's leaders through a variety of youth-engagement programs. Whether through school demonstrations, community events or the Rural Electric Youth Tour program, we're committed to providing opportunities for local youth to learn and thrive in our community and beyond.

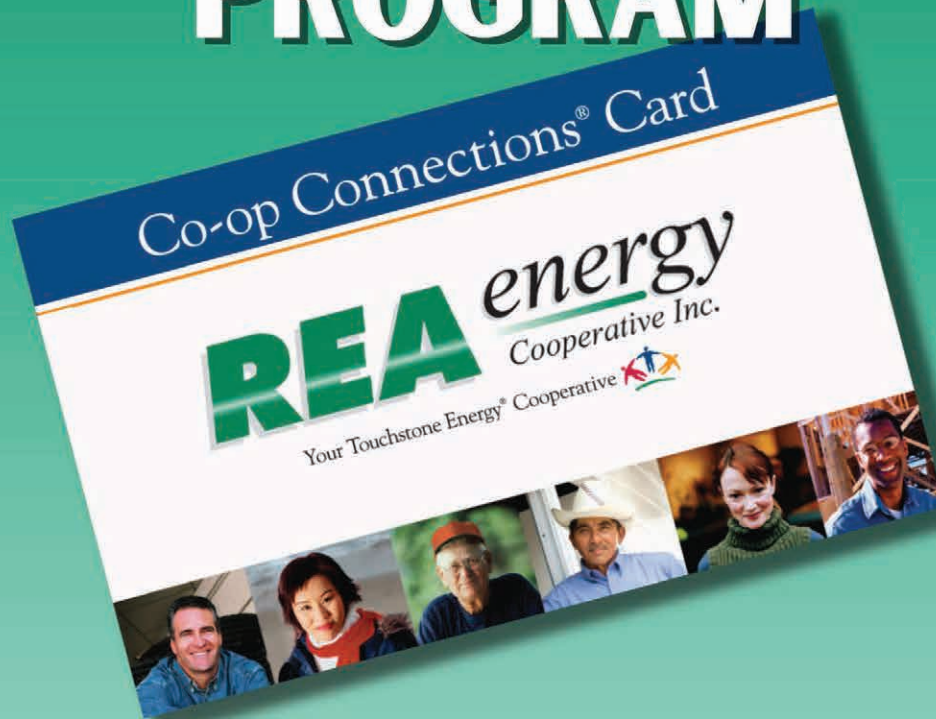
Co-ops grow for you. At REA Energy, your satisfaction is our No. 1 goal. It's why we were formed many years ago to fulfill a uniquely local purpose. We've come a long way since then, and your needs continue to evolve. That's why we'll never stop growing for you! 📶

STACY HILLIARD, CCC, CKAE
COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING MANAGER

October is Member Appreciation Month at REA Energy. Members who were not able to attend our in-person annual meeting or participate online* will need to present their annual meeting member card (the bottom portion of their annual meeting notice) at any of our office locations to receive a gift packet, which includes a hat, calendar, and travel mug. The gift packet will be available on a first-come, first-served basis. Only one per membership will be given, while quantities last.

**If you received the gift for attending September's in-person annual meeting or the \$10 bill credit for participating online, you will not be eligible for a gift packet.*

CO-OP CONNECTIONS PROGRAM



Bringing businesses and the community together!

The Co-op Connections program allows members to obtain details about online, national and local discounts offered by participating Touchstone Energy cooperatives across the country. Use your card or the Co-op Connections app!

More than 90 local business discounts available!

Call 724-349-4800 for more information
or see local discount listings at
reaenergy.com/co-op-connections-card

A Castle Fit for a Queen

KAYLA KING, MARKETING AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT SPECIALIST

WHILE DRIVING ALONG ROUTE 403 in Strongstown, you'll come across a variety of sights. From farms to small-town general stores, this place has it all, including a medieval castle.

Yes — a medieval castle.

Complete with a drawbridge, gargoyles and a (dry) moat, this 14th-century Norman keep-style castle has been a local attraction since 2002. The castle may seem out of place in a grassy field in the middle of rural Indiana County, but it's home to Cathy Homer, a true pioneer who has many passions and hobbies.

A dream come true

Cathy met her husband, Mike Mahalko — aka "Iron" Mike Mahalko of the Worldwide Wrestling Foundation (WWF) — at a martial arts studio in Barnesboro. Mike was training for the WWF, and Cathy was teaching self-defense classes. They immediately bonded over their many shared hobbies, including medieval culture and artifacts, renaissance faires, martial arts, and Great Danes. Cathy says it was love at first sight, and their life together was nothing short of action packed.

"We trained dogs and horses for the renaissance faires around the country, and we showed different breeds of dogs at dog shows," Cathy says.

They even had a traveling jousting company. Their collection of medieval weapons and artifacts, which they started adding to in the 1970s, began to outgrow their former home, so the couple decided to build an abode where medieval and renaissance fans could come together and where they could showcase their extensive collection.

The couple purchased the land for Dane Castle in Strongstown in 1992, but had a difficult time finding someone to design and build it.

"I wanted the design to be perfect, and we reached out to five or six companies to see if they would build it," Cathy recalls. "Every company we contacted thought we were nuts, but we finally found someone to complete the design and build. That man was Walter Lorek of Oak Ridge Construction."

Construction began in 2001, and 14 months later, the couple moved into their dream home. They christened the castle on Sept. 11, 2002, just one year after the tragic events of 9/11.

"So many people lost their lives and dreams on Sept. 11, 2001," Cathy explains, "so we wanted to honor them with our dream coming true."

Naming the castle was the easiest part — it pays tribute to the couple's love of Great Danes. The structure features a single tower made of split-faced concrete blocks, a "Great Hall," featuring their large collection of artifacts, gargoyle downspouts and a first floor dedicated to living quarters. Cathy and Mike kept the future in mind when building Dane Castle and made sure their living space was accessible during their golden years.

The Great Hall of Dane Castle features suits of armor, medieval weapons, bejeweled goblets and a long wooden table for feasts. Naturally, the castle has been the perfect site for many events, including weddings embracing traditional Celtic practices, such as handfasting, exchanging Claddagh rings and playing bagpipes. The castle has also hosted holiday feasts, knighting ceremonies, school tours, belly dancers and more than a few of Mike's wrestling friends.

"One time," Cathy recalls, "this boulder of a man sat next to me at dinner, and when I turned around to see who it was, I realized it was Andre the Giant."

