

JUNE 2023

PENNLINES

Off the Beaten Path

Discover Lots of Hidden Gems on a Pennsylvania Road Trip

THREE SURPRISING
FACTS ABOUT
ENERGY EFFICIENCY

RAINSCAPE THE
YARD?

NEVER FEAR A
STRAWBERRY

INSIDE!
OUR
READERS
REACT

“I haven’t been this excited since I got my first bicycle!”

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Sincerely, A. Macon, Williamsburg, VA

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ON THE COVER

A trail leads to Hawn's Overlook at Raystown Lake – home to the Raystown Hydroelectric Plant that provides energy to rural electric cooperatives – in Huntingdon County.

PHOTO BY
MICHAEL T. CRAWFORD

Striking the Right Balance: Ensuring Reliability for the 21st Century



FLIPPING ON A LIGHT SWITCH is something most of us probably take for granted. But sending those electrons on their way from the power plant to that light switch in your hallway is no small feat. That complex network of power lines and wires, substations and transformers has to work together perfectly to turn on that light the instant you need it. It's no wonder the electric grid is often cited as the greatest engineering achievement of the 20th century. The question today is: Can the grid handle the 21st century?

Recent strains on the grid have made reliability a key concern for the energy industry. Last December, Winter Storm Elliott brought record-breaking temperatures to our region — and increased electricity demand as we all tried to stay warm. On Christmas Eve, our regional grid operator, PJM Interconnection, issued an emergency alert across its 13-state region to conserve power. While our electric cooperatives fared well for the most part, nine states had to implement rolling blackouts — temporary power outages that are intentionally undertaken to reduce strain on the grid. In total, more than 7 million homes had to endure outages over the Christmas holiday. This event follows a similar winter storm event in 2021 that brought the Texas grid to near collapse.

These recent events have driven agencies like the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) and the North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC) to sound alarm bells about grid reliability. Testifying before the U.S. Congress, FERC officials warned of a “looming reliability crisis” in this country. NERC recently issued its highest-level alert ever in asking energy providers to prepare now for winter to avoid major outage disruptions that will have “very real human consequences.”

How did we get here? In addition to the severe weather events we have been experiencing, several policy and market factors are contributing to grid concerns. First, we are in the midst of transitioning to an all-electric economy, driven predominantly by the push for more electric vehicles. The more we electrify, the more we will be asking of our grid.

Second, we're doing this at the same time we're pulling more generation sources off the grid than we're putting on-line. Supply chain issues and the slow permitting process for getting new generation and transmission on-line continue to hamper this energy transition. Recent environmental proposals to further limit carbon emissions will likely see more power plants close — without enough renewable resources ready to replace them, resulting in a dangerous imbalance. With greater demand competing for fewer resources, the math doesn't add up. And when that happens, the lights go out.

A lot of things have to work together to turn on a light. Keeping the lights on is a matter of reliability. It's a matter of striking the right balance between energy and environmental goals — an effort that's going to require everybody working together. Fortunately, that's what cooperatives are great at. Your cooperative is working with the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association, Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc. and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association to raise these reliability concerns with policymakers and elected officials. Our message to them is simple: There has to be a balanced approach to this energy transition — a balance to ensure we maintain reliability moving forward, a balance to ensure the grid is ready for the 21st century. 🌱

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A LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL

Last month, *Penn Lines* explored a deep – and, some would say, deeply hidden – topic: stress and depression among Pennsylvania's farm workers.

It's a very personal topic, too, and quite frankly, we weren't sure if we would be able to find someone who would talk openly about their experiences. And then along came Jesse Phillips, a young Bradford County farmer with close ties to Sullivan County Rural Electric Cooperative (REC).

"If sharing my story helps just one person ... one farmer ... then that's what I want to do," he told us on a chilly spring morning in between posing for photos at Sugar Branch Farms in Troy, where he's the herd manager.

Jesse's story about his struggles with depression certainly touched our readers, many of whom thanked us and writer Paula Piatt for shining a light on a serious issue. (You can read a sampling of their comments on page 7.)

Because the truth is, Jesse Phillips isn't alone – something the state Department of Agriculture and other farm organizations here and across the country are trying to bring into the open. They're offering help, too, like a toll-free hotline staffed with counselors who understand the ups and downs of farm life. Local healthcare providers are also eager to provide support.

Why? Because the statistics are alarming: Agricultural workers are twice as likely as those in other occupations to die by suicide, a recent study found.

Jesse Phillips admitted he had dark thoughts of his own, but he pulled through with support from his family and friends, including his mom's co-workers at Sullivan County REC. In true cooperative spirit, the staff pooled their money to pay for gas so she could visit Jesse in the hospital – something he says he'll never forget.

Five years later, Jesse is a father of three and has made a comeback – proof that there is light at the end of the tunnel.

He's also proof that farmers, known for their thick skin and independence, have soft spots, too. And, as Jesse says, true strength comes from asking for help, not resisting it.



Jill Ercolino

JILL M. ERCOLINO
MANAGING EDITOR



SPERANZA ANIMAL RESCUE

WHAT IS IT?: Found along a road in central Pennsylvania recently, this wayward creature – thought at first to be a “monster” – gets some rest at a local shelter. The lizard, now nicknamed “Monster,” has since been identified as a savannah monitor, thanks to a viral social media post.

LOST LIZARD

Delivery driver finds ‘monster’ in Cumberland County

A delivery driver recently spotted what he called a “monster” on a road near Carlisle in central Pennsylvania, and thanks to a viral social media post that drew national attention, the unusual lizard-like creature has been identified as a savannah monitor.

The driver took the creature, aptly named “Monster” by its fans, to a local animal shelter, which has since found a new home for the lizard at the Venom Institute, a Lehigh Valley-based nonprofit.

A SLOW GO

Download speeds increase in rural Pennsylvania, but still lag behind urban areas

Between 2021 and 2022, average download cellular speeds in rural Pennsylvania increased 59% — from 54 megabits per second to 86 megabits per second — according to information from the Center for Rural Pennsylvania (Center).

Despite the increase, the average rates in Pennsylvania's urban areas were more than twice as fast as those

in the Commonwealth's rural areas. The urban average is 199 megabits per second, the Center says.

The Center's analysis of 2022 data also showed cellular speeds in rural Pennsylvania were similar to those in other rural regions of the United States, where the rate is 85 megabits per second.

For more information about the cell speeds, visit the Center's website, rural.pa.gov.

WE WON!

Penn Lines earns Spotlight award

Penn Lines recently received a Spotlight on Excellence Award at the 2023 Connect Conference in Jacksonville, Fla., hosted by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA).

The monthly news magazine, read by more than 400,000 rural electric cooperative consumers, earned the second-place Silver Award in the category of “Best External News Publication.”

The annual awards program, sponsored by NRECA and the Council of Rural Electric Communicators,

recognizes the best communication and marketing efforts by electric cooperatives and related organizations. Nearly 600 entries were submitted.

READER RESPONSES

Penn Lines readers react to recent articles

About April's "By the Book" feature on rural libraries:

Dear Editor:

Penn Lines contributor Kathy Hackleman scored a touchdown writing about "rural libraries that fill a void" in the April edition. I witness the success of these rural libraries first-hand when I visit my closest and beloved Fairfield Library. Combining the efforts and services of our rural libraries with the mission of Adams Electric Cooperative is a marriage made in heaven and I, for one, am so thankful for this linkage.

Kathy A. Megyeri

Adams Electric Cooperative



About May's "Seeds of Support" feature on farmers battling depression:

Dear Editor:

A special heartfelt thank you for the recent cover story on farmers battling depression. We can never do enough to support our farmers. Well done with such a vitally important subject.

Donna Martin

Valley Rural Electric Cooperative

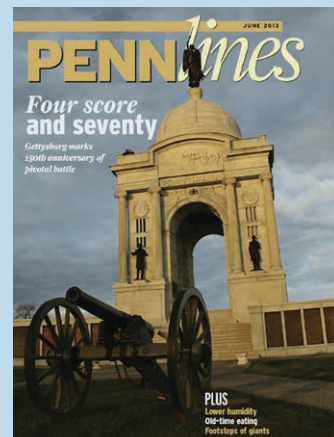


Dear Editor,

I read the article about help for farmers battling depression. I am the director of behavioral health at Hyndman Area Health Center. We are located in areas where there are many farms; it may [be] easier for someone to reach out [to us] for help, rather than a national organization. The Bedford address is 104 Railroad St., and the phone number is 814-263-5804. Other offices are in Hyndman, Everett and Johnstown.

Dr. Rebecca S. Coleman

TIME LINES



JUNE 2013

Ten years ago, residents of Gettysburg – the site of the iconic Civil War battle – were bracing for another invasion. This one, however, was more welcome as the town and visitors prepared to commemorate the battle's 150th anniversary. Two hundred new presentations, all free to the public, were planned. The Gettysburg area is part of the territory served by Adams Electric Cooperative.

