

NOVEMBER 2023

PEN LINES

At Your Service

Veterans Get by with a Little Help from Their (Four-Legged) Friends

ENERGY-SAVING GADGETS AND GIZMOS

MINI-SPLIT SYSTEMS ARE GAINING TRACTION

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Thank You For Your Entries

Thanks to everyone who submitted photos for our 2023 "Rural Reflections" contest. Now it's time to start snapping away for 2024



ON THE COVER

Scott Murray, a former U.S. Marine Corps sergeant, kneels beside his service dog, Rolo. New Hope Assistance Dogs, Inc. of Warren County provided Rolo to Murray to help him cope with post-traumatic stress disorder.

PHOTO BY
MICHAEL T. CRAWFORD

EPA Further Threatens Grid Reliability, Economic Health of Rural Communities



SEN. GENE YAW

NEWLY PROPOSED RULES BY THE Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) could soon threaten Pennsylvania's severely strained electric grid and jeopardize service provided by electric cooperatives throughout the region. The new rules would set unachievable limits using technology that is unavailable in the United States for new and existing gas-fired combustion turbines and existing coal plants, which currently generate two-thirds of Pennsylvania's electricity. The new mandates will impose an effective moratorium on new natural gas plants and force existing natural gas and coal plants to shutter prematurely.

This dual attack on electric reliability and affordability would, no doubt, fall on the shoulders of electric ratepayers and the more than 235,000 households throughout Pennsylvania and New Jersey that rely on their electric cooperatives for cost-effective services. Further, if finalized in the current form, the federal proposal would have a detrimental effect across all regions of the United States' power grid. Pennsylvania, the second-largest net supplier of total energy to other states after Texas, would be particularly devastated by this mandate.

Pennsylvania is a member of the PJM power grid, which consists of 13 states and the District of Columbia. Pennsylvania itself supplies 25% of the installed capacity in the PJM grid. Of that, rural electric cooperatives own and maintain about 12.5% of the electric distribution lines in the state, covering nearly one-third of the Commonwealth's land area in 42 counties, making them a critical component of rural communities, businesses, schools, hospitals, and industry.

As chairman of the Senate Environmental Resources and Energy Committee, I have held multiple hearings to review grid reliability. Overwhelmingly, the testimonies stated that a rush to shutter our fossil-fuel-fired power plants would directly impact our bulk power supply.

Even before the proposed EPA rules were rolled out, PJM warned that Pennsylvania (and other PJM states) could face energy rationing by 2026 and rolling blackouts as early as 2028. PJM referred to state and federal policies as forcing the premature closure of reliable thermal generation, which is increasingly being replaced by unreliable, intermittent sources of weather-dependent power.

Natural gas, nuclear, and coal plants are on-demand energy sources and not dependent on weather or time of day, which is essential for electric reliability. These are the facilities that can provide electricity at 3 a.m. on an extremely cold or extremely hot night. This EPA proposal, coupled with the uncertainty around Pennsylvania joining the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, would be a travesty if we want the Commonwealth to remain a global leader in energy production and maintain the economic health of our rural communities.

In May, Gov. Josh Shapiro wrote to PJM and expressed significant concerns about grid reliability in the wake of the "narrowly averted prospect of rolling blackouts throughout bitterly cold days and nights" during Winter Storm Elliott. As we head into another winter season, I share those concerns and urge a closer examination of our energy and environmental goals. In a changing federal energy landscape, we must ensure we can keep the lights on for Pennsylvanians. 🇺🇸

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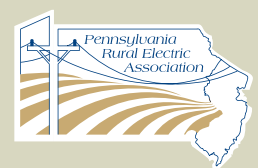
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Will This Strange Antarctic Squid Solve America's Memory Crisis?

New Deep Sea Discovery Proven to Be The #1 Natural Enhancer of Memory and Focus

Half a mile beneath the icy waters off the coast of Argentina lives one of the most remarkable creatures in the world.

Fully grown, they're less than 2 feet long and weigh under 10 pounds...

But despite their small size, this strange little squid can have a bigger positive impact on your brain health than any other species on the planet.

They are the single richest source of a vital "brain food" that 250 million Americans are starving for, according to a study published in the British Medical Journal.

It's a safe, natural compound called DHA – one of the building blocks of your brain. It helps children grow their brains significantly bigger during development. And in adults, it protects brain cells from dying as they get older.

Because DHA is so important, lacking enough of it is not only dangerous to your overall health but could be directly related to your brain shrinking with age.