In 2009, the couple opened the castle's doors for school and public tours, but those were suspended recently due to a fire in the Great Hall. At the time, visitors could try on medieval-era clothing and marvel at the collection of weapons and artifacts.

"I've always loved the chain mail," Cathy says of her favorite artifacts. "It's such a labor of love, piecing each and every link together. You can see the craftsmanship in every piece."

Life has slowed down in recent years. Now retired, Cathy enjoys hosting bat-watching evenings — yes, there are bats in the belfry — every week with close friends and family.

Sadly, Mike passed away from COVID-19 in 2020, but that doesn't mean Cathy leads a lonely life. She has big plans to refurbish the Great Hall and entertain guests again soon. For now, though, she's content to gather with friends and family at her outdoor round table and share snacks and quiet evenings with her Great Dane, Sookie, at her beloved Dane Castle. 🐕

KAYLA KING OF REA ENERGY COOPERATIVE AND TODD BERKEY: THE TRIBUNE DEMOCRAT OF JOHNSTOWN, PA.



DANE CASTLE: The Norman keep-style castle, modeled after those common in the 14th century, houses an extensive collection of weapons and artifacts. It's also been the site of weddings, holiday feasts, knighting ceremonies, bat-watching events, school tours and belly dancers. From left: the dry moat of Dane Castle; owner Cathy Homer and her Great Dane, Sookie; a sign leading to the home in Strongstown; a bridge over the castle's dry moat to the main entrance; and Dane Castle from a distance.



Right-of-Way Management/ Facility Construction News

REA Energy contractors will be completing tree-trimming work in the following areas in October:

- Contractor crews from Penn Line Tree Service will be trimming the rights of way of the St. Augustine substation area in addition to emergency maintenance areas.

Members in those areas will be notified about the work, which contractors will perform 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.

IMPORTANT NOTICE!

REA Energy Cooperative's Ebensburg and Indiana offices will be closed Friday, Oct. 13, and will reopen at 7 a.m. Monday, Oct. 16. Please call 844-920-3395 to report any power outages.

Payments can be placed in the drop-box at both locations or paid online via SmartHub at reaenergy.com.

Your Board of Directors



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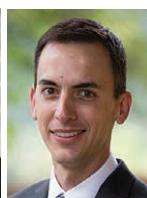
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REA Energy is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

effective. Gardening club members start their own seeds and keep track of their growth, finally selling the fruits of their labors at a 4-H auction.

Sandy Pardoe, also a member of Sullivan County REC and the county's 4-H extension coordinator, got involved as a 6-year-old and dove into a number of projects, including sheep, swine, cows, hiking, ceramics, rabbits, line dancing, and ancestry.

"I'm not sure who has more fun, the kids or the volunteers," Pardoe says with a laugh. "Many leaders are 4-H alumni. The good thing is that you can continue your 4-H career indefinitely as you never age out of being a volunteer, and we always need volunteers, whether they have 4-H experience or not."

"Some people volunteer to be project leaders; other volunteers work on a specific event," she adds. "People don't have to be experts to take on being a volunteer, and all skills are needed."

She agrees that 4-H is a good place for kids to land.

"4-H is where kids find their niche," she says. "They find a family they never knew they needed — people with common interests. 4-H friends last forever."

'Building life skills'

One of the non-traditional projects that is especially popular is the 4-H Exchange Club, which, as the name implies, gives members the opportunity to travel to and meet with 4-Hers in other states.

Sherry Lynch, a member of Somerset REC, is the 4-H Exchange Club leader in Somerset County. Lynch got involved in the Exchange Club when her two children, now adults, joined it. Her oldest child traveled to Oregon, and her youngest went to Colorado.

"It's rewarding to see the kids grow and have opportunities they wouldn't otherwise get," she says. "The majority of kids stay in touch with members they have been paired with in other states. With cellphones and today's technology, it's easy for them to stay connected. Lifelong friendships have definitely been formed."

Each exchange, Lynch says, brings new experiences.

"Every place I have dealt with has been very different in terms of 4-H fairs and club meetings," Lynch says. "It's a great way to get new ideas. Some ideas work for us; some wouldn't, but they are all great to learn about. They are all similar, but a little different."

Exchange Club members, who must be at least 14, are involved in all aspects of the exchange, including fundraising for travel and hosting expenses and planning the activities.

"We look at it as building life skills," she says. "So much of what goes into planning this [are things] they will take



FOOD FOR THOUGHT: 4-H campers engage in an engineering activity designed to build the largest structure out of uncooked spaghetti and marshmallows.

away and use the rest of their lives."

The club typically has eight to 12 members participating in an exchange, and they are accompanied by two chaperones — one male and one female. Lynch chaperoned the exchange to Colorado, where the group visited national parks and went to a rodeo.

"It's fun to get to see the kids experience new things," she says, "and they gain a lot of self-confidence venturing out on a trip like that."

4-H educator Amy Murphy agrees: "4-H is a program that can fit anyone, anywhere." 🌱

For more information about joining a 4-H club or volunteering, contact your county extension office or visit the Penn State Extension 4-H website, extension.psu.edu. 4-H is open to all young people, ages 5 to 18, regardless of where they live or their background.

THE FOUR H'S OF 4-H

Head (managing/thinking)

Heart (relating/caring)

Hands (giving/working)

Health (being/living)



In & Around

United Electric Cooperative

Looking for great places to visit? You're certain to find quite a few within the service territory of DuBois-based United Electric Cooperative, which serves more than 19,000 homes, farms and businesses across nearly 3,000 miles of line spanning seven counties.

If enjoying the great outdoors is a must, Parker Dam State Park and Cook Forest State Park should be on your to-do list. The former hosts a cabin colony, where more than 16,000 visitors stayed in 2021. Each of the 17 cabins is unique, including one that was the officer quarters for the Civilian Conservation Corps. Meanwhile, Cook Forest — or as some call it, “the best old-growth forest in America” — is home to some of the tallest trees in the northeastern U.S., as well as the “Forest Cathedral,” a 448-acre registered National Natural Landmark with trees more than



CONSERVATION CABIN: This is one of 17 cabins built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s at the Parker Dam State Park, which receives electricity from DuBois-based United Electric Cooperative. The cabins are available to visitors year-round.

150 years old.