JUNE



GETTING SQUATCHY

Looking for a scary good time? Why not check out the 2023 Forest County Bigfoot Festival, June 9-11, in Marienville. Events include a bigfoot hunt, bigfoot calling contest and biggest foot contest. Learn more at forestcountymbigfootfestival.com.

BRING ON THE BLUEGRASS

Cross Fork, in the heart of the Pennsylvania Wilds, is the place to be June 15-17 when the Smoked Country Jam Bluegrass Festival comes to town. The family-friendly benefit event promises 22 performers and 42 hours of music. Learn more at smokedcountryjam.com.



TREAT DAD TO A POWWOW

On Father's Day weekend, take a road trip to Forksville, home base of Sullivan County Rural Electric Cooperative, for the 31st Annual Forksville PowWow, June 17-18, at the Sullivan County Fairgrounds. Native American dancing and music will be featured. Learn more at the Forksville PowWow's Facebook page.

A CHOCOLATE BLOCK PARTY

The beloved Hershey's Chocolate World is turning 50 and marking the milestone with an all-day block party bash June 30, the exact day the attraction opened back in 1973. The party will run from 9 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. at Chocolate World. Learn more at chocolateworld.com



OFF THE BEATEN PATH

Discover Lots of Hidden Gems on
a Pennsylvania Road Trip

MICHAEL T. CRAWFORD

SERENE SCENE: Raystown Lake, as seen from Hawn's Overlook on the northern side of the lake, is surrounded by campgrounds and nature trails, and is a vacation destination for all kinds of travelers. The lake even provides hydroelectric energy to rural electric cooperatives across the Commonwealth, thanks to the cooperative-owned Raystown Hydroelectric Plant.

POP CULTURE HAS PRONOUNCED DECEMBER as the most wonderful time of the year, but let's make a case for June as a close second. June is, after all, vacation season. Children will soon be out of school (if they haven't been set free already) and that means you can go wherever you want. And it will be warm.

So buckle up — it's time to take a road trip.

There's plenty of fun to be had just bolting out the door and driving, biking or hiking to wherever fate takes you, but most of the time it's helpful to have a general idea of where you want to go — a final destination with some stops along the way.

The beach, for example, remains a staple of the summer vacation destination.

While Pennsylvania may not have an ocean, it does

have plenty of lakes for travelers to enjoy. One of the most popular and largest is Raystown Lake — home of the Raystown Hydroelectric Plant, which provides about 3% of all electricity used by Pennsylvania rural electric cooperative consumer-members. Located in Huntingdon County, the lake is rife with aquatic attractions, from the Seven Points Marina to the Tatman Run Beach and onward to the Wildriver Water Park, served by Huntingdon-based Valley Rural Electric Cooperative (REC).

The Raystown region also features plenty of attractions on land, including campgrounds, trail systems and educational programs.

But if you're looking for something slightly different, the Keystone State has tons of other things to do that suit every interest, from railroading to plain old relaxing. And





RESTFUL RETREAT: Patrick and Jaime Horne, members of Huntingdon-based Valley Rural Electric Cooperative, operate the Red Roof & Rail Bed & Breakfast in Rockhill.



MOSTLY STEAM AHEAD: A member of the East Broad Top Railroad Foundation guides a diesel engine across a wide, busy street in Rockhill in Huntingdon County. The engine is the only train not original to the railroad fleet, which includes five steam engines.

many of these places — let's call them hidden gems — can be found in areas served by Pennsylvania's electric cooperatives.

But, first, you have to get there — in mind and body.

It's all about the journey

For many of us, getting into relaxation mode can be as stressful as getting out of it, especially when trying to shift gears directly from work mode to vacation mode.

To reduce the potential for frustration, don't just settle for pit stops at gas stations. Instead, make the stops part of the adventure. Start with something relatively close to home and generally light on crowds. In Adams County, the Strawberry Hill Nature Preserve and Environmental Center is a good example.

Founded in 1986 to clean up and preserve the Swamp Creek Watershed in Fairfield, Strawberry Hill is surrounded by lush forests, gentle streams and carefully manicured walking and hiking trails. It also offers recreational and educational opportunities year-round. This summer, the center will be hosting nighttime hikes coinciding with full moons to highlight critters active at night, plus a special guided hike for Girl Scouts — the Summertime Forests Day on June 10 — to teach them about insect, flower and tree identification.

"With this program, we designed it so that anybody who is in the Girl Scouts will actually earn a Brownie badge, a Junior badge or Cadet badge because our curriculum meets the requirements," says Anne Gageby, environmental education manager for Strawberry Hill, which is served by Gettysburg-based Adams Electric Cooperative. "We're having our first Glow Party on June 24, where we're going to celebrate everything bioluminescent.

"I'm so stoked about this — it's going to be awesome," she adds. "We're going to talk about fireflies and unique adaptations, we're going to be playing nature games ... our plan is to light up Mount Hope."

Strawberry Hill also boasts two of the Commonwealth's rare "exceptional value streams" — pure bodies of water deemed by the state Department of Environmental Protection to be essential to clean watersheds, says Gageby, who spent most her life volunteering at Strawberry Hill before taking on her current role.

"One of the things we really try to focus on here is connecting people to nature," she explains. "Not just through programs and experiences, but just through that enjoyment of a pristine environment. Getting out to a place like Strawberry Hill allows you to be able to connect in a different way than going to a crowded park."

If you're road tripping from the northern edges of the state, you have your own gems to enjoy. In the northeast,

there's Worlds End State Park in Forksville, home to Sullivan County REC. The park offers educational programs on top of everything you'd expect to find at a place surrounded by Loyalsock State Forest. This month, young children can participate in the Lil' Sprouts gardening program and learn to plant, care for, and harvest produce.

If you're in the northwest, travelers can stop by Conneaut Lake in Crawford County. Part of Cambridge Springs-based Northwestern REC service territory, the waterway is the largest natural glacier lake in Pennsylvania. Visitors can go for a swim and hop on a boat or stay on dry land at the Conneaut Lake Park for mini golf, amusement park rides, and concerts.

All aboard

Once you're back on the road, it's time to crank up the excitement with one attraction where the Commonwealth has cornered the market: railroads.

"Pennsylvania has the most rail attractions in the nation," explains Jonathan Smith, director of sales and marketing for the East Broad Top (EBT) Railroad Foundation, based in Huntingdon County. "There are heritage railroads everywhere, and if you've seen one, you've seen one."

"We truly believe the EBT is a rare and unique gem, not just here, but internationally — a shining example of a shift from an agrarian society to an industrial one."

Heritage railroads are one of the fastest-growing attractions in the tourism industry, Smith says. The EBT, in particular, stands nearly frozen in time, with all but a single diesel engine original to the station. Reopened in 2020 after nearly 40 years of inactivity, the EBT offers rides on its newly restored passenger cars and steam engine.

"Train rides sit at the heart of many people's needs, but mostly they're just fun," Smith says. "Want to get in touch with history? Ride a train. Want to take a leisure trip? Get on a train. Want to have fun with your kids? Kids are obsessed with two things — dinosaurs and trains — and they rarely outgrow trains."

If you're coming from the opposite side of the state, you can still insert trains into your itinerary with a visit to the Allegheny Portage Railroad in Gallitzin, Cambria County. While trains no longer run at this particular national historic site, the attraction — areas of which are served by REA Energy Cooperative — offers daily summer programs focused on stonecutting, log hewing, rope making, clothing, historic toys and more. Opened in 1834, the railroad served merchants, passengers, slaves in pursuit of freedom and soldiers from the Mexican War, and it marked the first time there was a direct route between Philadelphia and Pittsburgh.



POWER PERSPECTIVE: A set of stairs leads to Ridenour Overlook on the north side of Raystown Lake, where visitors can see the lake's dam and the hydroelectric plant operated by Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc., the wholesale power provider for electric cooperatives in Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

Time to relax

Finding a place to stay — assuming you're not on a camping expedition — can be tricky when taking trips through the rural stretches of Pennsylvania. That is, of course, if you're limiting yourself to hotels. In the digital

Pennsylvania Has so Much More to Explore

A wonderful thing about Pennsylvania is that there is no shortage of destinations wherever you choose to roam. Here are a few alternative adventures:

- History buffs and movie aficionados alike will enjoy the **Jimmy Stewart Museum** in Indiana, Pa., home to REA Energy Cooperative. Honoring the "It's A Wonderful Life" actor, the museum explores Stewart's early life, his military service and his film career, plus you can even catch a matinee of his movies.
- If your adventuring spirit yearns to explore ruins of old, check out the abandoned **Bayless Paper Mill** in Potter County, portions of which receive electricity from Mansfield-based Tri-County Rural Electric Cooperative. Part of the Austin Dam Memorial Park, the mill was first destroyed in 1911 when the Austin Dam broke. It was rebuilt and destroyed again following a fire in 1944.
- If you've never been to the **Pine Creek Gorge Natural Area** in Tioga County — another region served by Tri-County REC — here is your excuse to go visit. Known as the "Pennsylvania Grand Canyon," this National Natural Landmark features the Pine Creek Rail Trail and some of state's most gorgeous waterfalls, like the 50-foot-tall Chimney Hollow Falls.