With more than 16 million Americans suffering from age-associated cognitive impairment, it's clear to a top US doctor that's where the problem lies.

Regenerative medicine specialist Dr. Al Sears, says thankfully, "there's still hope for seniors. Getting more of this vital brain food can make a life changing difference for your mental clarity, focus, and memory."

Dr. Sears, a highly-acclaimed, board-certified doctor— who has published more than 500 studies and written 4 bestselling books — says we should be able to get enough DHA in our diets... but we don't anymore.

"For thousands of years, fish were a great natural source of DHA. But due to industrial fish farming practices, the fish we eat and the fish oils you see at the store are no longer as nutrient-dense as they once were," he explains.

DHA is backed by hundreds of studies for supporting razor sharp focus, extraordinary mental clarity, and a lightning quick memory... especially in seniors.

So, if you're struggling with

focus, mental clarity, or memory as you get older...

Dr. Sears recommends a different approach.

THE SECRET TO A LASTING MEMORY

Research has shown that our paleo ancestors were able to grow bigger and smarter brains by eating foods rich in one ingredient — DHA.

"Our hippocampus thrives off DHA and grows because of it," explains Dr. Sears. "Without DHA, our brains would shrink, and our memories would quickly fade."

A groundbreaking study from the University of Alberta confirmed this. Animals given a diet rich in DHA saw a 29% boost in their hippocampus — the part of the brain responsible for learning and memory. As a result, these animals became smarter.

Another study on more than 1,500 seniors found that those whose brains were deficient in DHA had significantly smaller brains — a characteristic of accelerated aging and weakened memory.

PEOPLE'S BRAINS ARE SHRINKING AND THEY DON'T EVEN KNOW IT

Dr. Sears uncovered that sometime during the 1990s, fish farmers stopped giving their animals a natural, DHA-rich diet and began feeding them a diet that was 70% vegetarian.

"It became expensive for farmers to feed fish what they'd eat in the wild," explains Dr. Sears. "But in order to produce DHA, fish need to eat a natural, marine diet, like the one they'd eat in the wild."

"Since fish farmers are depriving these animals of their natural diet, DHA is almost nonexistent in the oils they produce."

"And since more than 80% of fish oil comes from farms, it's no wonder the country is experiencing a memory crisis. Most people's brains are shrinking and they don't even know it."

So, what can people do to improve their memory and brain function in the most effective way possible?



MEMORY-RESTORING SENSATION: The memory-saving oil in this Antarctic squid restores decades of lost brain power starting in just 24 hours.

Dr. Sears says, "Find a quality DHA supplement that doesn't come from a farmed source. That will protect your brain cells and the functions they serve well into old age."

Dr. Sears and his team worked tirelessly for over 2 years developing a unique brain-boosting formula called **Omega Rejuvenol**.

It's made from the most powerful source of DHA in the ocean, squid and krill — two species that cannot be farmed.

According to Dr. Sears, these are the purest and most potent sources of DHA in the world, because they haven't been tampered with. "**Omega Rejuvenol** is sourced from the most sustainable fishery in Antarctica. You won't find this oil in any stores."

MORE IMPRESSIVE RESULTS

Already, the formula has sold more than 850,000 bottles. And for a good reason, too. Satisfied customers can't stop raving about the memory-boosting benefits of quality-sourced DHA oil.

"The first time I took it, I was amazed. The brain fog I struggled with for years was gone within 24 hours. The next day, I woke up with the energy and mental clarity of a new man," says Owen R.

"I remember what it was like before I started taking **Omega Rejuvenol**... the lack of focus... the dull moods... the slippery memory... but now my mind is as clear as it's ever been," says Estelle H.

"My mood and focus are at an all-time high. I've always had trouble concentrating, and now I think I know why," raves Bernice J. "The difference that **Omega Rejuvenol** makes couldn't be more noticeable."

And 70-year-old Mark K. says, "My focus and memory are back to age-30 levels."

These are just a handful of the thousands of reviews Dr. Sears regularly receives thanks to his breakthrough memory formula, **Omega Rejuvenol**.

WHERE TO FIND OMEGA REJUVENOL

To secure bottles of this brain-booster, buyers should contact the Sears Health Hotline at **1-800-440-6057**. "It takes time to manufacture these bottles," says Dr. Sears. "The Hotline allows us to ship the product directly to customers who need it most."