The region is also home to the world's most famous meteorologist, Punxsutawney Phil. Naturally, the town is abuzz in February during the annual Groundhog Day celebration. Visitors, however, can enjoy summer fun, too, during the Punxsutawney Festival in the Park in July. Make sure to visit the Groundhog Club Headquarters and Phil's Burrow at the library.

Of course, there's always more to explore in rural Pennsylvania. Know of

a hidden gem or generally cool place to see in your area? Tell us about it at CommunityCorner@prea.com.



Main Office: DuBois, Pa.
Consumer-members served: 19,046
Website: unitedpa.com

Co-op Q&A

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

DECEMBER'S QUESTION

Many families have holiday traditions. Tell us about your favorite ones.

Send your response by **MONDAY, OCT. 23**, with “December 2023 Q&A” in the subject line.

JANUARY'S QUESTION

New Year's Resolutions can be tough to maintain. Tell us about one you made work.

Send your response by **MONDAY, NOV. 20**, with “January 2024 Q&A” in the subject line.

OCTOBER'S RESPONSES

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



“Back in the '90s after the old Allegheny County Jail had closed, I was inside for employment reasons. I was standing in the front office area along with two others. Right next to me was a doorway with plastic weather strips [to] keep cold air out. All of a sudden, those weather strips separated as if someone walked through them! No one else was there!”

— GUY GRANATA, SOMERSET RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE



“When I moved into my apartment, it was the first time I ever had a dishwasher. When I was training at my new job, I was working day shift. I normally would load the dishwasher the night before and run it while I was sleeping or at work. One day, I came home from work and the dishwasher was running. I was positive I didn't start it because I would have done so at 7 a.m. when I left for work. A week or so later, I was off during the day and sitting in my living room when the dishwasher randomly turned on. I never touched it or put it on delay. When I moved to second shift, the dishwasher continued to turn on right when I got home or shortly before I got home. Now I just accept that I have a ghost who likes to run the dishwasher when I don't.”

— EMILY MOYER, CLAVERACK RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

Make Time for Safety

AVOID HAZARDS WITH OVERHEAD POWER LINES

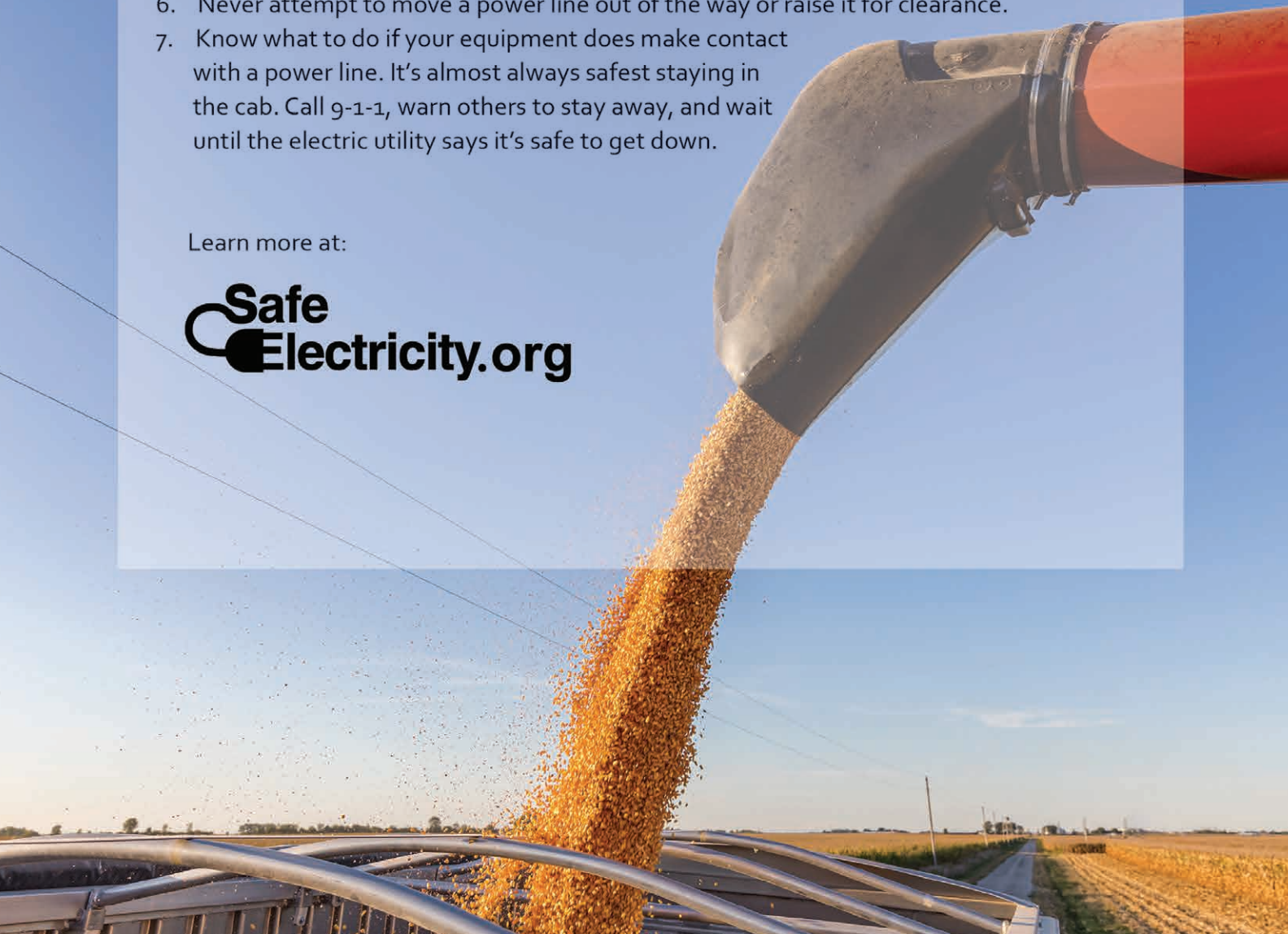
Fall harvest is the most likely time of year for farm-related accidents and fatalities. The number one factor in electrocution on the farm is an auger that hits a power line when being moved. Be aware of your surroundings and look up often.