Whether you're after the great outdoors, sweet treats or just a nice place to unwind, Pennsylvania has something for everyone. You can find more ideas at visitpa.com/trips-and-trails.

Keep Calm and Travel On

No matter how much fun a vacation can be, it can be really easy to end on a sour note. Long travel, unpacking and chores and work coming back into focus can feel like slamming the brakes on what was a peaceful ride. According to a 2019 Healthspan survey, many people find themselves needing a vacation from their vacation — some as many as three days to shake off the stress of a weeklong trip.

“If you’re visiting a place that’s new to you ... your brain is trying to integrate all of that new information and encode it in your memory and make sense of it,” says Dr. Angela Gorman, a licensed clinical psychologist with UPMC Central Pennsylvania in Harrisburg. “Your brain has to deal with all that while managing the stress of planning and keeping up with anything you scheduled. All of those factors can contribute to difficulty or inability to relax at the end of vacation.”

Here are a few suggestions to hold onto the relaxing vibes for as long as you can:

Clean up before you pack up. Taking the time to tidy up and get your home in order will spare you from having to stare down the chores you hate as soon as you get home. You don’t have to make the house sparkle, but tackling your pet peeves before you leave will keep you calm as you drag all your luggage inside.

Pack light and loose. Unpacking suitcases full of worn clothes usually leads to loads of laundry, which can immediately pull the plug on fun and power-up your post-trip anxiety. Assuming the purpose of your travel wasn’t a formal affair, keep everyone’s luggage down to a backpack each (preferably with lots of pockets). As for what you’re packing, go for loose clothing that breathes and can be worn over and over again.

Stop as often as you like. Fight the urge to “just get there” if it puts you in noticeable discomfort. Stiff? Tired? Need to use the bathroom? Take a break! Whether you’re hiking to a campsite or driving to a beach, the journey will become far less stressful if you treat stops as part of the vacation instead of trials to overcome.

Don’t be scared to purge. Your child, your significant other or even you probably have a few pieces of clothing that could probably use a trip to the trash bin. Along the same lines as packing light and loose, pack with things you won’t sweat parting with if you “misplace” them during your travels. Just think of it as one last adventure with that favorite (stained, torn, etc.) shirt. This also makes the next suggestion easier.

Bring back a memory. It may sound like vapid consumerism, but don’t be afraid to buy yourself a little trinket to remember the good times. Absolutely take photos, but something tangible with the potential for a story behind it can keep the good vibes of your vacation alive in your home for a little while longer. You can even take it back with you to work as a conversation starter with your co-workers.

Information courtesy of NomadicMatt.com, PA Junkie, UPMC Central Pennsylvania and our own meandering experiences.

age, you can find an honest-to-goodness house to stay in for less than a typical hotel room.

“There’s no hustle and bustle, there’s no other noises — dingy elevators or maids knocking on your door — you’re on your own schedule,” says Patrick Horne, co-owner of the Red Roof & Rail Bed & Breakfast and member of Valley REC. “I think people enjoy the quiet of it, the ease of it — it can be as hands-free as you’d like. There’s a charm about a house, especially in a small town like we’re in, that a hotel can’t compete with.”

Horne and his wife, Jaime, have their B&B listed on Vrbo.com, an online marketplace for vacation rentals. Situated next to the East Broad Top Railroad, the home offers a fire pit and picnic tables to watch the trains roll past.

“If trains are your thing, you can’t get a nicer place,” promises Horne, a pharmacist in Mount Union.

From here, Raystown Lake isn’t far — barely a half-hour drive. But if by the time you arrive you decide maybe you’d rather stick to woodland strolls, the densely wooded region surrounding the lake offers truly breathtaking views.

That sense of awe, as Gageby puts it, is a vacation experience in itself.

“When you form an emotional connection with nature, people want to protect it,” she says. “It demonstrates to the next generation — to the kids — why this is important.” 🌲



PRISTINE STREAM: A nature trail at the Strawberry Hill Nature Preserve and Environmental Center, served by Gettysburg-based Adams Electric Cooperative, runs alongside Middle Creek in Fairfield, one of the state’s few exceptional value streams.

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Three Surprising Facts About Energy Efficiency

Who knew you could improve your home's energy efficiency with a little innovative thinking – and slaying those electronic vampires?

PAUL WESSLUND

WE'RE MORE ENERGY EFFICIENT THAN you might think. And you may also be surprised to learn that we can do even better with a little innovative thinking and by controlling hidden power users.

Electricity touches our lives nearly every minute of every day and makes up about 5% of the nation's gross domestic product (GDP). It makes sense to use it wisely, whether you're concerned about how it affects the environment or you want to save money. Or both.

CLAY ELLIOT



A SMART INVESTMENT: If your refrigerator or dishwasher is more than 10 years old, the money you can save on energy use with a new appliance could pay for its purchase in just a few years.

Here are three surprising facts about energy efficiency that can help you make the best use of your electricity.

1. Proof of efficiency

A little-known way of measuring efficiency is with a statistic called the energy intensity index. It shows how much energy it takes to produce a dollar of the economy's GDP. Another term that's been used for that idea is energy productivity.

Whatever term you use, the indexes show we're getting better at creating more economic activity with less energy — energy intensity is down, and productivity is up. Way up.

The numbers show energy intensity is about half of what it was 30 years ago. That's because we're making strides in a range of ways, from building codes and lightbulbs to motor vehicle mileage. And these improvements are expected to continue. The U.S. Department of Energy projects energy intensity will decline by 30% over the next 30 years.

2. Out with the old, in with the new

The old phrase "you have to spend money to make money" is catchy because at first, it sounds like it doesn't make sense. But when it comes to appliances that consume a lot of energy, it can make dollars and sense.

From dishwashers to computers, energy efficiency is improving dramatically every year as technology, federal rules and plain old competition give you a better bang for your buck. In fact, if your refrigerator or dishwasher is more than 10 years old, the money you can save on energy use for a new appliance could pay for itself in just a few years.

The yellow Energy Guide labels found on products will tell you how much you can save with a new purchase. Another way to compare the old to the new is to Google "flip your fridge." That will take you to an Energy Star® calculator that will

compare the energy use of your current appliances to what's available in stores.

3. Slaying vampires

Did you know you could be spending \$100 to \$400 a year on energy you don't even need? That frightening fact even comes with scary names: phantom power, or vampire electronics. It's the TV and video games that draw power so they're ready to turn on instantly. It's the digital clocks. It's the computers and phones plugged in even though they're fully charged.

Getting rid of phantom power can be tricky. You probably don't want to regularly shut off your wireless router or constantly reboot your smart TV. But you can plug several devices into a power strip and turn it off when you're not using them. Also, smart power strips are available that will do it for you. When you're shopping for new electronics and appliances, look for the latest Energy Star®-rated models that take vampire loads into account. To start exorcising the phantoms, walk through each room of your home with a notepad and jot down anything that's plugged in. This will help you identify energy-users you might be able to control without causing too much inconvenience.

Phantom power costs do add up, but it's also true your home has much bigger energy users. If you're concerned about energy costs, make sure your heating and cooling system is up to date and working efficiently and that your windows and doors aren't leaking air.

Your electric co-op can advise you on the most effective steps for energy savings — they're your local leading authority on home energy use. And that's no surprise. 🦋

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

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Efficiency Tips for Residential Well Pumps

MIRANDA BOUTELLE

DEAR MIRANDA: I get my water supply from my own well. How can I use less electricity with my well?

A: The energy a residential well system uses depends on the equipment and water use. The homeowner is responsible for maintaining the well, ensuring drinking water is safe and paying for the electricity needed to run the well pump. Here are steps to improve and maintain your residential well and use less electricity.

Get your well system inspected

If you're concerned about how much you pay to pump water from your well, start with an inspection.

Similar to heating and cooling systems, well pumps are put to work daily, and parts will wear over time. Regular maintenance can improve efficiency and increase the lifespan of the system.

The proper system design and sizing can save energy. Oversizing equipment can waste energy. Ask a professional if your well equipment is properly sized for your needs. In some cases, adding a variable-speed drive can save energy.

Keep in mind, well systems don't last forever. Consider design and sizing before the existing system fails.

Things can go wrong with your well that are hard to spot. The water system may even act normally with good water pressure and flow while using more energy and causing higher bills.