Dr. Sears feels so strongly about this product, he is offering a 100%, money-back guarantee on every order. "Send back any used or unused bottles within 90 days and I'll rush you a refund," says Dr. Sears.

The Hotline is taking orders for the next 48 hours. After that, the phone number may be shut down to allow for inventory restocking.

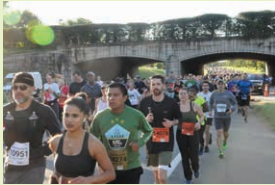
Call **1-800-440-6057** to secure your limited supply of **Omega Rejuvenol**. Readers of this publication immediately qualify for a steep discount, but supplies are limited. To take advantage of this great offer use Promo Code **PLOM1123** when you call.

GIVING THANKS

In this month of thanks, it seems appropriate we also recognize our veterans. "Thank you for your service" has become a common November expression with the observation of Veterans Day. This month, *Penn Lines* explores programs that provide healing care for veterans dealing with trauma from their service experience. The stories were written by a U.S. Army veteran, our Senior Editor Michael Crawford. As a fellow veteran, I am pleased to learn of the resources and care available to our nation's former service members.

Oddly, I don't often think of myself as a veteran, even though it's been almost 20 years since my active-duty Army days. More often, I think of a veteran as some other person, typically someone older – like my father, who served in Vietnam. While I believe that generation of veterans can't be thanked enough for their service and sacrifice, I am sometimes caught off guard by that kind of recognition when it comes to my days in uniform.

This happened recently while visiting a McDonald's with my son. We had just completed a long run – the Army Ten-Miler, an annual race in Washington, D.C. This year's run was special because it was the first time my son and I ran it together. We enjoyed the spirit of the event, with the crowds cheering and the Army Band playing along the route. Afterward, though, we were hungry for some cheeseburgers.



I still had on my Army fleece as we pulled into the McDonald's. Making our way to the line, a gentleman asked me about my military service. He said, "I'm buying you lunch." I was a little embarrassed, but soon understood it wasn't a request. He wanted to do something in honor of a soldier who had once helped him and his Air Force friends. I thanked him for his kind gesture – and his service.

In this month of thanks, I am grateful for all of those who look out for service members – my family who endured long deployments and their aftermath, the caregivers who look after veterans like my father, the trainers and their four-legged friends who give hope and healing to the service-wounded. And those with the kindness of a couple of cheeseburgers. Many thanks.

PETER A. FITZGERALD
EDITOR



ANOTHER WARM WINTER?: If you love snow or crave warmth this winter, you're in luck. Forecasters have come out with a range of predictions, and only time will tell who got it right.

WINTER WEATHER

Snowy or warm? Depends on who you ask

Which forecast to believe? Early reports from multiple farmer's almanacs warn the coming winter will be snowy and cold.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), however, recently shared a very different forecast for Pennsylvania, claiming an El Niño weather pattern will result in warmer-than-average temperatures.

The Northeast, the Pacific Northwest and the upper Great Lakes states have the best chance for warmer-than-normal temperatures, according to NOAA. As for precipitation, NOAA predicts much of the northern United States will also be drier than normal.

The NOAA predictions are vastly different from those in a recent issue of the *Old Farmer's Almanac*, which recommended Pennsylvanians dig out their snow boots and shovels in preparation for a cold and snowy winter.

A BUMPER CROP OF BEAR

State's bear population hovering around 15,000, game commission says

The Pennsylvania Game Commission reports bear are plentiful and widespread across the Common-

wealth this year with an estimated 15,000 roaming the woods.

The archery bear season, which got underway in some regions in September, runs through Nov. 24, while the statewide archery bear season kicked off in mid-October and runs through Nov. 4. The general statewide firearms bear season is Nov. 18 to 21.

Last year, hunters harvested 3,170 bear across all seasons in 58 of the state's 67 counties. Pennsylvania's all-time best bear season was in 2019, when hunters harvested 4,653.

The largest bear in 2022 — a 755-pounder — was harvested in Monroe County. The heaviest bear ever taken in Pennsylvania, however, weighed in at 875 pounds and was harvested in Pike County in 2010.

Among counties, Tioga County produced the most bear, giving up 187 last season. Lycoming County ranked second with 152, followed by Bradford and Luzerne counties with 126 each, Centre County with 122, Potter County with 119, Clearfield and Monroe counties with 114 each, and Clinton County with 113.