SAFE ELECTRICITY OFFERS THE FOLLOWING HARVEST SAFETY TIPS:

1. Check the height of the farm equipment to determine clearance.
2. Be aware of the location of power poles and lines, including field entry and exit points, and plan a safe equipment route.
3. Always keep a minimum 10-foot safety radius around an electric line.
4. Use a spotter when moving tall loads near electrical lines.
5. Lower extensions to the lowest setting when moving equipment.
6. Never attempt to move a power line out of the way or raise it for clearance.
7. Know what to do if your equipment does make contact with a power line. It's almost always safest staying in the cab. Call 9-1-1, warn others to stay away, and wait until the electric utility says it's safe to get down.

Learn more at:

 **Safe
Electricity.org**



PREA announces scholarship winners

Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association Scholarships in Memory of William F. Matson

Nine Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association (PREA) Scholarships in Memory of William F. Matson were recently awarded to outstanding students whose homes are served by rural electric cooperatives in Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

Selection for the annual scholarship is based on academic excellence, community involvement, need and cooperative membership. The scholarship is named for William F. Matson, who served 22 years as president of PREA and Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc. until his death in June 1986.

The recipients are Victoria Annunziata, Quinn Gonzalez, and Alexander and Luke Keating, Sussex Rural Electric Cooperative (REC); Julia Hoffman, REA Energy Cooperative; Maxfield Ma, Adams Electric Cooperative; Denae Mobus, Bedford REC; Adria Russell, Valley REC; and Collin Yeatts, New Enterprise REC.



Victoria Annunziata, a graduate of Vernon Township High School, is the daughter of Michael and Christine Annunziata of

Highland Lakes, N.J. Victoria will be attending Rider University, majoring in accounting. In high school, she received the Seal of Biliteracy in Spanish and an AP Scholar Award; was inducted into multiple National Honor Societies, including those for science, English, Spanish, math, history and psychology; and served as president of the National Honor Society and the Science National Honor Society. She was also involved in cross country, track and field, and swimming as well as multiple clubs and organizations, including Key Club, Unified Club, Girl Scouts, Youth Group and Club for Bystander

Awareness. Outside of school, she is a lifeguard, worked at a local restaurant, volunteered at Highland Lakes and helped with the Healthy Kids Running Series.



Quinn Gonzalez, a graduate of High Point Regional High School, is the daughter of Paul and Heather Gonzalez of Sussex, N.J.

Quinn will be attending the Honors College at Syracuse University, pursuing a degree in nutrition with the goal of becoming a registered dietitian. During high school, Quinn participated in cross country and track. Outside of school, Quinn has been involved in dance and has a full-time job at a state park. She also enjoys spending time with her family and pets.



Julia Hoffman, daughter of John and Beth Hoffman, graduated from Central Cambria High School and lives in Mineral

Point, Pa. Julia will be attending the University of Pittsburgh, majoring in Japanese. During high school, Julia competed in concert chorus and band with the Pennsylvania Music Educators Association, where she played in the district, regional, and all-state ensembles. She also played tennis in school and with the Greater Johnstown Tennis Association, competed with the swim team, and participated in the school's track and field team, throwing discus and shotput and running the 200- and 400-meter dashes. She also is a member of the Johnstown Youth Symphony Orchestra.



Alexander Keating, a graduate of Vernon Township High School, is the son of Michael and Jennifer Keating of Vernon Township,

N.J. Alexander will be attending Kean University, majoring in mathematics education and participating in a five-year program to complete both a bachelor's and master's degree. During high school, Alexander played tennis and participated in marching band. Additionally, Alexander was a member of the Spanish Honor Society, the National Honor Society for psychology and the Vernon Township PAL Youth Leadership Council. Alexander also volunteered as a freshmen orientation tour guide and homeroom mentor. Outside of school, Alexander volunteered at a medical office, archiving records, and works at Mountain Creek Resort.



Luke Keating is also the son of Michael and Jennifer Keating and a graduate of Vernon Township High School. He

will be attending Kean University, majoring in chemistry education and participating in a five-year program to complete both a bachelor's and master's degree. Luke was his class valedictorian, played tennis and participated in marching band. Additionally, Luke was a member of the Mock Trial Team, the Science National Honor Society, the Spanish Honor Society, Vernon Township PAL Youth Leadership Council and the Math League. He also served as a volunteer freshmen orientation leader and homeroom mentor. Outside of school, Luke volunteered at a medical office, archiving records, and works at Mountain Creek Resort.



Maxfield Ma, a graduate of Gettysburg Area High School, is the son of Xiaola Ma and Jing Li of Gettysburg, Pa. Maxfield will

attend Haverford College and major in mathematics. In school, he was a member of the National Honor

Society and the Tri-M Music Honor Society, the recipient of the 2023 National School Orchestra Award, and concertmaster and lead member of the string ensemble. Maxfield was also a lead member of the Gettysburg Area High School Math Club, a volunteer math tutor for middle school students and a member of the tennis team. Outside of school, Maxfield volunteered with Meals-On-Wheels through the Adams County Office for Aging, helped to organize a free youth tennis competition and worked as a cashier at Gettysburg's only student-managed business, Nerdherd Gifts and Games.



Denae Mobus, daughter of John and Dena Mobus, Everett, Pa., graduated from Everett Area High School. Denae

will be attending the University of Pittsburgh, majoring in business information systems. She served as class valedictorian, was president of the National Honor Society, served in various roles in Student Council and participated in Future Business Leaders of America. For extracurricular activities, Denae participated in band, volleyball, softball, Students Against Destructive Decisions and Youth Leadership Bedford County. She also was a District Youth Council representative and interned with the Bedford County Chamber of Commerce.



Adria Russell, daughter of Aden and Raylene Russell of Alexandria, Pa., graduated from Juniata Valley High School.

Adria will be attending Penn State University, majoring in animal science. During school, Adria was a member of the track and field team, marching band, concert and jazz band and National Honor Society. In addition to school activities, Adria participated in FFA, 4-H and the Pa. Junior Holstein Association. She is also a Petersburg Volunteer

Fire Co. firefighter and fire queen, was crowned the 2023 Huntingdon County Fire Queen and is a member of the First Methodist Church of Williamsburg Youth Group.



Collin Yeatts, a graduate of Northern Bedford County High School, is the son of Marcus and Emily Yeatts of Martinsburg,

Pa. Collin will be attending Geneva College, majoring in accounting and playing soccer. Collin was a member of the National Honor Society, Future Business Leaders of America and Scholastic Scrimmage. During high school, he participated in multiple sports, including soccer, basketball and football, and was a member of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. Additionally, Collin was in marching band, concert band, youth group, youth band and Sunday morning praise band.