One of the most common causes of increased energy use is underground water-line leakage between the pump and the home. Water lines can freeze and break or be damaged by digging or a vehicle driving over them. Other issues can include waterlogged pressure tanks and malfunctioning equipment. Even if your well is in good working order, there are practices you can implement to save on your electric bill.

Save money by lowering your water use

The less water you use, the less energy you use. Here's how you can conserve water and electricity with your home appliances:

Toilets. Check your toilet for leaks by putting a few drops of food coloring in the tank. If the color appears in the bowl without flushing, your toilet has a leak. This is likely caused by a worn flapper, which is an inexpensive and easy do-it-yourself fix.

If your toilets were installed before 1994, they are likely using more than four gallons per flush, which is well above the new energy standards of

1.6 gallons. The average family can save nearly 13,000 gallons per year by replacing old, inefficient toilets with WaterSense-labeled models.

Another option is the tried-and-true plastic bottle method. Place sand or pebbles into a one- or two-liter bottle and place it in your toilet tank or buy toilet tank bags. This results in less water filling the tank and less water being flushed.

Dishwasher. If you wash dishes by hand, start using your dishwasher instead. Did you know new Energy Star®-certified dishwashers use less than half the energy it takes to wash dishes by hand? According to the U.S. Department of Energy, this simple change in habit can save more than 8,000 gallons of water each year.

Washing machine. Run your machine only with full loads to save water and energy. You may also consider upgrading to an Energy Star®-certified washing machine, which uses about 20% less energy and about 30% less water than regular washers.

Showerheads and faucets. Get leaky showerheads and faucets fixed. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, a leaky faucet that drips at the rate of one drip per second can waste more than 3,000 gallons of water per year.

Faucet and shower aerators are inexpensive devices that reduce the amount of water flow. For maximum water efficiency, look for faucet aerators with no more than one gallon-per-minute (GPM) flow rates and low-flow showerhead flow rates of less than two GPM.

Understanding proper well system design, maintenance and water conservation will help you save. ♻️

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

MARK GILLILAND, PIONEER UTILITY RESOURCES



SWITCH SHOWERHEADS: Switch to a low-flow showerhead with flow rates of less than two gallons per minute for maximum water efficiency.

Field Dress For Success

The hunt for the perfect outdoorsman knife is over. There's only one tool you need: the Whitetail™ Hunting Knife—now **ONLY \$49!**

The consummate outdoorsman never goes on deep woods hunting trips without the essentials. Not just the basics for every hunting trip, but the items he's come to depend on over the years.

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In & Around

REA Energy Cooperative

We're not sure how rural Pennsylvania ended up with counties that share names with states, but these places sure hold a lot of interesting sights. In the heart of Indiana County, for example, you'll find REA Energy Cooperative, which serves more than 22,700 homes, farms, and businesses in Indiana and Cambria counties across more than 2,900 miles of line.

If you need to stretch your legs, head north of Indiana, Pa., to the White's Woods Nature Center, a 250-acre span of forest rife with walking trails and some much-needed shade and fresh air on a hot summer day. Even if you can't visit during the summer, the region has no shortage of other parks and trails to enjoy, as well as spots good for hunting, fishing and skiing.

If you're itching to learn about local history, visit Johnstown in Cambria



WHITE'S WOODS: The White's Woods Nature Center, a 250-acre span of forest north of Indiana, Pa., includes a 3.7-mile loop trail that takes an average of two hours to complete. Dogs are welcome and may be off-leash in some areas.

County, host to the Johnstown Flood National Memorial, which preserves the ruins of the South Fork Dam that failed in 1889. Looking for something unique? Johnstown is also the hometown of Spider-Man and Doctor Strange creator Steve Ditko. You can find a comic book mural dedicated to the artist's memory on the side of the Stone Bridge Brewing Company.



Main Office: Indiana, Pa.
Consumer-members served: 22,766
Website: reaenergy.com

Co-op Q&A

We've got questions,
you've got answers...

and we want you to share them with us. Every month, *Penn Lines* staff will ask readers a fun question and we'll publish selected answers in the next issue.

AUGUST'S QUESTION

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

PLEASE EMAIL YOUR ANSWER and a selfie to CommunityCorner@prea.com by **MONDAY, JUNE 19**. Be sure to include your full name, the name of your cooperative and a daytime telephone number and put "August 2023 Q&A" in the subject line.

JUNE'S RESPONSES

In celebration of Father's Day, what's your favorite memory with your dad?



"My best memory of Dad was on his homemade sailboat for three that he had built in about 1950. My BFF (Paula), Dad and myself went for a day of sailing on our local lake and the wind was whipping! Paula and I were sitting on the gunwales (the upper edge of the side of a boat) leaning back to stop the boat from flipping over and screaming to our hearts' delight. It was so much fun. Dad yelled, 'Coming about!' and we attempted to crab walk to the other side and not get knocked over by the rigging or fall out. We then were able to lean back far enough on that side to dip our long hair in the rushing water without tumbling backward. Dad always kept us safe, but gave us the rides of our lives on that old boat."

— GAIL RAE, VALLEY RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE



"Growing up, I always looked up to my dad as my superhero (and still do). Thank you for always being present, understanding, and supportive to my sister and me. From sitting through every single baton twirling competition to cheering us on at sporting events, you were there. Today, we celebrate you, Dad!"

— LINDSEY WEIKERT, VALLEY RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

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Electric Generation Concerns Addressed



WITH THE RECENT NEWS OF a possible shutdown of the Homer City Generation Station coming this year, we have been receiving questions about how this may affect electric reliability and service to our membership and the area in general.

To start, let's go back to what electric generation entails from the series of articles we published in the spring of 2022.

Generation is the production of electricity at power stations or generating units, where a form of primary energy is converted into electricity. Called the production process center of the power industry, these power stations have two main means of converting a source into electricity: by the heat energy of fuel, including coal, oil, gas, or uranium, or by the hydraulic energy of falling water, also known as hydroelectric.

Pennsylvania cooperatives — including REA Energy Cooperative, Inc. (REA) — own two sources of energy that provide nearly 65% of the power we use through Harrisburg-based Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc. (Allegheny).

Our main source of generation is nuclear. Allegheny owns 10% of the Susquehanna Steam Electric Station, a 2,600-megawatt (MW), two-unit nuclear power plant in Luzerne County. Cooperatives receive approximately 54% of our power from this source.

Allegheny also operates the Raystown Hydroelectric Project/William F. Matson Generating Station (Raystown), a two-unit, 21-MW run-of-river hydropower facility at Raystown Lake and Dam in Huntingdon County. The power we receive from this hydro-plant is nearly 3% of all our energy needs.

The balance of the electricity provided to Pennsylvania electric cooperative consumer-members is purchased on the open market or secured through long-term agreements. The generation sources of this electricity can include a diversified portfolio of coal, natural gas, oil, nuclear and hydro. Becoming more prevalent in the generation side of electricity are alternative electric generation sources, such as wind, solar, and other renewable fuels, including biomass or solid waste.

After generation, power is transported through transmission lines throughout what is called the PJM Interconnection Grid. PJM is a regional transmission organization that coordinates the movement of wholesale electricity in all or parts of 13 states, including Pennsylvania. Acting as a neutral, independent party, PJM manages the high-voltage electricity grid to ensure reliability for more than 65 million people.

While the Homer City Power Plant is part of the PJM grid, its power is not used locally. The power generated there is moved by transmission lines to eastern areas of the PJM grid, including New York state.

As mentioned above, most of the power supply for cooperative members is from what we own, so our reliability and means of providing power will not be affected if the power plant closes. We will continue to provide safe and reliable electricity as we have for the past 86 years. 🇺🇸

CHAD CARRICK, MBA, CFPC
PRESIDENT & CEO

Local Students Compete in Robotics Competition

KAYLA KING, MARKETING SPECIALIST

STUDENTS AT MARION CENTER JUNIOR-SENIOR HIGH

School (MCHS) have been making waves in the world of robotics this year.

Marion Center Robotics (MCR), a student club in Marion Center Area School District, traveled to Houston in late April to compete in the 2023 FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) Championship. The club qualified for Houston after winning the Rookie Team All-Star Award in April at the 2023 Greater Pittsburgh Regional Competition.

The robotics club is led by faculty coach Robert Weiss, who teaches both computer science and robotics classes at MCHS. The club is comprised of students from grades 7 to 12, who are known as the “Drive Team.”

Along with the seven-member Drive Team, the club’s robot, affectionately called “Larry,” worked in conjunction with other international robotics teams to complete various point-scoring tasks. While most of the time the students controlled the robot with a remote, for the first 15 seconds of each round, Larry moved on its own. Larry was developed over an 11-week span by the club’s 22 student members.

