

MARCH 2026

PENNLINES

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KaTona Loncar, a volunteer with New Hope Ministries in Dillsburg, York County, stocks the food pantry's shelves with donations.



ON THE COVER
 Kati Miller, right, a Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) employee, delivers a donation of meat to Shawnel Toomey of the Center for Family Services in Meadville. Northwestern REC is among the cooperatives statewide helping to put food on community members' tables.

Affordability and the Cooperative Mission



STEVE BRAME

THE PRICE OF ENERGY TOOK CENTER STAGE in Gov. Josh Shapiro’s recent budget address — and for good reason. Electricity costs are squeezing families and small businesses across Pennsylvania.

The governor’s point: Affordability has to be more than a talking point. He wants utilities — specifically, for-profit investor-owned and private power companies — to be more transparent about what’s driving their bills. He also wants them to face tougher scrutiny of charges, profits and add-on fees that can quietly push costs higher so Pennsylvanians aren’t paying for anything that doesn’t directly support reliable service.

While this may be a new approach for these utilities, driven by a directive from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania’s rural electric cooperatives have been practicing this members-first, cost-conscious way of doing business — voluntarily — for nearly 100 years.

Serving members is the primary reason electric cooperatives exist, and it shows up in their day-to-day decisions, where three things are fundamental. Electric service has to be safe. It has to be reliable. And it has to be affordable because electricity isn’t optional for any household, farm, or small business trying to make ends meet.

The co-op model is built this way and continues to thrive in the 21st century for one good reason: Electric cooperatives are owned by the very people they serve. Boards are elected from the membership. Directors live in the communities they represent. Many employees are co-op members, too.

That local accountability has always been at the heart of the cooperative story. It shapes how cooperatives do business, how they serve their members — and how they work together to keep electricity affordable.

In the early days, local electric cooperatives across the state faced numerous challenges in bringing power to their communities. Instead of going it alone, those local co-ops formed the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association in 1942 to represent their shared interests, strengthen their collective voice, and provide services that would help each cooperative operate more efficiently.

Eighty years ago, they took that cooperation a step further and created their own generation and transmission organization, Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc. (Allegheny) in response to the excessive wholesale rates private, for-profit power companies were charging them. By banding together to procure their own needs through Allegheny, they ensured that decisions about power supply were made with local interests in mind. That structure continues today, with affordability — not profit — driving those decisions.

In fact, for decades, cooperatives have been doing all the things the governor recently urged electric distribution companies to work on, including planning responsibly, operating efficiently, and staying accountable to the people at the end of the line.

In the co-op world, every electric bill represents a real household making real choices. This is a fact cooperative leaders understand deeply, and it’s why affordability remains front and center, even when the path is complicated and it results in market-driven rate increases.

Affordability may be getting more attention in 2026, but for electric cooperatives it has always been part of the mission. Serving members is the purpose. Local accountability is the foundation. And the focus stays the same: safe, reliable electricity at the lowest, reasonable cost.

That is what members deserve — and that is what electric cooperatives work to deliver. 🗣️

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TURN THE PAGE ON DOOMSCROLLING

My mother loves flipping through magazines, especially if the Royal Family is involved. Unfortunately, even *Penn Lines* takes a back seat to the House of Windsor. Lately, though, she's been doing less page-turning and more scrolling, thanks to a new tablet.

Recently, that scrolling left her a little shaken after she came across a story about a devastating earthquake in California. Only, there was no earthquake. Somewhere in her social media feed, she had clicked on an AI-generated video made to grab her attention. After a bit of searching, I had to gently explain to my 85-year-old mother that not everything on the internet is real.

My mother's experience reflects a habit that has quietly taken hold of many of us:

doomscrolling – that act of compulsively flicking through our social media feeds, consuming one alarming story after another, unable to stop. We tell ourselves we're just checking the news, but before we know it, we've spent an hour spiraling through content that leaves us anxious and exhausted.



As a survival instinct, humans are hardwired to pay attention to threats and bad news. Social media platforms have tapped into this evolutionary trait, using it to keep our attention fixed on a relentless stream of outrage, disaster, and controversy – something our brains and bodies were not meant to handle. Add autoplay videos, AI-generated stories, and infinite scrolling, and we find ourselves trapped in an endless cycle of anxiety and compulsive clicking that's hard to escape.

Recent studies suggest roughly two-thirds of Americans admit to this digital habit. Health experts warn that prolonged exposure to distressing content contributes to declining mental and physical well-being. They suggest establishing digital boundaries: turning off notifications, limiting screen time, or putting the phone away. They also recommend seeking out local or community-focused news, which tends to be more uplifting and less gloomy. Better yet, pick up a magazine and read without digital distractions.

And there's a great place to do just that: *Penn Lines*. Sure, it might not feature the House of Windsor (*sorry, Mom*), but holding a magazine can have a ritual, calming effect. It's intentional reading, where the simple gesture of turning the page moves you forward, one story at a time. Scrolling, on the other hand, too often just pulls you down.

PETER A. FITZGERALD
EXECUTIVE EDITOR



NO CHANGE – YET: The Pennsylvania Game Commission recently voted to tentatively keep the start date for firearms white-tailed deer season as the Saturday after Thanksgiving. Some have asked to move it to the Saturday before Thanksgiving. The commission will make a final decision on the issue in April.

ON THE HUNT

Pa. Game Commission eyeing same start date for upcoming deer season

The Pennsylvania Game Commission recently voted 6-3 to tentatively keep the start date for firearms white-tailed deer season where it has been in past years — the Saturday after Thanksgiving.

Before the vote, there was hope among hunters that the date could be moved a week earlier — or the Saturday before Thanksgiving; however, commissioners decided they would like to examine more data and revisit the proposition before making a final decision.

As a result, the public is invited to submit comments on the move before the commission's next meeting, April 10 and 11, during which it is slated to finalize the 2026-2027 hunting seasons and bag limits. If the commission decides to not change its mind in April, the dates for white-tailed deer season would be Nov. 28 to Dec. 13.

Hunters attended the meeting to urge an earlier start to the season, arguing the current timeline forces

them to choose between spending time with their families or spending time hunting. Since the vote, many have taken to voicing their opposing opinions online.

NO. 1 WITH A BULLET Report: Pennsylvania grabs top spot in buck harvests per square mile

Pennsylvania hunters rejoice: The Commonwealth is one of the best places in the country for deer hunting.

According to a 2026 report from the National Deer Association (NDA), Pennsylvania took the nation's top spot for most antlered bucks harvested per square mile. The report states that in the Keystone State, 3.9 bucks were harvested. Nearby Maryland finished with 3.3 per square mile.

Meanwhile, Pennsylvania was listed as second in the country for antlered buck harvests with 175,280. Texas took the top spot with 424,529, and Wisconsin ranked third at 162,336.

The NDA works with wildlife agencies across the country,

including the Pennsylvania Game Commission, to compile the report. To learn more about the study, visit deerassociation.com/2026-deer-report.

ALL CLEANED UP

Once polluted, Conestoga River transforms, earns prestigious title

A once-polluted river recently earned 2026 River of the Year honors after a public vote that included thousands of participants. The Conestoga River, a 61.6-mile-long tributary that primarily flows through the center of Lancaster County, received 2,510 out of the 5,604 total votes cast.

“This river is an example of what can happen when we prioritize clean, healthy waterways,” said Cindy Adams Dunn, secretary of the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR). “Its transformation has made the Conestoga a hub for outdoor recreation, providing a boost to the region and demonstrating that rivers build thriving communities.”

The Lower Schuylkill River,

which runs from Phoenixville to Philadelphia, finished in second place with 2,312 votes, while Chillisquaque Creek in Montour and Northumberland counties received 782 votes for third place.

As a result of the win, the Conestoga River Club, which nominated the waterway, will receive a \$15,000 grant to fund activities throughout the year.

NO BABIES ON BOARD

Warren General Hospital ends labor, delivery services

With the announcement that Warren General Hospital in Warren County ended in-patient labor and delivery services in January, there are now eight counties in northwestern Pennsylvania without a hospital where women can give birth.

The decision to end the services at Warren General came after one of its two OBGYNs decided to leave the practice, and officials spent more than a year trying to fill the position. Warren County, part of Warren Electric Cooperative’s service territory, is now the latest addition to the region’s expanding maternity-care desert. 📍

TIME LINES



MARCH 2016

A decade ago, *Penn Lines* examined both the future and the reliability of the nation’s electric grid. In doing so, the magazine looked back at some of the most important blackouts in North American history, including the Great Northeast Blackout of 1965 and a blackout in 2003 that affected more than 50 million people in the Northeast and Midwest. Ten years later, it serves as a reminder of how important grid reliability continues to be in the modern day.



CIMLG.ORG



GO BACK IN TIME

Have you ever wanted to experience frontier life? The Revolutionary Homestead in Mercersburg, Franklin County, has you covered. The program – held 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. each Saturday in March at The Conococheague Institute – focuses on hearth cooking, sewing, leatherwork and indoor crafts. Learn more at cimlg.org.