ECONOMIC POWERHOUSES

Electric co-ops are fueling economic development, study finds

A new report says electric cooper-

atives contribute significantly to the U.S. economy, supporting approximately 623,000 jobs and contributing \$554 billion to the nation's gross domestic product between 2018 and 2022.

Commissioned by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) and the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corp., the study found most of the economic impact occurred locally, with co-ops generating nearly 424,000 jobs and contributing \$374 billion to the gross regional product in their respective counties over the five-year period.

"This report quantifies what many American families and businesses know well — electric cooperatives are powerful engines of economic development in their local communities," NRECA CEO Jim Matheson says.

Investments by cooperatives in such areas as developing broadband networks and attracting new employers have amplified their economic influence.

LIFE-SAVING SCIENTISTS

Researchers with ties to Pennsylvania earn Nobel Prize for COVID-19 findings

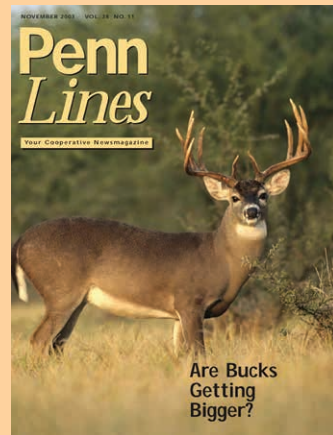
Two scientists with connections to Pennsylvania were recently named recipients of the Nobel Prize in medicine for their discovery that enabled the development of mRNA vaccines against COVID-19.

They are Katalin Kariko, an adjunct professor at the University of Pennsylvania (Penn), and Drew Weissman, who worked with Kariko at Penn.

"Through their groundbreaking findings, the laureates contributed to the unprecedented rate of vaccine development during one of the greatest threats to human health in modern times," the panel that awarded the prize said.

Panelist Gunilla Karlsson Hedestam said of their work that "in terms of saving lives, especially in the early phase of the pandemic, it was very important." 🗨️

TIME LINES



NOVEMBER 2003

Twenty years ago, deer hunters in Pennsylvania were adjusting to new regulations aimed at beefing up the size of huntable bucks. The tighter antler restrictions were part of a broader state effort to manage the deer population. Although state officials were confident their plans would work, some hunters weren't convinced, claiming the rules would "kill off" the Commonwealth's deer herd.



GREASE, LOVE AND HAPPINESS

Love bacon? Then, historic Easton is where you want to be Nov. 4 and 5 for the 12th Annual PA Bacon Fest. Held rain or shine, the event will feature live music, family activities – and, of course, every bacon treat imaginable. Learn more at pabaconfest.com.

A HIKE THROUGH HISTORY

Staff at Blair County's Canoe Creek State Park will be taking visitors on a short hike through history, starting at 2:30 p.m. Nov. 18 at the Wentz Education Center. Hikers will be transported back 100 years to learn the connection between geology, industry, the railroads and daily life.



CANOE CREEK STATE PARK - DCNR FACEBOOK PAGE



BEDFORDCOUNTYCHAMBER.COM

THAT'S LIT

Kick off the holiday season with the Fifth Annual Holiday Nights of Lights, which opens Nov. 24 at the Bedford County Fairgrounds. The drive-through event features dazzling displays created by more than 100 local businesses, organizations, schools, churches and families. Learn more at bedfordcountychamber.com/holiday-lights.

GET A LITTLE WILD

Educators will share videos and photos of the creatures they've encountered at Erie's Presque Isle State Park during a free, virtual event from 10 to 11 a.m. Nov. 29. Register your family at events.dcnr.pa.gov/event/virtual_wildlife_Wednesdays_3498.



COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG

AT YOUR SERVICE

Veterans Get by with a Little Help from Their (Four-Legged) Friends

MICHAEL T. CRAWFORD

"MAN'S BEST FRIEND" HAS TROTTED alongside humans for millennia. Some scientists suggest the four-legged friends forged the bond of their own accord, domesticating themselves before humans even figured out how to milk cows or herd goats.

However it happened — however the two species arrived at where they are today — humans have a long history with dogs. And that relationship, as both anecdotal and scientific evidence suggests, is a healthy one, especially for military veterans.

"I couldn't imagine my life without an animal in it," says Ruth Thompson, founder and director of the ANNA (Association for Needed and Neglected Animals) Shelter in Erie, Pa., near the service territory of Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative. "Just that tactile, emotional connection between the human and the animal ... that unconditional love of depending on each other in a very healthy way."