“I was in band (class) and thought of the name Larry from the TV show *Spongebob Squarepants*,” explains senior Daniel Waltermire, who landed in the classes by chance. “I didn’t go to the course scheduling day, and I was put in physics and Mr. Weiss’ robotics class at random. The combo of the two classes inspired me to go to college to become an electrical engineer.”

Robotics classes and clubs are a fairly new addition to the MCHS curriculum. Launched in 2021 by Weiss, the computer science and technology courses offer programming and coding, fabrication, 3D printing, and much more from the Carnegie Mellon and VEX Robotics STEM education curriculum.

“VEX has been a tremendous help and resource to the new technology courses,” says Weiss, when speaking about funding for the courses and events. “VEX and Carnegie Mellon have provided several items that aid the classes and club.”

The club’s funding for competitions comes from grants, sponsorships and public contributions.

“We started working on the robot in January of 2023, and finished about a week before our FIRST Pittsburgh competition,” junior Nathan Druschel explains. “The FIRST Pittsburgh competition went well, even though we couldn’t compete for two rounds. We had a problem with the robot’s arm and had to take it completely apart and put it back together.”

The students had to resize the robot to make it fit within the competition parameters, which gave the club a chance to advance their knowledge of Larry. Even though they did



SHORT CIRCUIT: Marion Center Robotics and their robot “Larry” headed to Houston for the FIRST International Robotics Championship. Shown, from left, are: Seth Boring, freshman; Anthony “AJ” Lynn, junior; Daniel Waltermire, senior; Tucker Penrose, sophomore; Risecen McGinnis, junior; JJ Ferraro, sophomore; Coach Robert Weiss; Nathan Druschel, junior; and Assistant Coach Matthew Yeomans.

not win first place overall, they had an opportunity to work with international teams.

“We worked with a team from Australia to help us with the autonomous coding during the competition,” notes sophomore JJ Ferraro.

Risecen McGinnis, a junior, “Working together and building the robot was my favorite thing about the club and the competition.” Anthony Lynn, a junior, concurs, noting how exciting it was to talk to people who share his interests.

When asked about their favorite aspect of the club, sophomore Tucker Penrose mentions disassembling the robot.

“Building the bot originally was a lot of fun, but I learned a lot more when we had to take it apart to fix it.”

Seth Boring, a freshman, really enjoyed 3D printing. “I designed a remote-control holder, so we wouldn’t lose the controller when transporting Larry.”

Weiss’ technology courses and robotics club have been an inspiration to these enterprising students. “I have been interested in technology since I was a little kid and figured it would be awesome to learn,” Druschel says when asked what brought him to the robotics club.

Not only are the MCHS robotics and computer science students gaining important information about the world’s ever-changing technology landscape, but they are also learning crucial soft skills. The club’s students had to plead their case to the FIRST competition judges to gain admittance to the Pittsburgh event.

While the MCR club and Larry might only be in their rookie season, the students and Weiss are excited for the future. They are already discussing next year’s competition schedule, and the graduating students wish to become mentors for the 2023-2024 school year. Meanwhile, we will be eagerly waiting to see what will come out of Marion Center’s STEM lab next. 🤖

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Signing up for auto pay is easy — visit our online member portal, SmartHub, MyREAEnergy or download our MyREAEnergy app, available in both Google Play and App Store. Once you have signed up for an account, go to the auto pay setup page and enter your card or banking information. 📱

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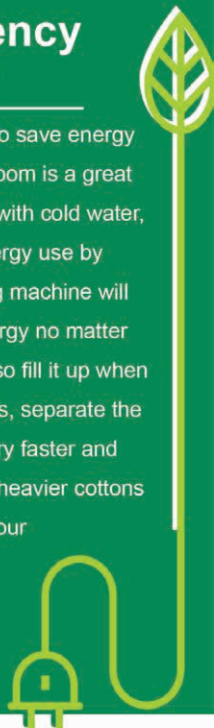
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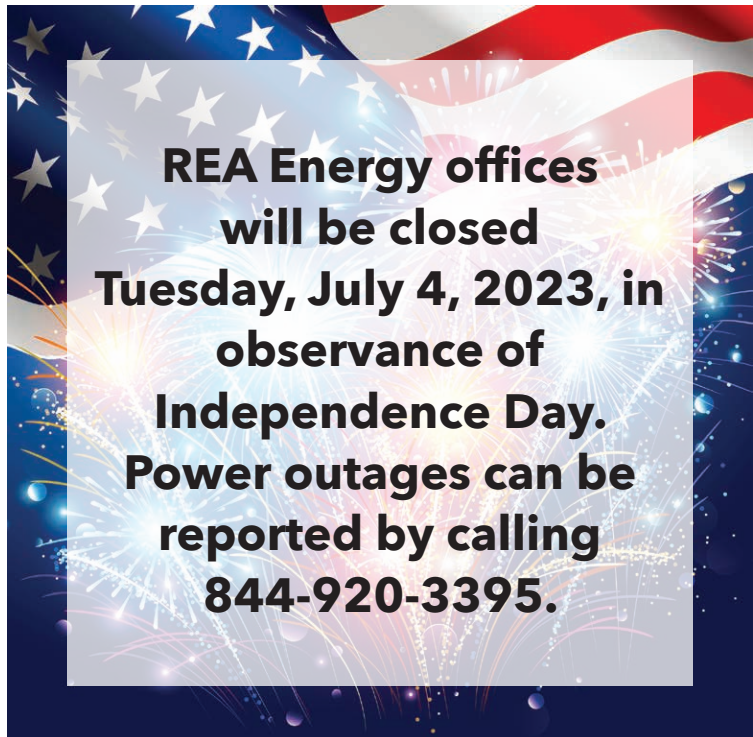
Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Looking for additional ways to save energy this summer? Your laundry room is a great place to start. Wash clothes with cold water, which can cut one load's energy use by more than half. Your washing machine will use the same amount of energy no matter the size of the clothes load, so fill it up when you can. When drying clothes, separate the heavier cottons. Loads will dry faster and more evenly if you separate heavier cottons like linens and towels from your lightweight clothing.

Source: Dept. of Energy



**REA Energy offices
will be closed
Tuesday, July 4, 2023, in
observance of
Independence Day.
Power outages can be
reported by calling
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Have You Been Using MyREAEnergy SmartHub?

Did you notice something different with REA this year? Starting Jan. 3, REA made big changes to its Member Portal. REA's SmartHub (also known as MyREAEnergy) was introduced to make your REA Energy experience easier.

Not only is SmartHub accessible through REA Energy's website, there is an app that is downloadable through your phone or other devices by searching MyREAEnergy on the App Store or Google Play.

What is MyREAEnergy? What's in It for You?

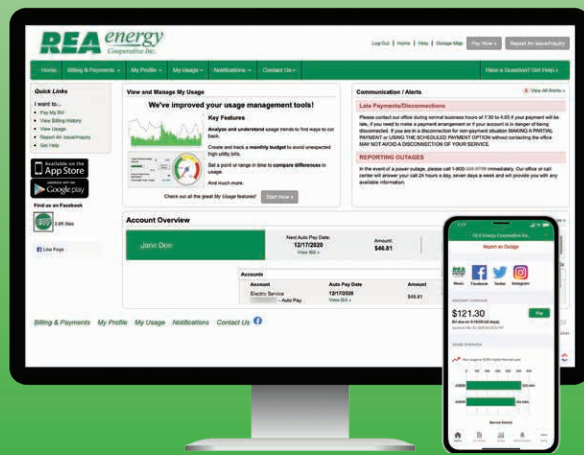
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Right-of-Way Management/Facility Construction News

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

Contractor crews from Penn Line Tree Service will be trimming the rights of way of the Washington substation, Birtle metering point, and Summerhill substation areas, in addition to emergency maintenance areas.

Notification of work will be made to members in the areas affected. Contractors will perform all right-of-way work per REA Energy specifications. All contractor employees will carry employee identification cards and their vehicles will display their company name.

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

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A variety of conditions or scenarios can result in a downed power line. Sometimes downed lines are visible while other times they are hidden by ice, snow, branches or storm debris.

Collisions with a pole or padmount transformer can cause the ground and objects to become energized. Regardless of the cause, always consider a downed line or damaged equipment energized and deadly.

If you are in a car accident involving a downed line, stay in the cab or car and wait until someone from the electric utility says it is safe to get out.

Call 9-1-1 to report a downed or damaged power line. Stay away and alert others to do the same.

Remember, if there is a downed line, stay away! Electricity can jump from a wire or object to you to find the quickest path to ground.

Learn more at:

 **Safe
Electricity.org®**

If you see a downed or damaged power line or pole or a dislodged electrical cabinet:

- Do not go near it.
- Do not touch it.
- Do not try to move it with another object.
- Do not touch items that could be energized.