LUCK O’ THE DRAW

Learn about leprechauns at the Dietrich Theater in downtown Tunkhannock, Wyoming County, with storyteller Hal Pratt. He’ll be answering all questions about these mischievous faeries from Irish folklore starting at 11 a.m. March 14. Admission is free. Learn more at dietrichtheater.com.

DIETRICHTHEATER.COM



SATURDAY SIPS

Wine, whiskey and brews will be available at 25 locations in downtown Bedford as part of the Wine and Spirits Walk from 1 to 5 p.m. March 21. Advance tickets are \$25 and \$30 the day of the walk. For more information, go to downtownbedford.com.

HAIL TO THE HOME SHOW

Celebrate the arrival of the spring home improvement season at the Erie Home Show, March 20 to 22, at the Bayfront Convention Center. Children 10 and under are free, while an adult day pass is \$7. Among the event’s features is a Master Gardener’s seminar series. Learn more at eriepromotions.com/erie-home-and-garden.



ERIEPROMOTIONS.COM

MORE than a MEAL

Co-op Communities Deliver Help for the Hungry

PAULA PIATT

Penn Lines Contributor



AMBER TILL CHERISHES HER \$20 BUNCH OF BASIL.

The director of communications for Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative in Crawford County, Till will often roll up to one of the area's Pay-What-You-Can Farmstands and ... pay what she can.

To some, \$20 for a handful of basil may seem outrageous. Not in this case, she says, noting the operators of the farmstand network use the money they make to buy fresh produce from local farmers and then provide affordable — sometimes free — food to the public.

"I'll go and get what I need and then give them whatever cash I have in my wallet," Till says, recognizing her responsibility to do what she can to make sure others — children, in particular — aren't going hungry.

She's been one of those kids.



CONCERN FOR COMMUNITY: When it comes to feeding the hungry in their communities, it's a group effort for co-ops and their members. Above, Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) member Stephanie Thauer, center, started the Pay-What-You-Can Farmstand network to offer affordable locally grown produce in the region. At right, Tri-County REC employee Joseph Kyler unloads potatoes at the Mansfield Food Pantry that were donated by board Chair Valery Robbins and her husband, Chris, owners of Barnett Farms in Potter County.



PRODUCE OF U.S.A.

Harvest Gold Potatoes

Harvest Gold Potatoes

Harvest Gold Potatoes



Harvest Gold Potatoes

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Harvest Gold Potatoes



“I grew up as a food pantry kid. My folks didn’t have a whole lot of money, and I remember eating spaghetti rings out of a can,” Till says. “We were free-lunch kids when I grew up in the ’80s and ’90s. And so, for me, food insecurity is huge.”

As it is for so many Pennsylvanians.

A growing hunger

According to the nonprofit Feeding America, a nationwide network of food banks, food pantries and local meal programs, there was a 40% increase in food insecurity in the Keystone State from 2021 to 2023.

“That’s pretty significant,” says Lauren Duff, chief public affairs officer for Feeding Pennsylvania, a Feeding America partner. “We’re back up to levels of food insecurity from the worst of the pandemic.”

Things were already at crisis levels, Duff says, before last year’s interruption of funding for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Cuts were also made to two critical federal food assistance programs. The cancellation of \$6 million in Emergency Food Assistance Program shipments meant the loss of more than 1 million meals in Philadelphia alone. And a \$13 million cut in the Local Food Purchase Assistance Program not only impacted local food pantries, which were unable to purchase fresh food, but also affected the farmers who produce and supply it.

Even as SNAP benefits have returned, food banks and pantries throughout the state are seeing more clients.

“The demand is still higher than it was before [SNAP benefits were halted],” says Duff, theorizing that people have now discovered the additional help. “Folks who were just like barely scraping by with their SNAP benefits are now realizing they can supplement with help from their local pantry.”

One in eight Pennsylvanians experiences food insecurity — a government term used to describe those who don’t have enough to eat and don’t know where their next meal will come from, according to Feeding Pennsylvania. The organization helps by annually distributing more than 230 million pounds of food to 2,750 agencies and food pantries in all 67 counties. It is, to be sure, an important foundation for feeding Pennsylvanians.

Look a little more closely, however, and you’ll see an almost invisible network of other helpers. Throughout the

state, rural electric cooperatives — already designed to reach into the nooks and crannies of Pennsylvania’s 46,000 square miles — are bringing more than electricity to homes. With





NEW DONATIONS FOR NEW HOPE: Above, as part of its 85th anniversary celebration in 2025, Adams Electric Cooperative asked members attending its drive-thru events to bring food and other donations to support its charitable partner, New Hope Ministries, based in York County. Employees, from left, are: Dan Leonard, Alexis Coscia-Kranias, Georgie Drowsky, Max Rinehart, CEO/General Manager Steve Rasmussen, Tony Spangler, Lisa Willet, Adam Willman and Dan Seibert. At right, New Hope Ministries Program Manager Sue Fornicola works closely with the co-op staff on a handful of community service projects.

“concern for community” as one of seven core cooperative principles, they and their members are leading food initiatives in every corner of the Commonwealth.

‘The cooperative always wants to give back’

In south-central Pennsylvania, Adams Electric Cooperative in Gettysburg has built a unique partnership with New Hope Ministries that provides multiple opportunities to help people in the co-op’s service territory, which covers Adams, Cumberland, Franklin, York and Perry counties.

“They have a passion and a heart for the communities we work with,” Program Director Sue Fornicola says of the group’s relationship with Adams Electric. In 2024, for instance, the co-op created a Hardship Fund through New Hope Ministries that’s supported by donations from the utility and its consumers. The financial assistance, up to \$500 a year, helps eligible co-op members pay their electric bill, freeing up funds for other necessities like food.

And the cooperative helps with that, too.

Last year, as part of its 85th anniversary celebration, Adams Electric asked members attending its drive-thru events to bring food and other donations.

“New Hope has been a huge partner of ours in the community,” says Kami Noel, Adams’ communications/member relations coordinator. “This was a way that we could finally give something back to that organization.”

Additional donations and sponsorships from the co-op have helped LifePath Christian Ministries in York County

provide food for holiday meals and other resources for families. They have also allowed the Adams County Farmers Market to offer shoppers free or reduced-price resources.

Statewide, similar scenarios are playing out.

“Being part of a small community, the cooperative always wants to give back,” Sullivan County REC CEO John Lykens says of his employees’ food drive last year. He and 18 other staffers not only fed a family at Thanksgiving, but they also gathered items for the Sullivan County Food Pantry.

In neighboring Tioga County, Tri-County REC collected food and monetary donations to support the Mansfield Food Pantry and provided manpower for deliveries. The potatoes included in the donation were supplied by Board Chairman Valery Robbins, who owns and operates Barnett Farms with her husband, Chris.

Last year, Indiana, Pa.-based REA Energy gave financial donations to several area food banks, and Somerset REC asks members to bring food donations to its Member Appreciation Day, held each October. Staff then delivers the items to community food banks. Nearby New Enterprise REC invites members to bring non-perishable food to its annual meeting drive-thru, which also supports local food pantries.

A group effort

These acts of giving are a normal part of cooperative life that also trickle down to co-op members, who are just as committed to embracing the concern for community principle.

As the saying goes: It's a group effort.

When the Tussey Mountain girls varsity basketball team in Bedford County hosted an open practice to kick off the 2025-2026 season, players encouraged the public to bring non-perishable food items.

The donations stocked the school's pantry, which is open to students on weekends and over long school breaks to supplement food needs. Like many school districts around the state, Tussey Mountain, located in territories served by New Enterprise REC and Valley REC, also offers a Weekend Backpack Program for elementary students that helps fill the gap when school meals aren't available.

"This was right before Thanksgiving, so it worked out great," says Brianna Gabrielson, a 17-year-old senior and team captain, whose parents, Angie and Eric, are Valley REC members. "And it's just a really great example of the kind of values that have been instilled in us and the values we want to carry with us after high school and into the real world: being generous, being compassionate, and thinking of other people before yourself."

When the evening was over, food filled the tables.

"It was an eye-opener when we got all the food together in the center of the gym," junior Hillary Horton says. "We got to see how many people we'd be helping; we know that a lot of people struggle, and we wanted to take the opportunity to use what we were given to help people."

It was an opportunity, says Gabrielson, that might not have been obvious.

"It wouldn't have been my first thought," she says of using a basketball practice to support others, "but there's always a way to help somebody else. Sometimes, it takes a little bit of creativity."

Just ask Stephanie Thauer, a Crawford County farmer and Northwestern REC member who wanted to provide the public with fresh, affordable food while also helping area farmers.

"There are a lot of areas in the City of Erie and in nearby rural communities that just don't have grocery stores or fresh food vendors," says Thauer, adding that one barrier local farmers face is being able to work on the farm while still having time to sell their goods.