The ANNA Shelter, a no-kill facility founded in 2004, offers adoption services for dogs and cats, plus other four-legged friends great and small, such as horses or rabbits. The shelter also functions as a state chapter of Pets for

Vets, a nationwide program devoted to connecting military veterans with service animals.

"I think one of my favorites was [when] a veteran adopted a rabbit," Thompson recalls. "We get stories about this bunny going all over. This guy literally travels the country with him, and we get pictures of the rabbit in the front seat of his truck"

'Suffering ever since'

A service animal — usually, but not always, a dog — has received specialized training to recognize and respond to a specific health challenge, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Service animals are sometimes referred to as

BEST BUD: Kaitlyn Smith, a former U.S. Coast Guard seaman, hugs her dog, Memphis, at the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Park in Mechanicsburg. New Hope Assistance Dogs, Inc. in Warren County paired Memphis with Smith to help her cope with service-related trauma.



assistance animals — neither of which should be confused with an emotional support animal.

“The criteria for PTSD are listed as exposure to an actual or threatened death, serious injury or sexual violence,” says Dr. Morgan A. Daugherty, a licensed clinical social worker who works at Saint Francis University in Cambria County. “Directly experiencing the traumatic event, witnessing it happen to someone else, learning of a traumatic event that happened to a close family member or friend, or repeated exposure to adverse details of traumatic events — that’s your first responders and ‘helper’ professions — can all lead to PTSD.”

Daugherty, whose husband, Dave, serves as the safety and right-of-way manager at Indiana, Pa.-based REA Energy Cooperative, explains that while some veterans may know what sets off their PTSD (the sound of fireworks when

it’s not a holiday, for example), others have more subtle triggers, such as a specific sound, odor or even a thought pattern.

“I got out in 1986, and I’ve been suffering ever since with outbursts, and just didn’t really play well with civilians,” recalls Scott Murray, a Lancaster County native and former U.S. Marine Corps sergeant diagnosed with PTSD. “Through my time in the service, I became extremely claustrophobic and hyper-vigilant. ... You get into my space, I turn into a Marine again, and I just react.”

PTSD symptoms include flashbacks, anxiety, a heightened startle reflex, hyper-vigilance, difficulty sleeping and suicidal thoughts, among others. According to the 2022 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report, an average of 17 veterans a day committed suicide in 2020.

“About the time when COVID-19 hit, I hit a really rough patch to the point where I didn’t feel like myself,” recalls Kaitlyn Smith, who lives in Mechanicsburg and is a former U.S. Coast Guard seaman. She also was diagnosed with PTSD. “I was experiencing a lot of suicidal ideation. ... I didn’t want to go to work. I wasn’t sleeping well. I couldn’t sit down for longer than five or 10 minutes — I was just riddled with anxiety.”

Of the 6 million veterans served by the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs in fiscal year 2021, 10% of men and 19% of women were diagnosed with PTSD. According to a nationwide study of veterans, 29% of those who served in Iraq or Afghanistan reported PTSD.

Helping paws

The presence of a service dog improved the reported quality of life for those with PTSD and decreased related symptoms, according to a 2022 study published in the research journal, *Frontiers in Psychiatry*. While the jury is still out on whether the benefit is more from the dog or its training, the concept of using animals to manage PTSD is gaining traction.

In Warren County, home to Youngsville-based Warren Electric Cooperative, New Hope Assistance Dogs, Inc. (NHADI) has spent the past two decades connecting veterans with helping paws. And now they’re helping Murray and Smith.

“In every possible way, he’s changed my life for the better,” Smith says of Memphis, a black goldendoodle she received through NHADI. “I’m working in a job that I never thought I would have been able to do — working with kids in a school. He has given me so much positivity. I’m better at advocating for myself just from having him. ... I’m less on guard knowing he’s right there, looking out for me. ... They gave me a part of my life back.”



STANDING UP FOR HERSELF: Kaitlyn Smith, a U.S. Coast Guard veteran diagnosed with PTSD, enjoys time with her service dog, Memphis, who was raised and trained by New Hope Assistance Dogs, Inc. in Warren County. Since adopting Memphis, Smith says she has a more positive outlook and is better able to advocate for herself.

Murray, who spent years suffering from violent flashbacks, thought he'd never be able to function in society again.

"It got to the point where I was getting in trouble and couldn't go places," Murray says. "I sucked it up because I was a Marine — I was always told, 'You don't hurt, you don't feel pain' — and I got to the point where I was getting episode after episode after episode in crowded spaces."