Never Fear a Strawberry

ANNE M. KIRCHNER

DO YOU HAVE FRAGARIAPHOBIA? I hope not because this month's recipes focus on one of my favorite summer fruits — strawberries! Fragariaphobia is the fear of strawberries. I can't imagine being afraid of this sweet, delicious fruit. Full of antioxidants and vitamin C, strawberries are a healthy ingredient for pancakes, jam, salads, desserts and more.

Keep strawberries fresh by following a simple storage technique. Place a paper towel in a storage container to absorb extra moisture. Line the strawberries — with their green leaf tops intact — in the container, which should then be sealed and stored in the refrigerator. **Note:** Never wash strawberries until you are ready to eat them. 🍓

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



STRAWBERRY SOUP

- 1 pound strawberries
- 1 cup Greek yogurt
- ¼ cup orange juice
- ¼ cup granulated sugar
- Whipped cream, for garnish

Combine the first four ingredients in a food processor. Pulse until well blended; chill until serving time. Serve the strawberry soup in a small bowl with a dollop of whipped cream. This soup can also be served in mini parfait cups as part of a dessert bar. *Makes 4 to 6 servings.*



STRAWBERRY PINEAPPLE BRUSCHETTA

- 1 Italian baguette, sliced ¼-inch thick
- 2 cups fresh strawberries, diced
- 1 cup fresh pineapple, diced
- 5 mint leaves, thinly sliced
- 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- 8 ounces goat cheese
- 2 tablespoons honey

Line a baking sheet with bread slices and broil for 2 to 3 minutes. Turn the bread over and broil the other side for an additional 2 to 3 minutes; set aside. In a small bowl, combine the strawberries, pineapple, mint, balsamic vinegar, olive oil, salt and pepper. In a separate bowl, combine the goat cheese and honey. Assemble the bruschetta by spreading the goat cheese mixture on each toast piece. Top the goat cheese with a scoop of the strawberry mixture and serve immediately. *Makes 6 to 8 servings.*



STRAWBERRY SHEET PAN PANCAKES

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- ¾ cups whole wheat flour
- 2¼ teaspoons baking powder
- 2¼ teaspoons baking soda
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 3 cups oat milk
- 3 large eggs
- 1 teaspoon almond extract
- 1 tablespoon maple syrup, plus more for serving
- ½ cup butter, melted
- 2 cups sliced strawberries

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Combine the flours, baking powder, baking soda and salt in a bowl. In a separate bowl, whisk together the oat milk, eggs, almond extract and maple syrup. Add the wet ingredients to the dry ingredients and whisk until blended. Add the melted butter. Let the batter set for 5 minutes. Grease an 18-by-13-inch sheet pan with cooking spray. Spread the batter evenly in the prepared sheet pan, arrange the strawberries on top and bake for 15 minutes. Cut the pancake into 12 square pieces and serve with maple syrup. *Makes 6 to 12 servings.*

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Rainscape the Yard?

GEORGE WEIGEL

OUR INCREASINGLY ERRATIC weather is especially evident when it comes to rain.

Sometimes we get too little in the “flash droughts” of hot, dry spells, but sometimes we get way too much in ever-heavier storm dumpings.

Both can wreak havoc on the landscape and impact what happens downstream.

That’s led to a new term in the gardening lexicon: “rainscaping.”

Rainscaping is crafting the yard in a way that manages water smartly, both in the way it comes into the yard and leaves it. In other words, it’s about making our yards “water friendly.”

So how do you do that? And why should you care?

How to Be Certified Water-Friendly

To qualify a yard as watershed-friendly, Pennsylvanians can fill out a free, online application on the Nurture Nature Center website that asks a series of questions about water management and practices.

The application is posted at nurturenaturecenter.org/programs/community/wfp-cert.

If you meet at least 85% of the goals, your yard qualifies as a certified watershed-friendly property. If not, the site is loaded with tips and links to help you make changes that will help you qualify.

Residents whose yards pass the certification test earn a watershed-friendly certificate and a watershed-friendly yard sign.

Penn State Extension’s Master Watershed Stewards and the non-profit Easton-based Nurture Nature Center have teamed up to answer those questions with a new program, the Watershed-Friendly Property Program, which aims to reduce stormwater runoff and pollution, conserve water, and support wildlife and pollinators.

Ten specific ways gardeners can do that are as follows:

1) Plant trees. Trees are ideal for soaking up water. One North Carolina study, for example, found a wooded area absorbs three times as much rain as a typical lawn before runoff occurs.

2) Add garden beds, especially ones with native plants. Only about 10% of rain typically runs off planted space, compared to as much as 55% from space dominated by houses, driveways and sidewalks.

3) Build a rain garden or two. These are well-drained, sunken beds planted with species that can tolerate occasionally wet soil and are designed to absorb all captured water in 24 to 48 hours. A good — and free — how-to guide on building a rain garden is available at the Three Rivers Rain Garden Alliance website, raingardenalliance.org.

4) Install one or more rain barrels to capture water from down spouts. These intercept some of the water coming off roofs and store it for use later when the weather is dry.

5) Minimize the use of pesticides and fertilizers. Or switch to less toxic, less polluting products. Also, sweep up any lawn-fertilizer granules that end up on sidewalks and driveways and avoid using rock salt to melt snow and ice in winter.

6) Conserve water in the yard and gardens. Water only when plants need it, keep a 2- to 3-inch mulch cover over soil to reduce evaporation, choose low-water-need



WATER WOES: Heavy rain is eroding mulch and soil off this backyard bank.

varieties and consider drip irrigation instead of overhead hoses.

7) Avoid bare soil. Bare soil allows more and faster runoff, which erodes sediment along with it. Add new grass seed to bare spots in the lawn and either plant or mulch other bare areas, especially slopes.

8) Create grassy or vegetated swales. Steer water away from houses or other areas where you don’t want flooding by digging slightly depressed channels that lead in a preferred direction, especially where water can soak into the ground. If these swales are vegetated as opposed to concrete, water will be absorbed as it’s redirected.

9) Be kind to Mother Nature. Plant trees to shade ponds and streams, remove invasive species, let grass clippings compost into the lawn instead of bagging them, allow brush piles that serve as shelter for wildlife, and don’t dump grass clippings or animal waste into creeks or streams.

10) Buffer those streams. If you have a creek or stream running through your property, plant the banks with native shrubs, perennials, and groundcovers to capture pollutants and sediment and to help hold the soil in place. 🌱

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



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'Mooooom, I'm Boooooored!'

ABIGAIL ZIEGER

IT'S A REFRAIN NO PARENT wants to hear, but school's out and the long, sweaty, sizzling days of summer are ahead of us. It's not only the boredom, but also the constant togetherness and accompanying bickering that's enough to drive all of us up the wall. Before you know it, summer vacation can turn into the summer doldrums — a prospect nobody is really happy about.

Lucky for us, we live within walking distance of a welcome respite and natural entertainer: the creek. When we go to the creek, the many moans of "there's nothing to do" seem to dissipate. The kids forget their most recent argument when their hands get in the water. And this mama gets a few quiet minutes to decompress.

To get to the creek from our house, we have to walk down a steep wooded hill whose path often is covered in leaves and fallen branches. It's not uncommon to slip and find yourself sliding several feet on your bottom as you make your way down. Though the trek may be difficult, the path is mercifully short and leads us right to the water. At the bottom, there's a small rocky landing under an old, broad-trunked sycamore that leans over the water.

We kick off our shoes, roll up our pants and walk out into the shallows. Crayfish hide under the rocks close to the bank, and the kids love flipping the rocks over to see if they can catch them. If they're successful, they pick the crayfish up and pretend they're talking in ridiculously low funny voices — a tradition that always makes us laugh.

There are boulders that jut up above the water that the kids have dubbed as official creek landmarks: Mermaid Rock, Choo-choo, Cowey and Sunny. They sit on the rocks and jump off into the water on repeat. They walk out into the waist-high water, pick up their legs and let the gentle

current carry them down to the shallow section again. They laugh about how short they look when they're sitting in the water, then surprise me over and over again with how tall they actually are when they stand up.

When we're feeling more adventurous, we walk upstream a short way to a wide, shallow stone basin just below a small waterfall area. There are "bubble zones," where the water falling off the rocks above creates small jetted pools that rival commercial hot tubs. The kids bring their inner-tube and glide from the waterfall to the edge of the basin, then walk it back up and start again.

Sometimes we climb up to a rock that overlooks a fishing hole and bring our poles. We may have our fishing licenses, but we know next to nothing about the sport. We struggle together and rarely catch anything, but it sure is fun trying.

Occasionally, we pack our dinner in to-go containers and eat by the creekside. More often than not, the kids abandon their dinners to start skipping stones or splashing in the water.