She, along with fellow farmer Stephanie Ciner, created the Pay-What-You-Can Farmstand network in Erie County. Volunteers collect the produce from farmers and distribute it among seven sites — six in the City of Erie and one in Edinboro. Last year, 30,800 pounds of produce went to 4,300 people, all using the pay-what-you-can model.

The farmstands, according to the network's website, "allow individuals the dignity of contributing if they can, and freely sharing with those who cannot." In addition to access to fresh locally grown food, the farmstands offer seedlings (and growing instructions) so people can raise their own veggies. Thauer and Ciner also encourage local gardeners to share their overabundance.

Each stand accepts vouchers, SNAP benefits, cash and credit/debit cards. The average donation is about \$2, and

Continued on page 27



STOCKING THE SHELVES: More than 425 Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative members donated an abundance of non-perishable items for the Confluence Food Bank during last year's Member Appreciation Day. Above, co-op employee Jarrod Putman, left, and food bank volunteer Charles Younkin fill up carts of donated items.



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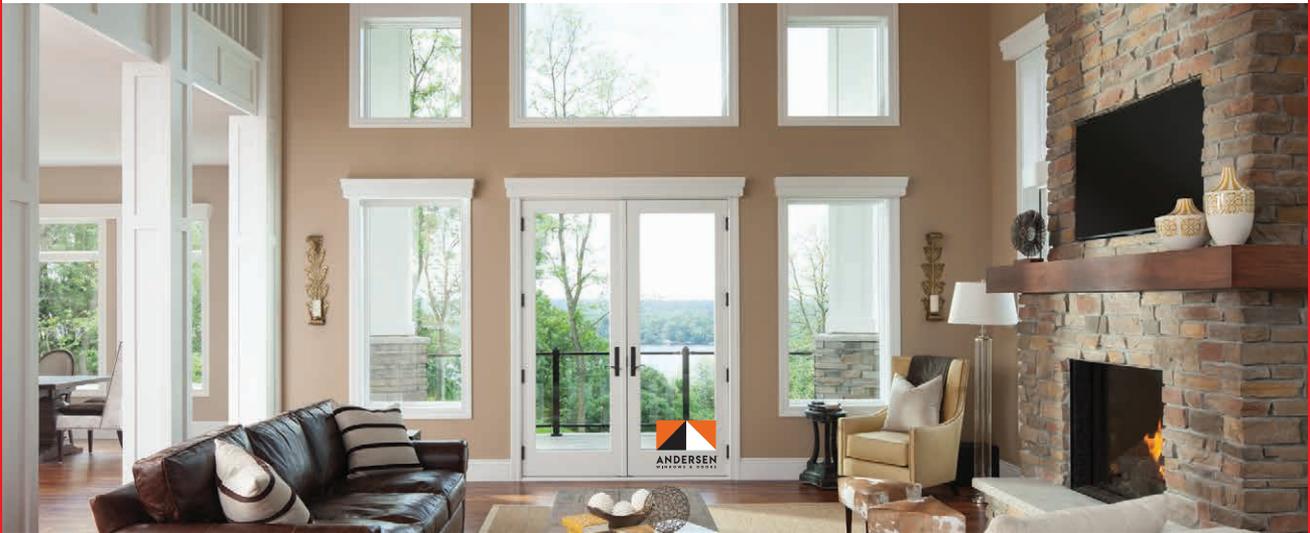
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Distribution Automation Keeps Power Flowing, Outages at Bay

CATHY CASH

STAYING ONLINE, uninterrupted by a power glitch, seems more important than ever, and today it's even more possible, thanks to advanced energy technologies that can instantly rearrange electricity flows to areas hit by storms or other disturbances.

Distribution automation (DA) refers to a powerful set of tools that includes automated sensors, communications systems, and data analytics, enabling electric utilities to monitor power lines, field equipment, and generation facilities in real time. You may have read about systems that use DA, such as SCADA — supervisory control and data acquisition — in previous issues of *Penn Lines*.

Several Pennsylvania cooperatives have started adopting some of these tools, which help them detect an outage and isolate it in real-time from their control rooms before sending out field crews.

“Distribution automation helps electric co-ops deliver reliable, high-quality service to members when today’s world demands it most,” says Ravindra Singh, senior principal of DA for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

Some call DA a “self-healing electric grid.” Through its FLISR application — that’s fault location, isolation and service restoration — the network of power lines and substations can automatically reconfigure in response to disruptions.

When power lines are damaged or shorted by storms, critters, or some disaster, DA systems can reroute electricity from the power source to unaffected infrastructure. This allows electric service to continue uninterrupted to a community that would otherwise suffer an outage.



STACY HILLIARD, REA ENERGY COOPERATIVE

HELPFUL AUTOMATION: REA Energy Cooperative employees monitor the electric distribution system from their control center in Indiana, Pa. With distribution automation technology and its analysis of network data, cooperatives can see their system’s assets, how they are operating and what energy resources are on their power lines to support better quality service and reliability. Shown, from left, are: Nick Hartman, manager of engineering; Zachary Barrett, electrical distribution design engineer; and James Horwat, electrical engineer.

DA not only has a hand in preventing outages, but this suite of technologies can save electric cooperatives and their members money by reducing inspection time for field apparatus, such as transformers, substations, and power lines.

With real-time field measurements from DA technologies, a cooperative gains situational awareness of its electricity network and can minimize unnecessary maintenance activities, truck rolls, and crew dispatches to examine lines, locate damage, or make repairs.

“Power distribution grids are evolving from being a passive network to a more active network,” Singh says. “With DA technology and its analysis of network data, co-ops can see their system’s assets, how they are operating, and what energy resources are on their power lines to support better quality service and reliability.”

Without DA, a cooperative may not know where electric vehicles (EVs),

rooftop solar, residential batteries, generators, and other distribution resources are being added or operated on its system by members. This can be a challenge when it comes to managing peak demand and having to curtail energy to sustain reliability.

Electricity demand is only going to grow because of new types of loads, such as data centers, crypto mining and EVs, according to industry forecasts, so it makes sense for utilities to optimize the use of their existing infrastructure and equipment to keep costs in check.

With DA, electric cooperatives can better manage and grow their systems and respond to crises safely and efficiently while their members enjoy reliable electricity without hiccups. 📺

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

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Should I Upgrade My Appliance?

MIRANDA BOUTELLE

BUYING A NEW APPLIANCE can feel daunting. Before you hand over your hard-earned money, here's how to choose one that will help you save money over time.

When shopping, keep in mind that not all new appliances are high efficiency and not all old appliances are inefficient. The less efficient your current appliance, the more you will save with an upgrade. The yellow EnergyGuide label on new appliances shows the yearly energy cost, kilowatt-hour (kWh) electricity use and Energy Star® logo, if certified.

Let's look at some appliance examples to see how the costs and savings stack up.

Refrigerators have seen major efficiency improvements over the years. New refrigerators use up to 73% less energy than 1970s models

and about a third less than 20-year-old models.

On a visit to my mom's house, she proudly showed off her 1980s refrigerator she bought when her 1970s harvest gold model died. If her '80s fridge uses 2,000 kWh per year, at 14 cents per kWh, it costs \$280 per year to operate. New Energy Star-certified refrigerator prices start at \$500 with yearly energy costs ranging from \$38 to \$122. If mom buys a new Energy Star-certified refrigerator for \$1,000 with \$100 yearly energy costs — saving her \$180 per year — it will pay for itself in about 5½ years.

If you intend to keep your old appliance, be sure to weigh the additional energy costs. Maximize efficiency and keep your food safe by setting your refrigerator to 37 degrees and your freezer at 0 degrees.

New Energy Star-certified **clothes washers and dryers** are also more efficient than older models. Use the Energy Star Product Finder at energystar.gov to compare products. The integrated modified energy factor measures the washer's energy efficiency. A higher number is better. The integrated water factor measures water efficiency. A lower number is better.

I recently bought a new washing machine when my old front-load machine died. I was considering a top-load machine, but I changed my mind when I compared Energy Star-certified top loaders to front loaders. Energy Star-certified front loaders use about 50% less energy and water than top-load agitator washers and about 25% less energy and water than top-load impeller washers that don't have an agitator.

My new washer cost \$698. According to the appliance's EnergyGuide, based on six loads of laundry a week and an electricity cost of 14 cents per

kWh, the yearly energy cost is \$15. The energy cost for a similar non-Energy Star-certified model is \$48 per year.

Then I had to make the decision about buying the matching dryer. My dryer was functional but had features I didn't like. At 14 cents per kWh and running roughly six loads a week for an hour each, my old dryer used energy that cost \$131 per year.

The new matching Energy Star-certified dryer cost \$698 and uses an estimated 607 kWh per year, which is \$84.98 per year at 14 cents per kWh. With an estimated savings of \$46 per year, the dryer would take 15 years for the savings to cover the price. That's a long time and not worth the cost.