And then, about a year ago, he met Rolo, a golden retriever.

"I've got tears in my eyes right now," says Murray, who has had multiple surgeries for smashed and shattered bones from combat injuries. "He and I just clicked. He'll help pull me up so I can stand. He opens and closes doors for me. With this dog, I can go anywhere and everywhere. We've been to comedy shows, plays and events. I can travel now — I can go to stores!"

Warren Electric members Amy Bennet, head K9 trainer of NHADI's children's division, and Barb Ruhlman, head K9 trainer of NHADI's veteran's division, founded the not-for-profit organization in 2001. Based in Warren, Pa., NHADI specializes in training service dogs for children and veterans.

"We serve all 50 states and even have dogs in Canada," says Tammy Rogers, NHADI president and also a Warren Electric member. "We prioritize our county, and the state of Pennsylvania, along with veterans and children, then continue to service the outlying areas."

Training dogs capable of instinctively responding to seizures, narcoleptic attacks, diabetic highs and lows, and fetching phones, medicine or water bottles — just to name a few — isn't easy. NHADI staff conducts rigorous temperament assessments and testing with dogs to determine their ability to perform skills.

"Each dog, like each person, is unique," Rogers explains. "We believe in working with the dogs' strengths, never forcing them. It's crucial that the dog loves doing his/her job. There are multiple aspects that we consider when choosing a dog for a recipient. They are specially chosen and uniquely prepared for their individual roles needed to perform for their recipient."

Greater independence and unconditional love

Such training doesn't come cheap, either.

"The cost of a dog to a client is \$17,000," Rogers says. "Our cost to raise and train the dog is approximately \$30,000. We offset the balance through the countless hours that volunteers donate, our Prison Program and donations

CARE FOR VETERANS ADVANCES ON MANY FRONTS, MANY LEVELS

New programs involving animals are being developed to help those with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

The Puppies Assisting Wounded Servicemembers for Veterans Therapy Act, passed in August 2021, directed the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to begin a five-year pilot program to train veterans to work with animals. The pilot program, which kicked off in February 2022, currently operates in Anchorage, Alaska; Asheville, N.C.; Palo Alto, Calif.; San Antonio, Texas; and West Palm Beach, Fla.

To learn more about the program and if you're eligible to participate, check with your local VA office. You can find facilities at va.gov/directory/guide. If you need help navigating the VA system, contact your county's Office of Veterans Affairs for help with local, state and federal programs.

But you don't have to be a veteran — or live in the aforementioned states — to learn how to work with animals. **Saint Francis University's Animal-Assisted Health and Education Certificate Program** offers a path to help animals who help those in need. To learn more about this and similar programs at the Loretto-based school, visit francis.edu.

New Hope Assistance Dogs, Inc. (NHADI), a Warren County non-profit that pairs service animals with veterans and first responders, is always looking for support, too.

"One of our greatest achievements is our collaboration with our Prison Program, where inmates train our dogs daily," President Tammy Rogers says. "They play a vital role in preparing our dogs for their future as a service dog."

Rogers says each dog has a primary and secondary handler, who stay with the animal 24/7. In addition to socializing the pups, the handlers teach them basic, intermediate and advanced obedience during the first six to 12 months of their life.

"On the weekends," she adds, "the dogs usually go home with the correctional officers to get accustomed to the outside world of sports, kids, shopping, doctor appointments and much more. This program allows us to place more dogs with more individuals in a shorter time frame than ever before."

To learn how you can help NHADI's mission, visit newhopedogs.net/giving-options. To find an opportunity closer to you, visit the **Pennsylvania Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals** at pspca.org/volunteer-foster.

Last but not least, help is also available for helpers. If you are concerned about a veteran in crisis — or you are one — or you're overwhelmed and don't know what to do, call the **Veterans Crisis Line by dialing 9-8-8** and then pressing 1. You can also send a text message to 838255. You don't have to be enrolled in VA benefits or healthcare to connect.

from the community. We rely on a large number of volunteers and donors to achieve these feats.”

Through the NHADI Puppy Raiser Program, families

NEW HOPE ASSISTANCE DOGS, INC.



CONCERN FOR COMMUNITY: Retired Master Chief Petty Officer Ed Burris Jr., vice chairman of the Warren Electric Cooperative Board of Directors, gets to know one of the service dogs in training from New Hope Assistance Dogs, Inc., which works to provide veterans and first responders with service animals at no cost. Burris, a director of the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association, served as the Warren County director of veterans affairs to help service members understand how to obtain the benefits due to them for their service.

help train puppies until they are ready for the advanced training required to be a service dog.