We may grumble

about getting ready to go the creek, but we almost always enjoy it once we're there. It's fascinating how water and earth have a way of resetting even the most grumpy kids — and adults, too. Time at the creek not only cools off the heat, but also cures boredom and resets bad attitudes. Just about any natural setting has a way of doing that. Even if you don't have a creek in your backyard, there's almost always some place beautiful you can go to get outside and beat the summer doldrums. 🍷

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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PREA, Allegheny Have a Powerful Connection

JILL M. ERCOLINO



YOU MAY NOT REALIZE IT, but a lot of people are working behind the scenes to make sure you and your fellow cooperative members — that's around 600,000 consumers — have safe, reliable, and affordable power.

At the local level, you'll find the directors and staff of your rural electric cooperative. In Harrisburg, they're supported by two organizations: the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association (PREA), which serves as the unified voice for the 14 cooperatives in Pennsylvania and New Jersey; and Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc. (Allegheny), their wholesale power supplier. Each is governed by a 14-member board of directors, which includes one representative from each member cooperative board.

Recently, Leroy Walls and Jay Grove, the chairmen of the PREA and Allegheny boards, respectively, sat down to discuss the powerful connection between cooperatives and the statewide organizations that serve them and why that's a good thing for consumers.

Walls, board president of New Enterprise Rural Electric Cooperative (REC), was named to the PREA board in 2008 and elected chairman in 2013. Grove, a director for Gettysburg-based Adams Electric Cooperative, joined the Allegheny board in 2006 and was chosen as chairman in 2015.

Combined, the pair have dedicated more than 50 years of service to their local electric cooperatives. (To learn more about the chairmen, see the sidebar on page 30.)

Q. What did you know about electric cooperatives before you joined the local board? And after you became a director, what was different?

Walls: "I kept up with our cooperative by reading *Penn Lines*, but once you get on the board, it's a different world, and it really brought a lot of things to light. I've always had an interest in electricity, and it was just so interesting to see the nuts and bolts behind the scenes that make it all work."

Grove: "Even though, as a farmer, I was very familiar with the cooperative way of doing business, I didn't realize the depth of its difference from other utilities until I got involved. That's when the education really started. The cooperative is just so much more involved with and concerned about the members than I ever dreamed of."

ALL ABOUT THE MEMBERS: The trio leading the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association (PREA) and its sister organization, Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc. (Allegheny), are dedicated to providing safe, reliable and affordable electricity to rural residents. They are, from left, PREA/Allegheny President & CEO Steve Brame, PREA Chairman Leroy Walls and Allegheny Chairman Jay Grove.

Q: In your experience, what is it about the cooperative model that makes it work in the rural areas you serve?

Walls: "I think the member involvement is so key. I will say from the New Enterprise REC perspective, any member can reach out to me. We're a small community, and many of the members know me, whether it's through



DECADES OF SERVICE: Between them, Jay Grove, above, chairman of the Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc. board, and Leroy Walls, below, chairman of the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Cooperative board, have given more than 50 years of service to Pennsylvania's and New Jersey's rural electric cooperatives and their consumers.



a church activity, a 4-H activity, or a fire company activity. They know where I'm at, how to contact me and, most important, that their input is being represented."

Grove: "I agree. Our cooperative is a little larger, but the people in my local area — the Shippensburg area — know who I am. And it is just that: Members feel they can reach out, either to someone they know or they can call the cooperative headquarters and get an answer. That's what makes the co-op system work."

"Another thing that makes this model work is the cooperation ... the ability to reach out to another cooperative or PREA or Allegheny for help with an issue or advice on how to handle it — that's what this is all about."

Q. Why did you decide to get involved on the PREA and Allegheny boards?

Grove: "I just wanted to step up to the plate in a more positive way and be more involved, and that's how it happened. I will say the friendships that have come out of this with other board members have been so invaluable. It's amazing to be able to work alongside each other for a common cause."

Walls: "We would get reports at our [local board] meetings about what happened with PREA and Allegheny, and it just sparked an interest in me. So when the opportunity came up, I said I would be very interested. At that time, I had to use vacation time for every PREA meeting, so my vacation got eaten up pretty quickly, but I wouldn't give this up for anything. For me, it's all about the people, whether that's the members back home or the folks here at the statewide."

Q. How do the two organizations, PREA and Allegheny, support each other?

Grove: "It's a like a glove — we fit together, work together and help each other out. It's gotten to the point now where members of both boards will come to town early [before board meetings] just to go to dinner. We do this out of friendship, but we also talk about where the organizations are going ... where these trains are headed."

Walls: "The two boards really do mesh together very well because we all have a common goal, and that common goal is safe, reliable, and affordable electricity. We both need each other, and we realize that."

Q. What's a challenge facing electric cooperatives?

Walls: "I do think about electric vehicles in rural Pennsylvania and wonder with the infrastructure we have today, how are we going to get through that? It's a huge challenge."

Grove: "What policymakers are asking us to do is supply enough power to support electric vehicles. Yet, they're taking away some reliable energy-producing resources, including gas and coal, so we'll have to find a way to continue to meet the demand for energy. It's going to be a big challenge, I agree, but I do think we're going to figure it out — cooperatives always do."

Q. And, finally, what are you most proud of in your service as electric cooperative directors?


Grove: "For me, it's having the opportunity to be a part of something that's so important and that affects the quality of life of so many people. It has just been a great opportunity and a great way to give."

Walls: "Same here. I'm just proud to be part of a program that touches so many people's lives. To be part of this, and to know that hopefully you're making a difference in a positive way, is a good feeling. Earlier, I said this is one of the greatest things I've ever done, and it really is."

Turn the page to learn more about the chairmen and their path to cooperative service.





COMMUNITY FIRST: PREA Chairman Leroy Walls, left, and Allegheny Chairman Jay Grove grew up in different parts of Pennsylvania, but the pair share a similar commitment to hard work and community service.



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Meet the Chairmen

JILL M. ERCOLINO

Jay Grove and Leroy Walls, the duo leading the Harrisburg-based organizations that support Pennsylvania's and New Jersey's 14 rural electric cooperatives, understand the value of hard work and community service.

This commitment to being part of the solution has been a focal point of their lives, even from a young age, and led them down a similar path – one that's dedicated to helping improve the quality of life in rural areas.

The path to leadership

Grove, a native of Franklin County, grew up working on a dairy farm that has been in his family for three generations. At one point, he left, but couldn't stay away. Grove now owns and operates the Shippensburg business with his brother.

"I was on the farm, I grew up on the farm, and was literally tired of the farm," says Grove, board chairman of Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc. (Allegheny), which supplies power to the 14 cooperatives. "So I went to college, and the next thing I know, I'm planting flowers around the dorms. Then I just kind of realized that maybe the farm was beckoning more than I thought."

As a boy, Walls delivered newspapers in his hometown of Saxton in Bedford County. With the money he saved, he bought his first business, a lawn mower repair franchise. At the time, Walls was a junior in high school.

"I would go to school during the day, and I would work on small engines at night," says Walls, board chairman of the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association (PREA), which acts as the unified voice for its member cooperatives and their consumers. "When I got out of high school, I took the opportunity to go straight into the workforce and started working on farm equipment. And in the evenings, I would come home and work on lawn mower engines. I had a pretty good business going."

Today, Walls travels between Maine and Michigan as a district service manager for JCB North America.

As young men, Grove and Walls also took an interest in community service, becoming active volunteers in local organizations as well as their churches, where both have held leadership positions.

It was this shared desire to give back to their communities – and provide their neighbors with safe, reliable and affordable electricity – that eventually brought them to the same place: the boards of their local rural electric cooperatives and, later, the helms of Allegheny and PREA, the sister organizations that serve cooperatives statewide.

"It's just been in my blood to be involved," says Grove, who has been a director for Gettysburg-based Adams Electric Cooperative for more than three decades.

Walls, board president of New Enterprise Rural Electric Cooperative – an organization he's served for 23 years – agrees: "I've always had that drive to be a part of the solution, not the confusion. I have three rules I live by, and these come from [football legend] Lou Holtz: Do what's right, do your best and



A POWERFUL CONNECTION: Penn Lines Editor Pete Fitzgerald, left, discusses the powerful connection between PREA and Allegheny with chairmen Leroy Walls, center, and Jay Grove.

treat others the way you want to be treated.

"If you are doing those things," he adds, "you're doing the right thing – I firmly believe that."

Good advice

Both chairmen became cooperative members after buying their first homes. Grove and his wife, Peggy, settled in Shippensburg on land the family owned behind the main dairy farm. When Walls married his wife, Suellen, he sold his lawn mower business to buy their new home in Saxton.

"When we built our house, we were literally on the end of the line – we could have gone with Penelec or we could have gone with the co-op," Walls says. "And my grandfather ... was like, 'You've got to go with the co-op.' If we hadn't done that, I might not be here today. My grandfather gave me good advice."