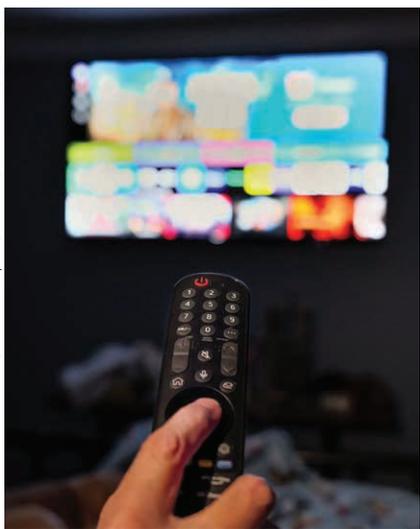
To improve your washer and dryer efficiency, wash in cold water, don't over-dry clothes, and clean your lint trap between every load.

Just like the lightbulbs in your home, **LED televisions** offer increased efficiency. Energy Star-certified televisions are 34% more efficient than conventional models. If you have a working LED television, swapping to an Energy Star model is more efficient but may not make up for the cost of a new TV. Instead, check the efficiency settings on your TV or buy a smart power strip that turns off other connected devices when not in use.

Whatever appliance you are upgrading or replacing, make an informed decision by comparing the cost of operation and shopping Energy Star models to help lower your electric bill. 📺

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 nearly 900 electric co-ops.

MARK GILLILAND, PIONEER UTILITY RESOURCES



TUNE INTO SAVINGS: If you're looking for a new TV, Energy Star-certified models are 34% more efficient than conventional models.

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Local Lore

Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative

Let Them Eat Cake!

WHAT DOES THE French Revolution and Bradford County, Pa., have in common? Marie Antoinette.

Or, well, kind of.

In the late 1700s, investors Steven Girard and Robert Morris bought land along the Susquehanna River in Bradford County — a region now served by Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) — and developed it into a community known as French Azilum. Spread over 300 acres, the makeshift town for French refugees featured a chapel, a town square and a large home.

That home, as legend has it, was called “La Grand Maison” and was built for Queen Marie Antoinette as a safe haven after fleeing Europe. When the escape was foiled, the French

settlers used the home to host parties and dignitaries, including Louis Philippe, who ultimately became the last king of France.

The community was short-lived; by the late 1790s, settlers began moving to more established parts of the country, like New Orleans. In 1803, Napoleon declared amnesty for French aristocrats and the settlement was left desolate. Come 1830, there was almost nothing left of French Azilum.

These days, a few log cabins remain, and tourists can visit them to learn about life in the community. To honor the former queen’s connection to the county, the Marie Antoinette Overlook was built in Wyalusing in the 1920s. From its location across the Susquehanna River, visitors can see not only Bradford County at its finest, but also the remains of French Azilum.

And so, while she was never able to eat cake in the Keystone State, Marie Antoinette can rest knowing there was



BUILT FOR A QUEEN: French Azilum, a long-abandoned community in Wyalusing, Bradford County, featured “La Grand Maison,” which was built in the late 1700s by French refugees for Queen Marie Antoinette.

a hideaway in the northeastern Pennsylvania wilderness that would have been happy to accommodate her. 🍷



Main Office: Wysox, Pa.
Consumer-members served: 19,124
Website: claverack.com

A Sight to See

This month’s artwork comes from Olivia Kelly, 5, daughter of Shawnee and Brenton Kelly, members of Valley Rural Electric Cooperative. Her drawing is based on a photo of grazing deer that accompanied a recent article in *Penn Lines*. She liked it because, as she said, “We see deer grazing in our yard in the evenings.” Thank you, Olivia, for sharing your artwork with us!

Olivia Kelly, age 5, Valley Rural Electric Cooperative



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

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

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

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Safety Starts Before the Storm



STACY HILLIARD

BY THE TIME SPRING ARRIVES, many of us are ready to welcome longer days, warmer weather and the chance to get back outside. But at electric cooperatives across the country, spring also signals the beginning of severe weather season, bringing heavy rain, strong winds, flooding and even late-season snowstorms that challenge our electric grid and communities.

For employees of REA Energy, safety is more than a priority — it is a responsibility. Our crews train consistently to respond to storms quickly and safely, often working long hours in difficult and hazardous conditions to restore power. Yet no matter how prepared our teams are, the most effective storm response is one that begins before the weather rolls in.

Preparation starts with awareness. Spring storms can develop rapidly, creating risks not only for utility workers but also for members at home. Something as simple as knowing where to go for outage updates or having a flashlight ready can make a meaningful difference when the power goes out unexpectedly. Refer to the article on page 16B for emergency preparedness tips.

At REA Energy, we invest time and resources into planning for severe weather. We review response procedures and monitor forecasts closely so we can act quickly when needed. This proactive approach protects our employees and may help reduce restoration time for our members. But preparedness is not something we do alone; it's a shared effort between the cooperative and the communities we serve.

Electrical safety is especially critical during and after storms. Downed power lines should always be treated as if they are energized. If you see one, keep your distance and report it immediately. Never attempt to remove tree limbs from lines or move a downed line. Our trained professionals are prepared to handle those situations safely.

Spring is a good time to take a walk around your property, too. Look for trees or branches that could pose a risk to service lines and notify the cooperative if you see potential hazards near our equipment. Staying alert and reporting concerns early can help prevent outages and accidents before storms arrive.

At its core, the cooperative model is about people helping people. During storm restoration, that spirit shines through — not only in the dedication of our crews, but also in the patience, support and cooperation shown by our members. When we all stay informed, prepared and focused on safety, we strengthen our entire community.

Spring storms may be unpredictable, but our commitment to safety is not. Together, by preparing ahead of time and looking out for one another, we can weather the season with confidence while knowing we are ready, resilient, and prepared to power through whatever comes our way. 🌩️

STACY HILLIARD, CCC, CKAE
COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING MANAGER

When Storms Strike: Stay Safe with a Family Emergency Plan

KAYLA KING, CCC, MARKETING AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT SPECIALIST

IT'S NEVER FUN to think about potential emergencies. Most of us would rather imagine sunny days and normal routines rather than think about storms, power outages, or other emergencies. But the truth is simple: Preparation now can make a big difference later.

Emergencies are unpredictable, and when they occur, seconds may matter. Creating a plan for your family and practicing it will help everyone stay safe and calm.

The goal is not to worry; it's to prepare. When you are prepared, you don't feel vulnerable. Instead, you know what to do, where to go and who to contact. That peace of mind is worth the effort.

Before an emergency

Start with a clear conversation. Make sure everyone in your family knows who to contact first, where to meet if you can't stay at home, how to escape safely during a fire or a storm, and what to do if you are unable to use your cellphones.

Choose someone who lives outside your immediate area as your point of contact. If your group separates, everyone should check in with this person. Sometimes, text messages can be successfully sent even when phone calls do not connect.

Teach your young children their full name, home address and your phone number. If they have their own phone, add a contact called ICE (In Case of Emergency). First responders are trained to look for this.

Education and practice

Different emergencies require different actions. Spend time planning for each of the following:

- ▶ **Fire:** Draw escape routes from every room. Practice twice a year.
- ▶ **Tornadoes or high winds:** Identify the lowest and most interior room in your house, such as a basement, hallway or interior bathroom.
- ▶ **Flooding:** Know where higher ground is nearby. Never try to drive through floodwater.
- ▶ **Severe storms:** Discuss what to do if the power goes out for hours or days.

Young children learn best by practicing. Make planning a drill. Walk through your home together and point out the safest places. Let them help pack the emergency kit so they know where everything is.

Prepare your home

A home that is prepared is a safer place. Here are some basics to consider:

Warning systems

Install and regularly test:

- ▶ Smoke alarms on every level of your home
- ▶ Carbon monoxide (CO) detectors, especially near sleeping areas

Replace the batteries every six months. An easy way to remember to do this is to change them when you adjust your clocks in the spring and fall.

Local alerts can provide important information about road closures, shelters and evacuation orders. Use a battery-operated weather radio or download severe weather apps for advanced storm warnings. Subscribe to text and/or email alerts from your local office of emergency management, if available.

A well-stocked emergency kit

Build a kit that can last at least five days. This should include:

- ▶ Non-perishable food
- ▶ One gallon of water per person, per day
- ▶ Food and medication for pets, if needed



- ▶ Flashlights and extra batteries
- ▶ Prescription medications
- ▶ First-aid supplies
- ▶ Blankets and warm clothing
- ▶ Phone numbers for family, neighbors, utilities and REA Energy
- ▶ Cash (ATMs and card readers may be offline)
- ▶ Copies of insurance cards and important documents

Keep your kit in a location everyone can easily access.

If someone has medical equipment, oxygen or mobility needs, have a plan for them as well.

During an emergency

Stay calm and stick to the plan.

Panic can cloud judgment. When something bad occurs, take a deep breath, think clearly and follow the plan you've practiced. Your kit, communication strategy and safe locations are ready for moments like this.