“These families help us by raising and training the pup or puppies until a certain age, then they come back to our facility for advanced training,” Rogers explains. “Not only do they donate their time for working with the puppy, but they also donate the food, monthly heartworm, deworming, and flea and tick medication, gasoline to attend training sessions, and so much more.”

Fortunately for veterans — and first responders — the NHADI Veteran’s Division places assistance dogs with service members at no charge to them or their families. Since 2015, the organization has placed more than 100 service dogs with eligible veterans.

“We place assistance dogs with veterans, police officers, firefighters and first responders qualified through our program,” Rogers says. “We believe this is one piece of the puzzle to help them re-enter civilian life and gain a greater independence with the help of the unconditional love of a four-pawed battle buddy. This is our way to say thank you for all they have given for our freedom.”

Helping veterans heal physically, mentally and emotionally from wounds during their service helps more than just veterans, according to retired Master Chief Petty Officer Ed Burris Jr., vice chairman of Warren Electric’s Board of Directors. He also is a director of the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association, the statewide trade association for 13 rural electric cooperatives in the Commonwealth and one in New Jersey.

“Veterans are entitled to certain benefits for illness or injury that is a result of their military service,” says Burris, who served as chairman of the Pennsylvania State Veterans Commission under former Gov. Tom Wolf. “When they get the care they are due, and they get the proper care, it helps alleviate a lot of the problems they are going through and establishes a better family life.

“PTSD affects not only the veteran, but it also affects the family because the veteran is going through a lot of emotional states,” adds Burris, who served as the Warren County director of veterans affairs before retiring. “Especially when there are children involved, because they don’t understand what the veteran went through, and many times the veteran doesn’t want the family to know what they went through.”

Daugherty argues the world is a better place when it has access to veterans’ knowledge and expertise, unhindered by past trauma.

“Everybody comes with a skillset ... or a contribution they can provide to our society,” she says, “and they deserve that opportunity.”

HORSE THERAPY HELPS VETERANS HEAL

There's no shortage of quotes or tales reminding us of the special key our four-legged friends have to our hearts. Over the past few decades, veterans struggling with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) have been looking to these gentle creatures for ways to heal.

"My dad had been in the Pacific during World War II, and as I grew up, he did not sleep," says Donna Simpson, founder and executive director of Grantville-based Pennsylvania Warhorse, a not-for-profit that helps military and first responders suffering from PTSD and traumatic brain injuries (TBI).

"He'd pace the house," she recalls, "he'd leave and take walks, he'd drive and go to the office ... and he just couldn't sleep."

Simpson's father bought a horse for her as a reward for learning to read (she struggled until the third grade when she reached the top of her reading group). After being around the horse, Simpson's father unwittingly formed a bond with the animal.

"Without knowing what we were doing, we were doing equine therapy," says Simpson, who holds a master's degree in counseling with a specialization in equine psychotherapy. "Thirty years after World War II, my dad started sleeping through the night."

Pennsylvania Warhorse professionals are certified in equine-assisted psychotherapy by the O.K. Corral Series (OKCS). They're also trained to work with counseling professionals and collaborate on the best treatment plans for veterans coping with PTSD. Developed by Army veteran Greg Kersten, considered the founder of equine-assisted psychotherapy, OKCS educates professionals in the practice of equine-assisted work, which uses natural horse and herd behavior as a model for human mental and emotional health.

"Communicating with the horse helps you relax and helps you communicate with other people," says Simpson, who also works as a paralegal. "Bonding with the horse helps us work with our emotions better and be better able to control them."

'I found the horses'

Shawn Holmes – a native of Gettysburg, home to Adams Electric Cooperative – has tried for years to find something that would help him through his trauma, making countless visits to different U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs' clinics across the country. But then he met Lily.

"I've been through so many therapies, I was kind of tired of them," says Holmes, a former U.S. Army radio transmission systems operator who grapples with PTSD and the long-term effects of TBI from a mortar explosion in Iraq. "It was in my journey in trying to find something that worked that I found the horses."

At a Veteran's Coalition meeting hosted at Pennsylvania Warhorse's ranch, Holmes noticed just about every veteran had taken time to approach a horse, and every veteran – who he noted had a grim expression on their face most of the time – was smiling.