Jody Loudenslager Memorial Scholarship

Two students selected to participate in past NRECA Youth Tours have been named recipients of Jody Loudenslager Memorial Scholarships. They are Elizabeth Bruner and Elizabeth Smith, both from REA Energy Cooperative.

The scholarship is named in honor of Jody Loudenslager, a 1995 PREA Youth Tour student from Trout Run, Pa., who was among the 230 passengers who died in July 1996, when TWA Flight 800 exploded shortly after takeoff from New York.



Elizabeth Bruner, the daughter of Clark and Connie Bruner of Blairsville, Pa., was home-schooled. She is a student at Penn State

DuBois, majoring in forest ecosystem management. Involved in 4-H for the past 13 years, Elizabeth is a member of the Pennsylvania 4-H State Council and earned the 4-H Diamond Clover Award. She is also involved in a number of conservation organiza-

tions, including the Wildlife Leadership Academy, Trout Unlimited, the Pennsylvania Governor's Youth Advisory Council, the National Deer Association and the Rivers Conservation Camp. She is a former Indiana County Fair Queen and a deacon at Blairsville United Presbyterian Church. Elizabeth's hobbies include fly fishing and tying, hunting, archery, shooting, hiking, and driving a team of Haflinger horses.



Elizabeth Smith, a graduate of Marion Center High School, is the daughter of Greg Smith and Lisa Wanchisn of Marion

Center, Pa. A student at Allegheny College, she is majoring in chemistry and minoring in studio arts. Elizabeth holds a leadership position on the board of CHEMII, the chemistry honors society, and has worked as a glaze chemist in the Allegheny ceramics department for two years. Additionally, Elizabeth has done undergraduate research in synthetic organic chemistry, presented an undergraduate research poster at the American Chemical Society's National Conference, and has completed a competitive REU program funded by the National Science Foundation at Michigan State University. She plans to pursue a doctorate in organic synthesis with a focus on the development of green materials and biofuels. 🌱

GET READY

2024 Youth Tour will be held June 16-21 in Washington, D.C. Please contact your local rural electric cooperative for additional information.



FIELDS OF FORTUNE

FLOURISHING GAME-BIRD FARMS KEEP HUNTING TRADITIONS ALIVE

JEFF FETZER

Penn Lines Contributor

AS HE RETRIEVED THE BLOODIED carcasses of dozens of brightly plumaged game birds scattered about the ground inside the flight pen, Ed Halerz conceded defeat.

The lifeless ring-necked pheasants all had the telltale neck bites that pinned the wanton slaughter on a mink.

"We lost about 150 birds in two nights," recalls Halerz of

Tamarack, Clinton County, a member of Tri-County Rural Electric Cooperative. "It was devastating. It was the last straw."

With about one-third of the flock lost to a single varmint, he decided it was time to scrap the game-bird rearing efforts of the Pheasants 4 Sportsmen Project he had spearheaded in 2010.

MIKE STONE



A blessing in disguise

The project began when four local groups — the Cross Fork Sportsmen's Club, Western Clinton Sportsmen Association, Tamarack Kettle Creek Sportsmen's Club and Great Outdoors Conservancy — banded together to hatch a program aimed at restoring pheasant hunting on public lands near the border of Clinton and Potter counties.

The Pennsylvania Game Commission had ceased stocking pheasants in that area about five years earlier. Halerz, an officer with the Cross Fork Sportsmen's Club, wanted to ensure hunters, especially young ones, had the same opportunity to enjoy the pursuit of pheasants as he and his sons had many years before.

Today, very few wild pheasants remain in the state. Since the 1970s, loss of habitat, changes in farming practices, and increased use of pesticides and herbicides have caused the population to plummet. Now, nearly all of the 110,000 birds harvested annually by licensed hunters in the Commonwealth are raised on farms and released by the game commission and private groups.

The clubs leading the Pheasants 4 Sportsmen Project

INTO THE WILD: Volunteers with Cross Fork Sportsmen's Club release ring-necked pheasants in northern Clinton County while a pair of hunters, done hunting for the day, looks on. The club, the lead organization for the Pheasants 4 Sportsmen Project, raises more than \$6,000 each year to purchase and stock 500 to 600 pheasants on public land in the Kettle Creek valley.

felt so strongly about keeping this hunting tradition alive in their region, they started their own pheasant farm. In 2010, volunteers built a 20,000-square-foot flight pen on private property. The following spring, the group acquired 300 one-day-old ring-necked pheasant chicks, which were raised to maturity and released on public hunting grounds.

Relying on donations and proceeds from an annual gun raffle, the organization continued to raise and release about 400 to 600 birds a year until 2018, when the mink attack permanently halted the pheasant-rearing program.

But that did not mark the end of the group's pheasant-stocking efforts. In fact, the mink predation turned out to be a blessing in disguise.

"About the same time we lost our birds to the mink," Halerz says, "I ran into a pheasant guy who offered to sell us adult birds for about what we had into the cost of feed for the birds we had been raising.

"We are putting out the same number of birds today, and I no longer have to take care of them."

Now, each October, Halerz and a core group of six to eight volunteers make a 250-mile, round-trip visit to the "pheasant guy," Gary Hite, owner of Hite's Pheasantry in Loretto, Cambria County. There, they purchase ring-necks, which, upon their return to northwestern Clinton County, are released at three public-hunting locations.

The 'pheasant guy'

Hite, a member of Indiana-based REA Energy Cooperative and a state prison corrections officer, began raising pheasants as a lark in 2010.

"I always thought a rooster pheasant was pretty neat looking, and I had dabbled with them about 25 years ago, hatched a few, raised them and let them go," he says. "I didn't really get into this so much for extra income as I did because I just wanted to tinker with pheasants again."

He built a flight pen on his 52-acre property in 2010 and, with no real plan in mind, raised 500 pheasant chicks that first year.

"I had no idea what I was going to do with all those birds," he says, "and then all these guys from hunting clubs started calling me looking to buy birds. I could have sold 5,000 birds that year."

Now in his 13th year of pheasant farming, Hite expects to raise about 6,000 birds this year. "It's a hobby that got out of control," he says, "but I really enjoy doing it."