Storm safety

Storms can be frightening, but preparation helps. During severe weather:

- ▶ Stay away from windows.
- ▶ Close interior doors.
- ▶ Move to the lowest, most central part of the home.
- ▶ Have shoes, flashlights and phones nearby.

If you are driving when storms approach:

- ▶ Pull over and stop.
- ▶ Avoid trees, power lines and open areas.
- ▶ Do NOT shelter under a bridge during a tornado.
- ▶ Stay inside your vehicle if lightning is close. Remember: If you can hear thunder, lightning is close enough to strike.

Power outages

Power outages often follow storms. If your power goes out:

- ▶ Report the outage to REA Energy by calling 844-920-3395 or using our SmartHub app.
- ▶ Unplug sensitive electronics to protect them from surges.
- ▶ Keep refrigerators and freezers closed as much as possible. A fully stocked freezer can keep food cold for 48 hours, if unopened.

To maintain communication:

- ▶ Keep charged power banks in your emergency kit.
- ▶ Use phones sparingly to extend battery life.
- ▶ Save battery power by turning on low-power mode and reducing screen brightness.

Generator safety

Portable generators are helpful, but they *must* be used correctly:

- ▶ NEVER run a generator inside your home or garage.
- ▶ Run only in well-ventilated areas outdoors.

- ▶ Keep at least 20 feet away from doors, windows and vents.
- ▶ Use proper extension cords.
- ▶ Refuel only when the generator is turned off and cooled.

Carbon monoxide is silent and deadly. If you use a generator, make sure you have working CO detectors.

After the emergency

Be patient and stay alert.

Even after the wind stops or the power returns, danger may still exist. Follow official instructions and do not return to an evacuated area until authorities say it's safe to do so.

When you come home

- ▶ Walk carefully through your property.
- ▶ Look and listen for gas leaks.
- ▶ Avoid standing water, which may hide debris or electrical hazards.
- ▶ Never touch a downed power line. Assume every wire is energized and dangerous. Report it immediately.

Check on neighbors

Storms and outages can be tougher for older adults, families with infants or people with medical issues. Once the danger has passed, check on your neighbors. A quick visit or phone call could make a big difference.

Take notes and improve

Once life returns to normal, review your experience:

- ▶ What worked well?
- ▶ What could be improved?
- ▶ Do any supplies need to be replaced?

Update your family plan and remember that preparation is ongoing.

Why preparation matters

No one can control when a storm rolls in or when the power goes out, but you can control how ready your family is for those things to occur. Planning transforms fear into confidence.

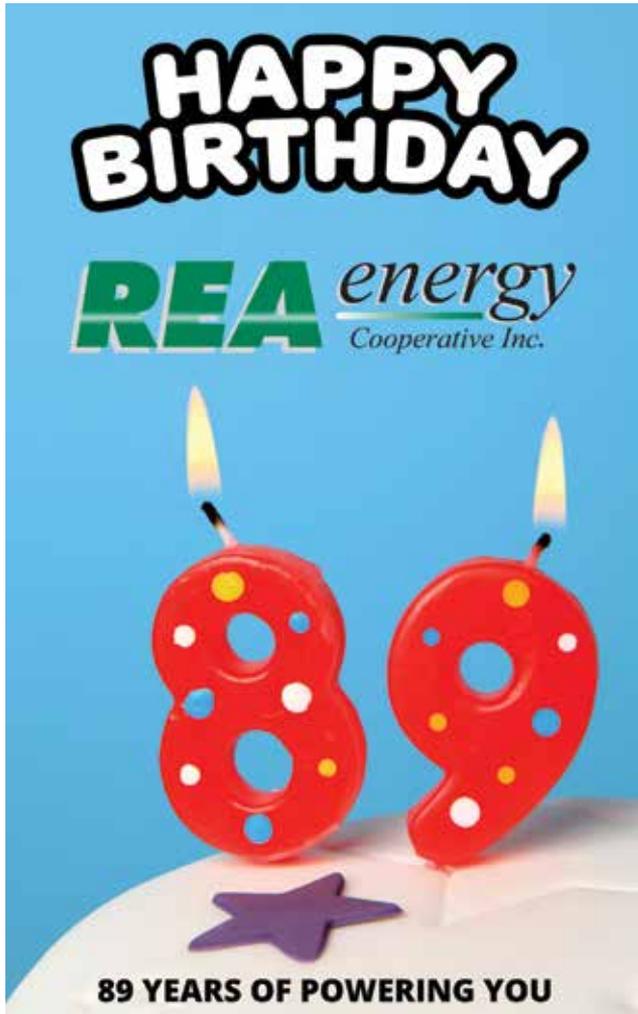
By taking a little time now to communicate, educate, and prepare, you can help protect the people and pets who matter most to you. In an emergency, small steps can save lives.

For more tips, visit:

- ▶ [ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov)
- ▶ [redcross.org](https://www.redcross.org)

Being prepared is never wasted time; it's peace of mind. 🧘

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Right-of-Way Management News

REA Energy contractors will complete tree trimming work in the following areas in March:
Contractor crews from Penn Line Tree Service will be trimming the rights of way of the Amsbry substation and Reese/Wilmore substation service areas in addition to emergency maintenance areas.
Members in affected areas will be notified. Contractors will perform all right-of-way work per REA Energy specifications. All contractor employees will carry identification cards and their vehicles will display their company name. If you have any questions, call 724-349-4800 or view the specifications at reaenergy.com.

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ALWAYS STEER CLEAR OF OVERHEAD AND UNDERGROUND POWER LINES



Always look up and look out for overhead power lines. If you or an object you are touching contacts or gets too close to a power line, you could be seriously injured or killed.

Regardless of the task, always keep a 10-foot minimum clearance between you or an object you are holding and an overhead line, including the drop-down service line.

Power lines are buried and run underground as well. Always call 8-1-1 or visit call811.com before digging to get underground utilities marked.



 Safe
Electricity.org®

BE MINDFUL OF POWER LINES WHEN COMPLETING THESE TASKS:

- Home maintenance: Examples include cleaning gutters, being on the roof or using extended tools to wash windows or skim a pool.
- Yard work: Examples include trimming trees, carrying ladders and digging.
- Transporting tall objects: Ladders are not the only extended objects people use outdoors. Be careful any time you move a tall object or tool.
- Contracted and DIY projects: If you are planning any project that requires digging, ensure underground utilities are marked.

Look up and look out for overhead power lines and think about what is below them. Contact can happen in an instant.

If there is a damaged/downed power line or padmount transformer (green box), do not go within 50 feet of it.

Love Those Spuds

ANNE M. KIRCHNER

PHOTOS BY ANNE M. KIRCHNER



CREAMY MASHED POTATOES. Hearty shepherd's pie. Savory potato pancakes. These are a few of my favorite potato dishes, which stir up valuable childhood memories. My resourceful mother taught me how to grow, harvest and cure potatoes. We often called them "spuds." Potatoes were a staple in our home, a practice I continued into adulthood.

My kitchen is stocked with a variety of spuds — white, red and sweet. I appreciate this root vegetable — it's inexpensive, absorbs flavor and fills the tummy. Potatoes can be boiled, baked or fried. I also use potato starch as a thickener. With so much versatility, who doesn't love spuds? 🥔

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

CREAMY MASHED POTATOES

- 2 pounds gold Yukon potatoes, peeled & diced
- 4 tablespoons butter
- 1/3 to 1/2 cup whole milk
- 1/3 to 1/2 cup sour cream
- 1 to 2 teaspoons garlic salt
- 1/2 teaspoon coarse black pepper

Place the potatoes in a large pot and cover with water. Bring to a boil and reduce to a simmer. Cook for 20 minutes or until the potatoes are fork tender. Drain, then place the potatoes in a large bowl. Add the butter, milk and sour cream. Mash the potatoes while combining all ingredients. Add more milk and sour cream for desired consistency. Season with garlic salt and black pepper. *Makes 4 to 6 servings.*

SHEPHERD'S PIE

- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 small yellow onion, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon dried parsley
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1 cup beef broth
- 2 large carrots, peeled & diced
- 1 cup frozen peas
- 1/2 cup frozen corn
- 4 to 5 cups mashed potatoes

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Place the ground beef in a large skillet and cook on medium heat. Using a wooden spoon, crumble the beef as it cooks. Add the onion and garlic; cook until tender. Stir in the parsley, black pepper, Worcestershire sauce and tomato paste. Mix in the flour. Add the broth and bring to a boil. Add the carrots, peas and corn then reduce heat to a simmer. Cook for 5 minutes. Pour the filling into a 9-by-9-inch baking dish and spread into an even layer. Spoon the mashed potatoes over the meat mixture, carefully spreading into a second layer. Bake uncovered for 30 minutes. *Makes 4 to 6 servings.*

POTATO PANCAKES

- 2 cups mashed potatoes
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1/4 cup flour
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/2 teaspoon coarse black pepper
- 2 green onions, finely diced
- 1/3 cup shredded cheddar cheese
- 2 tablespoons butter, melted
- Sour cream, optional garnish

Preheat griddle to 325 degrees. In a large mixing bowl, combine the mashed potatoes, eggs, flour, salt, black pepper, green onions and shredded cheddar. Brush the griddle with melted butter. For each pancake, spoon 1/3 cup batter onto the griddle. Cook until the batter is firm and the bottom side is brown. Flip the pancakes and cook until the second side is brown. If desired, serve with sour cream garnish. *Makes 4 to 6 servings.*



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Umbrellas, Shark Teeth and One Tiny Toad

MITCHELL KYD

IN THE MIDDLE OF PRACTICALLY NOWHERE — along the road “up the valley” from me — tire tracks and flattened grass in front of a rustic, roofed stand verify that visitors stop there regularly and year-round. A hand-painted sign proclaims “Free,” and I’ve seen the table stocked with glassware and household goods, kids’ toys, and small tools. A box labeled “Food Pantry” encourages visitors to take what they need, including in-season garden produce that’s been donated.