That was Walls' first introduction to the cooperative business model, which puts members and their needs before profit – in this case, the need was electricity in rural areas, which were being overlooked by large investor-owned utilities in the early part of the 20th century. Grove, however, was familiar with the concept, which is often used to help farmers market their products, including feed and milk.

"In farming," he says, "there are a lot of different cooperatives that started for the same reasons rural electric cooperatives started: what one person can't accomplish, a group can."

Both leaders say they're proud to be part of a member-focused business that has done so much for so many – then and now – and the organizations that support and represent them.

"I can honestly tell you that between the co-op board and being on the PREA board, those are some of the absolute best things I've ever done in my life," Walls says. "When you're around programs like this and you see that people can work together, it's just an absolute great experience."

"I have always enjoyed learning," Grove adds, "and serving the co-op and Allegheny has been another form of education – it's opened a whole new world. Not only that, I felt I was giving back to the community in another form, in another way. It's just been an enjoyable ride."

"It's just been in my blood to be involved."

Jay Grove,
Allegheny Board
Chairman

"I've always had that drive to be a part of the solution, not the confusion."

Leroy Walls,
PREA Board Chairman

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BEFORE YOU GO

From 2006 through 2021, 446 people were struck and killed by lightning in the U.S. Nearly two-thirds of the deaths happened while people were enjoying outdoor leisure activities such as fishing, camping and running.

June, July and August are the peak months for lightning across the U.S. More than 72% of lightning deaths occurred in these months, with Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays having slightly more deaths than any other day of the week.

Lightning often strikes away from heavy rain; it can happen up to 10 miles away from rainfall. To prevent lightning-related tragedies, when thunder roars, go indoors.

Source: National Lightning Safety Council

**More Than 72% of Lightning
Fatalities Occur From June
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INTERESTED IN LEASING PROPERTY in the Canton, Pa. area for hunting. If you might be interested in leasing your property, please give me a call and ask for Robert. If there is no answer, leave a message. 570-344-5358.

RECIPES & FOOD

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How to Avoid Life's Potholes

JOHN KASUN

WE OFTEN ASSOCIATE WISDOM WITH age, but is it based on age or life experience?

Each of us has a different set of life experiences and, therefore, different wisdom at different ages. Older, or should I say, more experienced people seem to have more “wisdom.” They can easily point out what should be done or, equally important, what should not be done in any given situation. I wonder if it is simply that people who seem to have the answers also have the experience to back up those answers?

That thought process took me back over my own life experiences. I realized wisdom comes to those with experience at any age who make minimum mistakes and, more important, learn from those mistakes.

Shortly after college graduation, I taught electronics for the Army in Texas, teaching both classroom theory as well as electronic labs. In the labs, we worked with missile control cabinets that had low-voltage circuits to avoid killing the students — something that was definitely frowned on.

As part of the training, the instructors would install faulty components in the cabinet circuitry, allowing the students to safely troubleshoot the problem. Quite often during each class, students would put their fingers in the wrong place, resulting in sparks and a loud snap as they got a mild shock and jumped back. The instructors would often ask the student to show them what they did wrong, and sure enough, they would reach in and say, “I touched this wire,” and — POW! — the recruit would get shocked again. It may seem cruel, but it was a very effective learning process; a mild shock today could keep the student from getting killed in the future when working on fully charged circuitry.

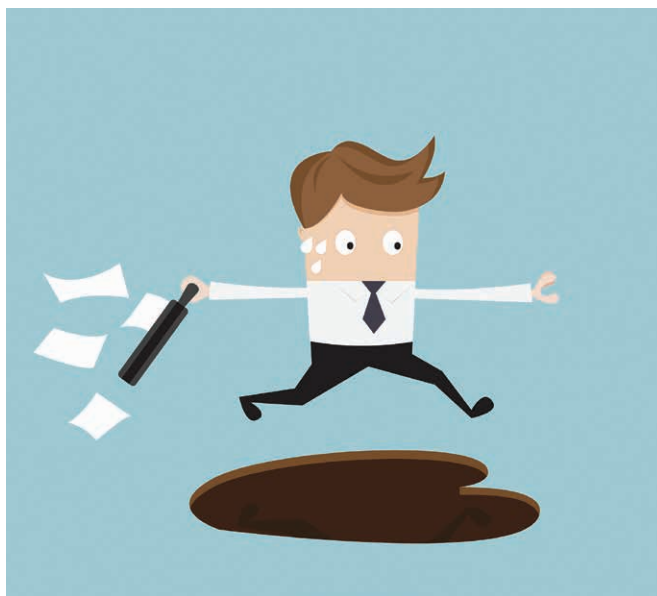
During one of our labs, things were going smoothly until I heard a loud CRACK from the other side of the room. A fellow instructor called me to his side, saying “You won’t believe the stupid thing I just did.” He proceeded to show me that while

demonstrating a circuit-checking procedure to a student, he inserted a meter lead into the cabinet to check the voltage when his wedding ring — which should have been removed according to safety rules — touched a live component and POW! Now that was stupid enough the first time, but this time I had my head bent over the cabinet to see what he was doing when he got shocked a second time. He jerked his hand out, giving me a bloody nose and a cut lip. The students got a big kick out of two “experts” making a rookie mistake, but everyone, including my fellow instructor and me, learned a valuable lesson.

The moral of this story is wisdom does not come with age,

it comes from experience at any age. No one is born with it.

If you are young, you automatically think you know everything and don’t need any advice. And as you grow older, you don’t want people to think you don’t know how to do something or need to ask advice. In both cases, that’s natural, but also wrong. When offered advice or when seeking it, you don’t have to follow it, but it is important to listen and evaluate it. We are all old enough to make

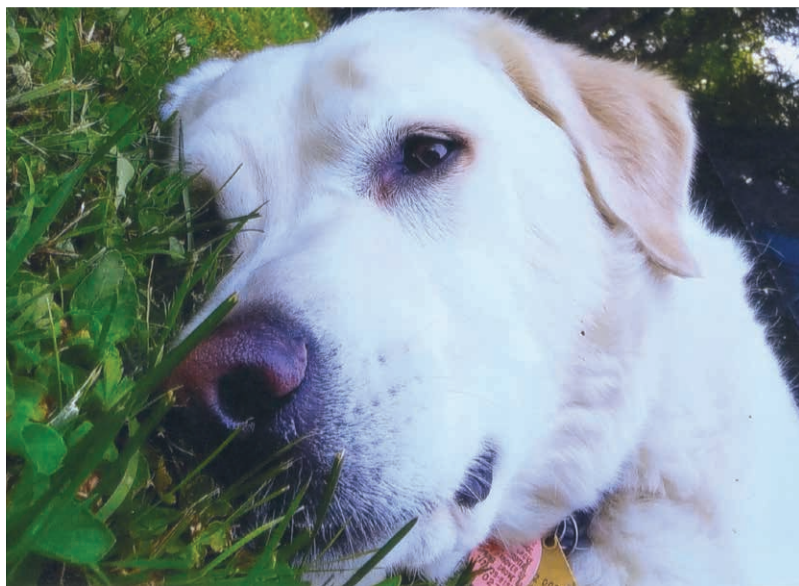


our own mistakes, but it makes no sense to make the road of life harder than it already is. People with experience can make the journey easier, if you just listen.

This is true for people of all ages, but especially important for our recent high school and college graduates who are just starting out.

A very good friend of mine once said, “If I had my life to live over again, I would have listened to the old guys. Most of them knew where the potholes of life were located, and if I had paid attention to their advice, I wouldn’t have had such a rough ride.” 🍷

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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RURAL REFLECTIONS

Lazy Sun Day

It's finally safe to shed the sweaters, slip into shorts and laze about beneath the sun. There's no time like the present to take it easy; the "honey-do" list can wait.

Share your photos of soaking up the sun for this year's Rural Reflections contest — 2023 winners in five categories (artistic, human, landscape, animal and editor's choice) will receive \$75 each and runners-up will each receive \$25. 📷

SHARON ROEDTS • SULLIVAN COUNTY REC



AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHERS are encouraged to send photos for the 2023 "Rural Reflections" contest (no digital files) to: *Penn Lines* Photos, P.O. Box 1266, Harrisburg, PA 17108-1266. On the back of each photo, 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

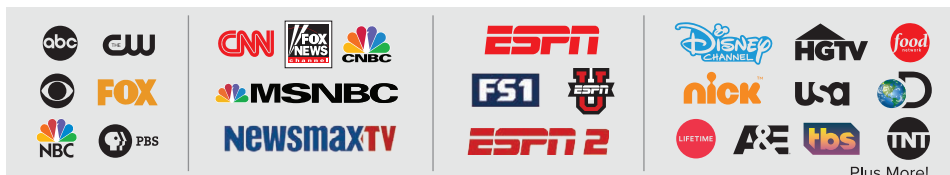


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