About half of the birds are sold to customers who operate pay-to-hunt pheasant preserves. The bulk of the remaining birds, which fetch \$10 to \$15 a piece depending on sex and age, are purchased by hunting clubs that stock them on their own grounds or by sportsmen's organiza-



FROM CHICK TO GAME BIRD: This five-week-old ring-necked pheasant is among the thousands raised at Hite's Pheasantry in Cambria County. Owner Gary Hite purchases about 6,000 one-day-old chicks each year and raises them to maturity before selling the game birds to hunting preserves, private clubs and sportsmen's organizations.

tions, like Pheasants 4 Sportsmen Project, that release the birds on public hunting land.

Hite also established a commercial pheasant hunting area on his property. Each year, he releases about 400 to 500 pheasants for paying customers. In addition to pheasants, he grows and sells mums, pumpkins and gourds at his hobby farm. However, Hite says the pheasant-raising operation is the most rewarding of his side businesses; it's also the most labor-intensive — and at times, the most frustrating.

"The bird seems like it's destined to kill itself or get killed," he says. "If you have anything in the pen, it will get wedged in behind it or fly into it. If young birds get caught outside at night and it pours down rain, they will die of hypothermia or huddle together and smother each other. And every critter in the county is trying to get into the pens."

Hite, who expects to retire from the prison in about two years, says he will continue raising and selling pheasants for the foreseeable future but has no plans to expand his operation.

"My wife would choke me if I put up another pen," he jokes. "I'm maxed out, and I'm not going to be building any more pens."

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Birds are big business

For John Delp, a member of Dubois-based United Electric Cooperative, expansion has been the name of the game since he purchased a quail and chukar hatchery near Brookville, Jefferson County, in January 2000.

Since then, Delp's Game Bird Hatchery has become the largest producer of bobwhite quail in the nation, hatching and selling more than 1 million chicks annually and shipping them to every state in the country.

While the farm's core business remains that of hatchery — incubating quail eggs and selling the chicks to commercial “growers” — Delp also raises about 100,000 quail, chukar partridge, and ring-necked pheasants to maturity each year. The adult birds are purchased by hunting clubs, game preserves, individual hunters, dog trainers and field trialers.

Delp went to work for the farm's previous owners in the late 1990s, with the intention of buying the business when they retired. “I worked for three years as a laborer,” he says, “and then ran the hatchery for a year while they still owned it.”

When he took over the business, he and his wife, Lisa, were the only employees. Today, the farm has a couple of full-time, year-round employees, including a farm manager, as well as a number of seasonal workers. While Delp delegates much of the labor to employees, he still runs the business and troubleshoots issues.

A board member with the Pennsylvania Game Breeders Association, Delp says the industry is thriving.

“In this business, finding customers is not a problem,” he says. “No matter what the economy is, people are going to golf — and they are going to hunt.”

So Delp has focused his efforts on growing his operation to meet demand.

JEFF FETZER



HATCHING AND SELLING: United Electric Cooperative member John Delp owns and operates Delp's Game Bird Hatchery in Brookville, the nation's largest bobwhite quail hatchery in the nation. In addition to hatching and selling more than 1 million day-old quail chicks annually, Delp raises about 100,000 quail, chukar and ring-necked pheasants to maturity at the sprawling Jefferson County operation. The birds consume more than 20 tons of feed every two weeks.

The previous owners hatched about 20,000 to 30,000 quail and chukar a week and sold all of them as day-old chicks. Today, Delp hatches 40,000 to 50,000 chicks weekly, April through October, and also raises and sells mature birds. He added pheasants to the mix in 2008 after inheriting his family's Clarion County farm, where he established a pheasant-hunting preserve.

While the 54-year-old has done well enough to retire, he has no immediate plans to do so.

“I absolutely still enjoy this after nearly 30 years,” says Delp, whose home is located on the farm. “I can't wait to get down here in the morning. The customers are so friendly — almost like family. I know them. I know their families ... and I like the money.”

THE TALE OF PHEASANT HUNTING IN PENNSYLVANIA

Although the ring-necked pheasant is a non-native game bird, it has a long and storied hunting history in Pennsylvania.

Originating in Asia, ring-necked pheasants are a popular target of upland game enthusiasts, especially those hunting behind flushing and pointing dogs, because of their attractive appearance, challenging behavior for hunters and dogs alike, and culinary appeal.

Because, for a variety of reasons, the bird no longer flourishes here in the wild, the Pennsylvania Game Commission releases more than 225,000 pen-raised pheasants each year on public lands across the state before and during the birds' various hunting seasons. All of these release sites are listed on the commission's website, PGC.pa.gov. Sportsmen's groups also release farm-raised birds for public hunting.

The statewide pheasant season opens Oct. 21 and runs

through Feb. 29, but is closed during the statewide rifle deer season, as well as Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. A special juniors-only pheasant season for licensed and mentored hunters under 17, who are required to obtain a free permit, runs Oct. 7-14.

In addition to public pheasant hunting, there are scores of licensed hunting preserves throughout the state. Neither a Pennsylvania hunting license nor a pheasant stamp are required when hunting at these sites.



How to Insulate Your Attic Hatch

MIRANDA BOUTELLE

DEAR MIRANDA: I've noticed a draft coming in around my attic hatch, and it makes the room uncomfortable. Can you offer any tips?

A: You can eliminate drafts and reduce energy waste by properly sealing and insulating your attic hatch. Attic hatches are often overlooked, even if the rest of the attic is properly insulated. It should be noted if your attic access is in an area you are not paying to heat or cool, such as your home's exterior or garage, there's no need to insulate it.

For attic access points inside the home, however, it's important to seal them properly, keeping durability and functionality in mind. Attic hatches should be insulated close to the same R-value as the rest of the attic. (R-value is the insulation's capacity to resist heat flow.)

Attic access types vary, but here are a few tips on how to insulate standard and ladder attic hatches:

Standard attic hatches

A standard attic hatch is typically a covered rectangular hole cut into the ceiling. If your hatch is drywall, I recommend replacing it because it is difficult to properly insulate and seal a drywall hatch. They often crumble and crack around the edges, leading to more air leaks.

Ready-made insulated hatches are available online or at home improvement stores, or you can insulate and seal your existing attic hatch. Either way, measure carefully to ensure you create an effective seal.

To improve your existing hatch, replace drywall attic hatches with $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch plywood cut to fit. If you have



A LOW-COST OPTION: If buying materials or ready-made kits to insulate your attic hatch is not in your budget, inexpensive weatherstripping provides a minimal level of protection.

loose-fill insulation in your attic — as opposed to fiberglass batts — install a dam or barrier that extends 2 inches above the level of insulation to prevent it from spilling into the house when you open the hatch. Use unfaced fiberglass batt insulation or plywood to hold back the loose fill insulation.