A handmade cabinet with a glass door sits alongside, bearing the sign “Free Library.” It’s an unexpected spot for readers to browse, take, borrow or donate books. Who initiated this rural outreach is a mystery to me. With no businesses or churches nearby and no seeming connections to any home within view, it simply exists out of kindness.

Places that create deep roots for the people who live there seem to inspire that kind of action. I see it all the time. When people feel connected, they aren’t afraid to treat strangers as friends.

Although my friend, Teresa, worked in downtown Pittsburgh, she grew up and got anchored in a quiet, wooded neighborhood outside the city. She buys and carries extra umbrellas in her car for soggy strangers anywhere, whether waiting in the rain at bus stops or slogging their way home with their groceries.

My rock guy, Tom, gives bags of tumbled stones to kids, assortments that often include a few shark teeth. A retired teacher, he knows it might be more than a moment’s amusement; his gift could fire up a future geologist or jewelry designer.

My computer guy, Don, runs a small business with a tiny footprint but heavy foot traffic. As a kindness, especially for all the harried delivery drivers who face each day as a race, he plunked down a fridge just inside his shop door. It’s always stocked with cold drinks for anyone popping in.

My friend, Lynn, lives in the only house at the end of a long lane off a country road. For years, she’s been leaving bags of candy for the crew who picks up her trash as a “thank you” for making the trek. She also hands out

wrapped candy to traffic flaggers and others she sees stopped along her way. It wipes away the weary for a bit, I suspect. When she shared her roadside tales with a friend, he started his own kindness crusade in Minnesota.

“It’s such a tiny thing,” Lynn says, “but it’s such an investment. You can see instantly how one small gesture like that can change the direction of someone’s day, including your own.”

Sometimes, changing the direction of a day means picking up strangers, even if they’re not the same species.

One sweltering August morning, I walked into a local pharmacy to find two employees fussing over the contents of a discarded ice cream dish. One woman held the dish while another slowly poured water into it, one gentle drop at a time. I had to ask why.

When they opened for business that Monday morning, they said they found a little toad that had been stuck between the glass doors all weekend, trapped in that awful heat. They were doing their best to rehydrate the tiny critter, which I swear was wearing a look of relief and gratitude when I peered in.

It’s funny how familiar things resonate differently over time. While rewatching Peter Jackson’s movie adaptation of J.R.R. Tolkien’s “The

Hobbit” recently, one scene instantly reminded me of my friends. The wizard Gandalf was asked why he chose Bilbo, a tiny hobbit, to be part of a dangerous journey to end an encroaching darkness. Others thought overcoming great evil demanded great power.

“That is not what I have found,” was Gandalf’s cinematic reply. “I’ve found it is the small things, everyday deeds of ordinary folk, that keep the darkness at bay. Small acts of kindness and love.”

I agree. To all the ordinary folk quietly offering kindness in our world every day, thank you. 🐸

YVONNE BUTTS-MITCHELL



YVONNE BUTTS-MITCHELL celebrates the joys and poignant moments of rural living under the pen name Mitchell Kyd. Her stories from the Path Valley Hotel were hatched by encounters with contractors, critters and creepy crawlies while rehabbing the family cabin after its 17-year stint as a giant closet.



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While We Were Away

STEVE PIATT

IT'S NOT EASY to find true wilderness these days, at least from the standpoint of losing all contact with the outside world. Those places exist, but so does cell service via satellite or contact via Garmin InReach communications.

I guess that's not a bad thing; emergencies can and do happen out there. But there's a big difference between being able to call for help if you're lost or injured and checking your phone to see if the Phillies won last night.

It didn't used to be that way. When Paula and I began our wilderness adventuring by canoe — and even once by dog sled — there really was no contact with the outside world. Cellphones were in their infancy and about the size of a stick of firewood. And even in town, service was spotty at best.

So when we paddled from lake to lake in northern Ontario and Minnesota, flew into a Newfoundland moose camp or a Canadian fishing spot, we were truly disconnected from the outside world for a week or longer.

And typically, when we returned to civilization, we learned that *something* had happened while we were away.

Maybe it was simply that the world didn't stop turning while we were checked out from it, but it seemed the timing of our adventures coincided, incredibly, with some fairly major world events. Or maybe we just sought these special places so often, the odds were good that big news awaited upon our return.

In July 1990, Paula and I emerged from the bush to word that the stock market was in the throes of a "mini-crash," as the economists labeled it. We were young and didn't much



GETTING AWAY: Steve Piatt disconnects from the rest of the world to focus on the beauty of the wilderness and the thrill of the hunt for mountain goats in British Columbia.

blink at the 401(k) losses. Instead, we simply planned another trip a month later.

Paula and I then enjoyed an arduous paddle-and-portage canoe trip through Ontario's Algonquin Provincial Park. As we always did, we exited the wilderness in search of pizza and huge glasses of milk, as well as lengthy hot showers, and learned the U.S. was at war — as in, the Gulf War.

Sometimes, we headed off the grid knowing full well we were going to miss some major events, at least to a sports junkie like myself. A Canadian outing in June to hopefully photograph big bull moose overlapped with the U.S. Open golf championship, which was to be the last for the great Arnold Palmer. But there was more: As we plunged into the wilderness, O.J. Simpson was riding in a white Ford Bronco on a Los Angeles freeway. We got some great photos of moose, lost some blood to the black flies and mosquitoes, and learned the outcome of the chase a few days later.

These days, we've accepted and even embraced the technological advancements that allow us to connect with the outside world. It's especially

useful when Paula is back home while I'm hunting or fishing in Alaska, British Columbia, Newfoundland, and other special places to which we gravitate.

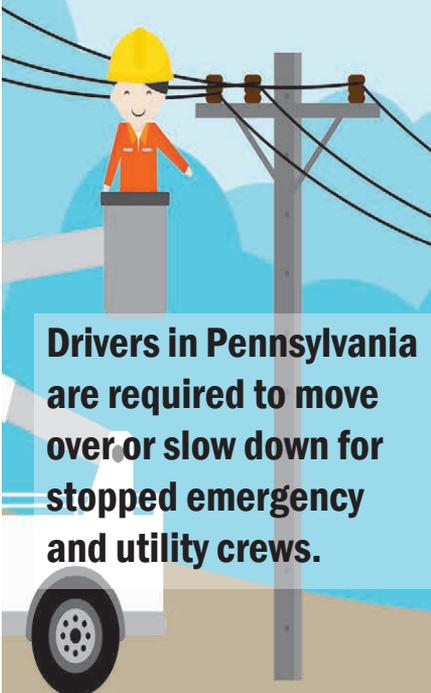
I've listened to a high school football game while tucked away in a tent on a mountain in Washington state during an elk hunt in the massive Pinchot National Forest; kept a fairly steady commentary with Paula while tagging along on a buddy's Newfoundland moose hunt, using a satellite connection on the cellphone; and when I downed a mountain goat high above Alaska's Prince William Sound, my guide sent along a brief InReach message: "Big billy down." Paula received it in the middle of the night and spread the word to my hunting friends in the morning.

When we're out there, as we so often are, we try to avoid connecting with the outside world, even though we know we can.

I can check golf scores and baseball standings when I get home. 📶

STEVE PIATT is a veteran newspaper editor and outdoor writer who along with his wife, Paula, has hunted and fished across North America. He is most at home on the water and in the fields of the Keystone State. He lives in Bradford County.

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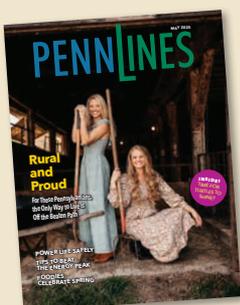


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LISTEN NOW





GIVING BACK: Last year, Sullivan County Rural Electric Cooperative employees participated in a Thanksgiving Meal Food Drive for the Sullivan County Food Pantry. Front row, from left, are employees Lindsay Fitch, Heidi Roupp, Kim Phillips and Diane White with the food pantry's Barb Davis. Back row, from left, are employees Tyler Worthen, Kevin Johnson, Shane Kline, Tom Livezey, Dave Kepner, Darrick Higley, Josh Heess, Kendall Achey, Lori Williams, Jeff Spako, Nolan Chase, Alex Laudermilch and Todd Molyneux.

it all goes back to buying more produce from local farmers for the next week.

Year-round giving

In the same corner of the state, Northwestern REC works with the Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwestern Pennsylvania.

“They’ve been great partners, and they’ve done a great job of supporting our pantry network,” Second Harvest Executive Director Greg Hall says. “They do everything ... the big things during the holiday season ... they donated \$5,000 to local pantries [eight, in all] ... and there’s a lot of fundraising and food support. They really lean into the communities they serve.”

Amber Till, still relatively new to the co-op’s staff, is excited to be able to give back.

“That was one of my roles I was really excited about: that I could jump right in with our sponsorships and donations; that’s how we show our concern for the community,” she says.

The co-op routinely buys livestock at the annual Crawford County Fair 4-H Auction, processes the meat and holds a raffle for members, with the proceeds going to its Member-to-Member program that helps with electric bills. Last year, a portion of the meat from a second purchase went to local food pantries. The cooperative’s

back-to-school supply drives also help free up family budgets for food, and year-round financial donations to community organizations keep pantry shelves stocked beyond the holiday “giving season.”

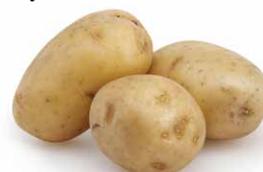
“You’re not just hungry at Thanksgiving. You’re not just hungry at Christmas. It’s easy to think about those big-feast events, but it’s essential that there’s food available all the time,” says Till, who is organizing donation events in conjunction with the co-op’s 90th anniversary celebration this year. “We’re continuing to raise funds for our Member-to-Member fund, which is available year-round. It doesn’t necessarily help with food, but if we can alleviate the need to put all of your money toward your electric bill, that leaves money for the grocery store.

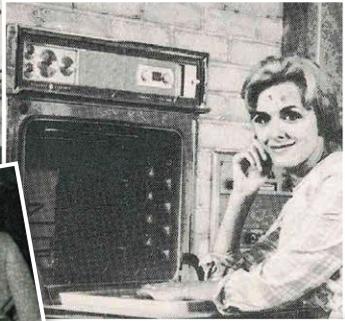
“We’ll also continue to support organizations in the community that help with food insecurity.”

Personally? She volunteers with the Pay-What-You-Can Farmstands when she can.

“It’s a beautiful, beautiful project,” she says. “I’m grateful for what I have now and grateful that I’m in a position where I can help. That’s so important, particularly for people who have great jobs working at a cooperative. It’s important to remember that not everybody has that and to give back as much as we can.”

Even if it’s just one bunch of basil at a time. 🍅





60 Years of Penn Lines in FOCUS

WITH A SINGLE PHOTO, we can show in an instant what might otherwise take an entire page of words to tell. With 60 years behind us, *Penn Lines* has amassed a treasure trove of stories — nearly all accompanied by photographs that capture the essence of each tale.

As these images have been gathered and archived over the decades, they reveal — in black and white and color, too — the growth of rural electric cooperatives and the communities they serve. They also trace the evolution of *Penn Lines* itself, from a newsletter focused on energy and politics to a news magazine celebrating and reporting on rural Pennsylvania, its people, and places. Much has changed over the years, but one thing remains the same: *Penn Lines* will always be the magazine you come home to.

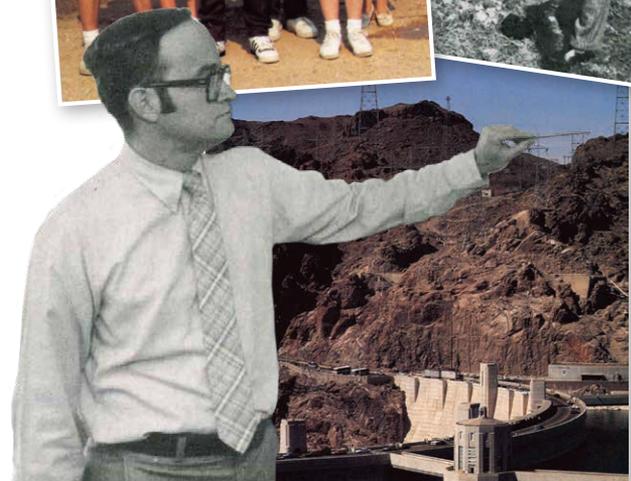
1960s The earliest issues of *Penn Lines* focused on the politics of rural electrification and efforts to level the playing field for rural communities, not just in Pennsylvania, but across the nation and even around the globe.

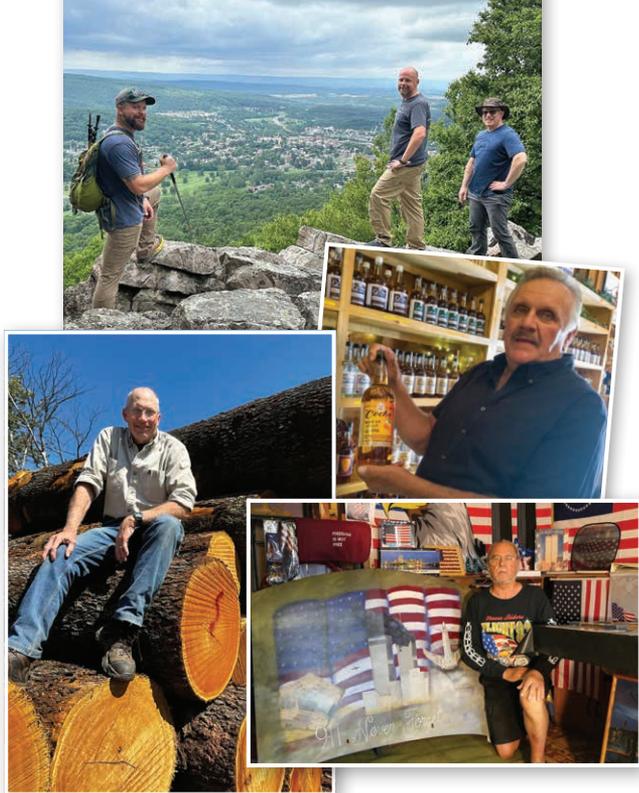


1980s The pages of *Penn Lines* during this decade reflected on the history of rural electrification, as well as new efforts from both the distribution cooperatives and Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc., the wholesale energy provider for cooperatives.



1970s In its second decade, *Penn Lines* began showing more of the communities and the members at the end of the line.





2020s Early into this decade, *Penn Lines* went through another redesign. We're only halfway through, and we've already shown rural life during a pandemic, explored the best-kept secrets of the Commonwealth and gotten ourselves into some crazy competitions. But even with a new look and new stories to tell, we still draw strength from remembering where we've come from and what our rural communities have been through the past 60 years.

2010s *Penn Lines* maintained its look and feel throughout the second decade of the 21st century, covering emerging technologies, such as electric vehicles and broadband deployment, while taking a look back at how rural traditions, like beekeeping and volunteer fire companies, were keeping up with the times.



2000s This decade, marking the end of the 20th century, brought more photos into *Penn Lines* as the magazine highlighted stories about growing industries and timeless attractions.



1990s *Penn Lines* became more colorful, adding feature stories ranging from member hobbies and conservation efforts to political representation. And, of course, photos printed regularly in full color.



Clean Up on Aisle 5

JOHN KASUN

MY WIFE AND I HAVE ALWAYS shared the responsibilities of being married. I try to help around the house, and she helps me when I need an extra hand on a project. But there are also things we each take care of individually as well. One of those is shopping for groceries, and for that, my wife is in charge. Once you get past milk, bread, butter, or ketchup, I always seem to get the wrong brand, wrong size, or wrong color produce that is too ripe or not ripe enough. I was born at night, but not last night, and I learned early in our marriage not to do the grocery shopping unless my wife provides a list with specific details — including pictures, if possible.

Recently while running errands, my wife added a quick stop at the grocery store to the list. I decided to tag along, hoping to learn firsthand from an expert the things I always seem to get wrong. I like to say I was grocery shopping; however, my wife might describe it differently as I believe she would just as soon leave me in the car. According to her, I tend to be a giant version of a 5-year-old, constantly wandering away and causing her to spend most of her time searching for me.

In one of those intimate conversations men and women have in the privacy of their bedroom, she once confided in me that every time she hears, “Clean up on Aisle 5,” her only thought is, “What did he do now?” If they were not so hard to push, I think she would make me ride in one of those carts designed for kids that look like a fire truck so she could keep track of me.

She also says I am always talking to people, and I must admit I am guilty as charged. The problem is if I am not stopping other people, they are stopping me, and that is exactly what occurred on this trip.

As we entered the store, my wife stressed, “Now, stay with me, and don’t start talking. We have a lot to do today, and we need to keep moving.”