To insulate the hatch, use rigid foam insulation cut slightly smaller than the plywood attic hatch. Use screws and fender washers to secure the first layer of rigid foam to the hatch. Add layers of rigid foam by taping the edges together one at a time using foil tape. Always wear gloves when using foil tape to prevent cuts. Keep layering the rigid foam until you reach the desired R-value.

Remember to seal any gaps between the drywall and trim, using caulk for smaller gaps and foam sealant for larger ones. Finish the job by applying adhesive weatherstripping around the hatch perimeter. Install the weatherstripping on the hatch itself or on the trim supporting the hatch.

Ladder attic hatches

For attic hatches with drop-down ladders, you'll follow the same instructions: Install a dam, air seal and insulate. Be sure to account for the space of the folding ladder.

To insulate, build a box to sit in the

attic around the hatch. I suggest using wood for the sides that's tall enough to accommodate the folded ladder. The top of the box will be rigid foam you can remove to get into the attic. Cut the first piece of foam to fit inside the box and the next layer to fit on top of the box. Keep layering until you reach the desired R-value.

To get a good air seal, you may need to remove the existing trim to seal the gap between the drywall and hatch frame. Add weatherstripping to the hatch or the underside of the frame to form a tight seal when closed.

There are several commercially available options for insulating ladder hatches. Remember to check the product's R-value and measure carefully.

If purchasing the required materials to seal and insulate your attic hatch is not in your budget, I recommend weatherstripping the hatch perimeter. While it won't provide the same level of insulation, it's a simple, low-cost option for blocking air drafts. 🛠️

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.

Enjoy an Oktoberfest Menu

ANNE M. KIRCHNER

SEVERAL YEARS AGO, I WAS asked to teach a cooking class featuring Oktoberfest foods. While everyone loves traditional bratwurst, I decided to showcase sloppy Ottos. This version of sloppy Joes is made with ground pork sausage and sauerkraut and served on a pretzel roll.

I also introduced a German cheese dip called obatzda. The tangy dip pairs well with crispy pretzels and is a great appetizer. Another flavorful recipe is gurkensalat, a refreshing salad featuring sliced cucumbers marinated in a sour cream dill dressing. This fall, take time to enjoy an Oktoberfest menu. 🍷

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

PHOTOS BY ANNE M. KIRCHNER



SLOPPY OTTOS

- 1 pound ground pork sausage
- 1 (14-ounce) can sauerkraut, well drained
- 1 medium green pepper, chopped
- ½ medium onion, chopped
- 8 pretzel rolls, sliced in half
- 8 slices provolone cheese

In a large skillet, cook the pork sausage and break into small crumbles; drain. Add the sauerkraut, green peppers and onion. Cook the mixture for 5 to 7 minutes or until the vegetables are tender. Spoon the meat onto the pretzel roll bottom. Top the meat with a slice of provolone cheese and finish with the pretzel roll top. *Makes 8 servings.*



OBATZDA

- ¼ cup mild beer or apple cider
- 1 pound sharp cheddar cheese, shredded
- ¼ cup onion, finely chopped
- 2 tablespoons ketchup
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1½ teaspoons Tabasco sauce
- 1 clove garlic, minced

Bring the beer or apple cider to a boil in small saucepan. Reduce to medium-low heat, simmer for 1 minute and then remove from heat. Combine the remaining ingredients in a food processor until smooth. With the processor running, slowly drizzle the warm beer or apple cider into the mixture and process until very smooth. Serve immediately with pretzels. *Makes 6 to 8 servings.*



GURKENSALAT

- 2 English cucumbers
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- ½ cup sour cream
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 2 tablespoons white vinegar
- 1 teaspoon dill
- ½ teaspoon black pepper

Thinly slice the cucumbers and place in a colander over a deep bowl. Sprinkle the cucumbers with kosher salt and allow to drain for one hour. Press the cucumbers in the colander to extract any extra moisture. In a medium bowl, make a dressing by combining the sour cream, garlic, white vinegar, dill and black pepper. Pour the dressing over the cucumbers and stir until well combined. Refrigerate until serving. *Makes 6 to 8 servings.*

It's Perfectly Ok to be an Imperfect Parent

ABIGAIL ZIEGER

THIRTEEN YEARS AGO, I WAS eagerly awaiting the birth of my first child. I spent my pregnancy counting kicks, belly-watching, dreaming baby names ... my entire world revolved around welcoming this boy.

I had spent most of my young adult life working with kids. I was studying to be a music teacher, and my first three jobs post-college were at a preschool, a private school and a music lesson center. I had a reputation for being a “warm cup of milk” as a teacher. Naturally, I expected that my transition to motherhood would be simple and sweet.

When my firstborn arrived, we were absolutely in love. Those early moments are still clear snapshots in my memory: holding him in my arms, touching his soft little toes, running my fingers through his peach fuzz hair. And that sweet new baby smell! Is there anything better?

Of course, we faced challenges. Breastfeeding did not come easily at first, and this child was not what you'd call a good sleeper. I now credit his brilliant mind and creative energy for keeping him up at night, but at the time, all I knew was that I was exhausted. I became more and more sleep-deprived and discouraged as the months went on.

Then there was the barrage of constant advice — why you should let your baby cry it out ... why you should never let your baby cry it out ... how to sleep train ... how often to nurse. The recommendations ballooned as our son aged, and I felt dizzy with the amount of things I was supposed to do correctly — provide the best nutrition, read to him so many minutes a day, limit his access to screens, form a strong bond while fostering independence and promote age-appropriate development. All of this was to be done, of course, while I kept the house in a reasonable state of cleanliness. Oh, and remember that teaching career I was supposed to be pursuing?

Over time, my idealism dissipated, and I slipped into a state of overwhelming anxiety, and what I later recognized

as postpartum depression. I became immobilized as a parent, fretting over tiny decisions and stressing about what people thought of my mothering. I cried often, struggled with insomnia, spent too much time on the computer, ate constantly or didn't eat at all, and dreaded get-togethers. Meanwhile, I still hadn't gotten the hang of getting my child to sleep through the night, and I was the walking definition of a “mombie” — a mom who feels more like a zombie than a human.