Working our way down the first aisle, a woman walked past and by the look she gave me, I knew she recognized me. We had only made it a few steps when I heard a voice behind us saying, “Excuse me.”

We hesitated as she turned her cart around and blurted out, “Are you the man who writes that column in the local paper? I want you to know that I just love it. I told my husband you should be published nationally, but I am so glad we have you all to ourselves.”

Turning to my wife, she added, “You’re so lucky. He

must be a real joy to live with.” I appreciated her comments and thanked her but could hardly stop from laughing out loud as I could see the wheels inside of my wife’s head spinning out of control.

A short time later, as my wife pushed her cart toward the checkout, she looked at me and said, “That woman has no idea how confusing living with you can be. I never know what you are thinking, what you are going to say or what you may do next. Every time I see that little smirk on your face, I know something weird is going on inside your

head. As a matter of fact, I see that look right now! What are you thinking?”

Barely able to contain myself, I said, “Actually, I was just wondering if patients in a nudist colony hospital have to wear one of those stupid hospital gowns?”

“What am I going to do with you?” she replied with her eyes rolling back in her head. Just then, as if it were a message direct from heaven, the loudspeaker blared, “Clean up on Aisle 5.” Turning toward me, she demanded, “What did you do?”



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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- Ad copy as it is to appear in the publication.
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CLEARFIELD COUNTY - 25 ACRES, 3,240-sq. ft. office building with living suite, two garages, sawmill, \$489,000. Near Cook Forest - two acres, \$59,000. Cambria County - 18.2 acres, field, gas well, \$99,000. Near Glendale Lake - Newly built cabin with utilities on 2.48 acres, \$238,000. Clearfield County - 502 acres, timber, streams, \$1,399,000. www.timberlandrealty.net. Ron Westover: 724-422-5525, 716-962-9935.

TIMESHARE CANCELLATION

STOP BEING A TIMESHARE VICTIM! TimeShareBeGone will get your timeshare legally cancelled. 100% money-back guarantee. A+ BBB rating, 17 years in business. Low payment plans. Call 800-214-4460, timesharebegone.com.

TOOLS & EQUIPMENT

HEAVY-DUTY 15-AMP DEWALT 13" THICKNESS PLANNER, corded. Model 735X. Two speeds, three knives, in/out feed tables, and mobile thickness planer stand. \$650. Gettysburg, Pa. 240-678-8886.

TRACTOR PARTS - REPAIR/RESTORATION

ARTHURS TRACTORS. Specializing in vintage Ford tractors, 30 years' experience, online parts catalog/prices, Indiana, PA 15701. Contact us at 877-254-FORD (3673) or www.arthurstractors.com.

TRAVEL & TOURISM

NEW SMYRNA BEACH, FLORIDA, oceanfront condo rental. Two-bedroom, two-bath, deck overlooking beach and pool. \$995/week or \$3,600/month. No pets. Not available Jan. - Mar. Call 814-635-4332 or 814-979-8058.

BEACH VACATION! HILTON HEAD ISLAND, SC! CONDO: Two bedrooms, two baths. Economical getaway! Complex amenities: private beach access, pools, hot tub, clubhouse, tennis, pickleball. Snowbirds: spring or summervacations! Call 814-431-5540.

WANTED TO BUY

ANTIQUe AND CLASSIC American and foreign cars, motorcycles, trucks, Broncos, Blazers and Scouts. Any condition. Will buy entire car collections. krmiller1965@yahoo.com. 717-577-8206.

ANTIQUe AND CLASSIC motorcycles wanted. All makes and sizes. BSA, Norton, Triumph, Honda, Yamaha, Suzuki, Kawasaki, etc. krmiller1965@yahoo.com. 717-577-8206.

COLLECTORS BUYING PRE-WAR AND POST-WAR Lionel® trains, accessories, Plasticville® buildings, Transformers®, etc. Buying pieces to entire collections. Call Mick, 814-656-1634 or John, 814-937-9052.

WORLD WAR II MEMORABILIA wanted by a private collector and veteran. Medals, helmets, hats, uniforms, knives, swords. American, German, and Japanese. Call 814-341-0354, leave a message.

STATUE OF LIBERTY. Preferably metal. Five to seven feet tall. Will give it a good home. 717-385-9791.

LOOKING TO BUY ADVERTISING ITEMS such as signs, clocks, thermometers, globes and gas pumps. Gas and oil, soda, beer, etc. Please call or text 814-952-5449.

GENERATOR

Safety

FOLLOW THESE TIPS TO ENSURE EVERYONE'S SAFETY:

- Make sure there is **nothing plugged into the generator when turning it on**. Use a **heavy-duty** extension cord to connect appliances to the outlets on the generator.
- Always operate the generator on a stable, dry surface **outside the home**—out and away from the garage, doors, windows, and vents into your home. The carbon monoxide the generator produces is **DEADLY**.
- **Never** connect your portable generator to the home directly. This can result in **potentially deadly backfeed**, which happens when electricity is fed back through the electrical system onto power lines, creating a hazard for line workers and others.

Learn more at:  Safe Electricity.org



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The Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association (PREA)
Scholarship Trust Fund proudly presents the



JODY LOUDENSLAGER SCHOLARSHIP

for the 2026-27 academic year.

ATTENTION FORMER YOUTH TOUR STUDENTS:

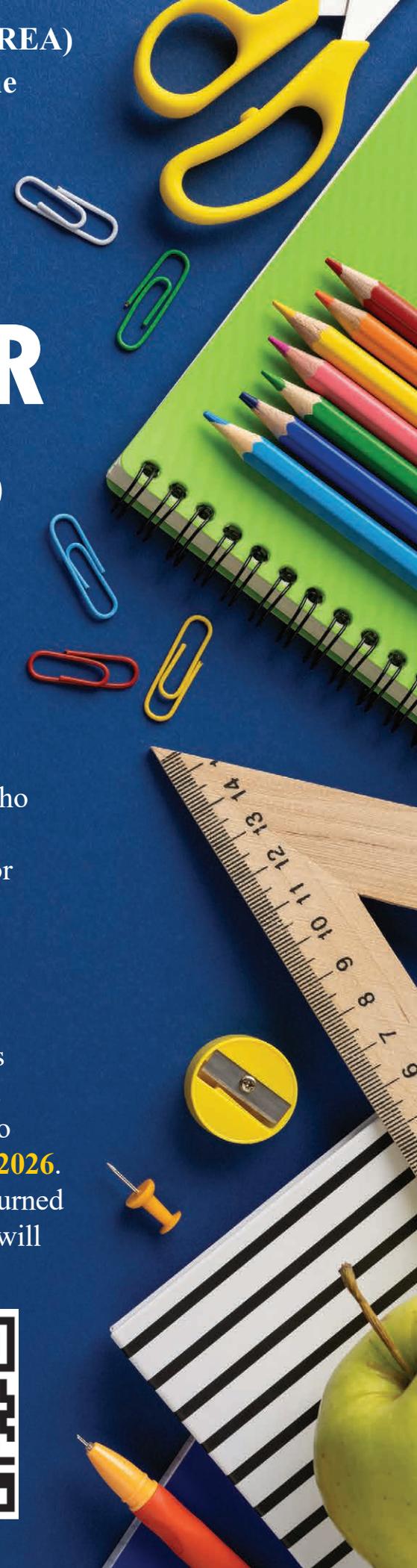
The **JODY LOUDENSLAGER SCHOLARSHIP** is available to any college-bound or current college student who was selected to participate in the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association Youth Tour program. Scan the QR code below for more information about the scholarship and the application.

REQUIREMENTS & DATES TO REMEMBER:

Applicants are required to furnish necessary aptitude test scores and transcripts (high school or unofficial college, if applicable). All applications and required documentation must be emailed to Steph Okuniewski (email address below) no later than **May 4, 2026**. Finalists will be sent a follow-up questionnaire that must be returned by **June 8, 2026**. Scholarship recipients, notified in July 2026, will be featured in the October 2026 *Penn Lines* issue.

QUESTIONS:

Steph Okuniewski
Member Engagement Specialist
Stephanie_Okuniewski@prea.com
717.982.1455



Goodbye, Winter

AS WE OFFICIALLY BID ADIEU to winter this month, there's no denying that it left us with a bevy of memorable scenes. Be it chilly walks in the snow or a dog and cat finding time to cuddle away the cold weather, the last few months have left quite an impression. Now, as the season fades from winter to spring, take some photos and submit them to our 2026 Rural Reflections contest. 📷



MARY CARLSON • UNITED EC



KYLIE MANNING • REA ENERGY



ANGELA HOCKENBERRY • VALLEY REC



SUELLEN WALLS • NEW ENTERPRISE REC

How to enter

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

Remember, our publication deadlines require that we work ahead, so send your seasonal photos to us early. We need summer photos before mid-May, fall photos before mid-July and winter photos before mid-September. Please note: Starting this year, we will not be returning any physical photos mailed to our office. Therefore, if you mail a photo, please make sure it's a print, not an original.

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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