It took me a long time to realize that what I really needed was sleep, decent food and help. I needed people to support me and tools for when the going got tough. I also needed to give myself some grace — after all, I had never been a mother before.

Most people didn't recognize how I was feeling in those early days because I never said anything. However, over time, I began opening up and realizing I wasn't alone. It was OK to ask for help, and it was OK to parent imperfectly.

Eventually, I found people who would support me when I couldn't do it myself anymore. Those friends helped me work on myself, see the light in the dark, and find joy and perseverance. I em-

braced the fact that there is no one right way to be a mom. As I grew, I gradually became less worried about others' opinions and more comfortable in doing things the way they worked for us. I wanted to live the adventure of parenthood instead of agonizing about how I was going to do it.

After 13 years and three more kids, it's abundantly clear to me that no matter what stage you're in, parenting will never be easy. But it can also be one of the most beautiful, rewarding journeys in the human experience. Sometimes, all we need is a little help along the way. 🧡



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.

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December 2023
January 2024
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October 13
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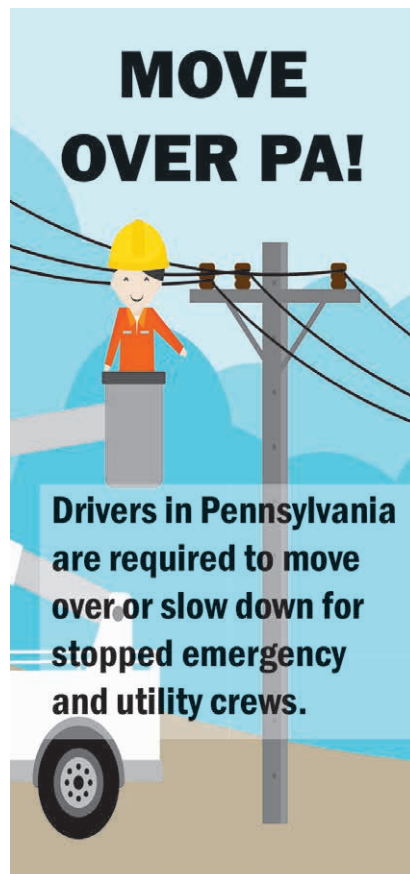
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It's Never Too Late to Start Over

JOHN KASUN

MY WIFE AND I HAVE been married 62 years and have had a dog in our home for most of that time. We have had five — all English springer spaniels who were both house dogs and excellent bird dogs.

We spent countless hours following those dogs through fields and brush while hunting pheasant and grouse. The rest of the year, they were like hunting buddies hanging around the house. They kept the yard clear of squirrels and chipmunks and chased wild ducks from our pond. When our last springer, Misty, passed away three years ago, I assumed she would be our last. While we both struggled with the loss, my wife had a very difficult time. At our advanced age, though, it didn't seem smart to start over with a new puppy.

My wife lasted until late last fall. She would make casual comments like, "Are you thinking about another dog?" or "Do you think we should get a small dog, or do you still want to get a springer?" Suddenly, our computer was filled with searches for springer breeders across the eastern seaboard.

I knew we were in trouble when I walked into the office one day and found a map filled with pins, flags, and red circles. To the untrained eye, it might appear to be a map of bombing runs against enemy forces — you know, the kind you might find in the Pentagon — but I knew it was a step in the process of locating a puppy. My wife was spending more time on the phone, and her map was filling up with potential birth dates of puppies as well as the mileage to various kennels. Every time we bought a new dog in the past, it involved a long trip. I swear if my wife found a dog locally, she would have had it shipped several hundred miles away just so we could "go get it."

I knew things were getting serious when photos of the parents of potential new puppies started showing up on our computer, along with those of some previous puppies bred at the kennel. It was kind of like expecting a baby girl and immediately interviewing the parents of a boy who might be her prom date in 18 years. As my wife narrowed down her search, my job was to keep the car filled with

gas in the event we had to leave at a moment's notice. She also had a bag packed with blankets, pillows and treats for the ride home from the kennel. It was kind of like getting ready to go to the hospital for the birth of a child — except without the flashing light on top of the car.

Finally, the big day arrived and our new puppy, Abbey, was born, but we had to wait eight weeks before she could be separated from her mother. As each day ticked by, my wife grew more anxious. Luckily, a daily stream of photos, emailed from the kennel, allowed her to check on our new addition.

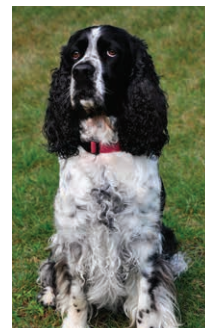
When pick-up day finally arrived, we headed to an area just outside of Shamokin, which was about 150 miles from our home and located slightly east of the middle of nowhere. The kennel address did not appear on our GPS, and every time we asked for directions, people would point in a different direction. Finally, we found ourselves in a remote wooded location and at the home of a kennel full of beautiful, well-bred and -cared-for dogs. After writing a check for what was more than I paid for my first car, we were on our way home with

Abbey, our newest springer spaniel.

Now the question is, if Abbey outlives us, how will she sign the Social Security checks to keep dog food coming in after we are gone? It may never be too late to start over, but I occasionally still wake up in the middle of the night thinking, "What have we done?"

Author's note: For all dog lovers, please be advised that Abbey's future is safe and secure in the event we are called to our heavenly home. She has a loving adoptive family waiting. 🐾

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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Last Call for 2023 Photos

IT'S TIME TO WIND DOWN the 2023 Rural Reflections contest, so hurry and get your photos ready to mail. Entries must be postmarked by Oct. 31 to be placed in competition for the 2023 prizes.

Amateur photographers who are members of a rural electric cooperative have a chance to win a \$75 prize in one of our contest categories: artistic, landscape, human subject, animal and editor's choice. Runners-up will receive a \$25 prize. Entries received after Oct. 31 will be entered in the 2024 contest. Winning entries and the runners-up, all selected by an independent panel of judges, will be printed in the January and February issues of *Penn Lines*. 📧

SARAH MACKEY • ADAMS ELECTRIC



AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHERS may send photos (no digital files, please) to *Penn Lines* Photos, P.O. Box 1266, Harrisburg, PA 17108-1266. On the back of each, include your name, address, phone number, and the name of the electric cooperative that serves your home, business, or seasonal residence.

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 at the end of the contest year if a self-addressed, stamped envelope is included.

ADDRESS CHANGES:

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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