"That really stood out, and I knew there was something going on here," Holmes recalls. "I couldn't explain it – couldn't put my finger on it – but I knew it was worth checking out."

During equine therapy, which is often paired with other methods such as cognitive behavioral therapy and experiential therapy, patients are taught how to groom and care for their horse (or horses). They're also taught to speak with them openly and honestly. Even after completing the six-week program, Holmes still visits Lily, who he refers to as his therapist, and other horses several times a month, continuing – as many program alumni volunteer to do – to care for his four-legged friends.

"The same thing your battle buddies, your team, other veterans give you – [the horses] give you," Holmes says. "You don't have to deal in vulnerability, and that is comforting when you're coming out of a whole bunch of hurt."

"Dealing with the after effect of TBI, it's really hard to manage emotions – really powerful emotions – but the horses, when I see them, they run up to me and nudge me, give me a hug," he says. "It's faster than any medication out there – and no repercussions or side effects, not one."

Multiple studies, including a 2020 report published in *Frontiers in Veterinary Science*, indicate humans' and horses' heart rates begin to synchronize when close to one another.

"There's an honesty in the relationship when you ask a horse to do something," Simpson says. "You have to slow down. It's hard to explain, but ... come visit the horses, and you'll get it."

Studies are still at a loss to describe exactly why it works, but few argue against the results. To visit the horses yourself, call 717-945-4616 or visit pennsylvaniawarhorse.org.

"No philosophers so thoroughly understand us as dogs and horses."

– Herman Melville, novelist and poet



HORSE SENSE: Shawn Holmes, right, a U.S. Army veteran from Gettysburg, pets Molly, a therapy horse at the Pennsylvania Warhorse ranch in Grantville. Also shown is the organization's founder and Executive Director Donna Simpson.

In & Around

Valley Rural Electric Cooperative

Just south of the center of the state lies some of the most beautiful and serene forests and bodies of water that Pennsylvania has to offer. It's also home to Huntingdon-based Valley Rural Electric Cooperative, which serves more than 22,000 homes, farms and businesses across more than 2,800 miles of line spanning eight counties.

Raystown Lake — home of the Raystown Hydroelectric Plant, which provides about 3% of all electricity used by Pennsylvania rural electric cooperative consumer-members — is rife with aquatic attractions, from the Seven Points Marina to the Tatman Run Beach and onward to the Raystown Lake Waterpark. But if you'd rather stick to woodland strolls, the area surrounding the lake offers truly breathtaking views.

Farther south, sandwiched between the Tuscarora and Sidling



SERENE SCENE: Raystown Lake, as seen from Hawn's Overlook on the northern side, provides numerous recreational and educational programs to visitors. The lake also provides power to electric cooperatives in Pennsylvania and New Jersey via the Raystown Hydroelectric Plant.

Hill mountain ranges, you can take a self-guided tour through Fulton County's Frontier Barn Quilt Trail. Featuring more than 200 unique hand-painted quilt blocks in every township in the county, the trail provides budding adventurers with the history behind each facility and the significance of each quilt's design.

There's always more to explore. Have you found any hidden gems or generally cool places in your

area? Tell us about it at CommunityCorner@prea.com.



Main Office: Huntingdon, Pa.
Consumer-members served: 22,211
Website: valleyrec.com

Co-op Q&A

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

JANUARY'S QUESTION

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

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

FEBRUARY'S QUESTION

We hear love is in the air. Tell us about someone or something that makes your heart happy.

Send your response by **MONDAY, DEC. 18**, with "February 2024 Q&A" in the subject line.

NOVEMBER'S RESPONSES

No matter what life throws at you, there's always something to be thankful for. What made you grateful in 2023?



"In 2023, I am thankful for life! In April 2022, life threw at me a massive heart attack! . . . I am so thankful for the emergency room and catheterization lab personnel who were able to get me stabilized and ready to be transferred to the Cleveland Clinic, where eventually I received life-saving surgery. Penn Highlands also provided excellent cardiac rehab services to help me regain my strength when I was able to return home. I am truly thankful for the gift of life!"

— MARY RISIK, UNITED ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

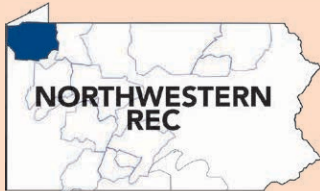


"We attended a performance of 'Million Dollar Quartet' at the Totem Pole Playhouse. We found it so uplifting and professionally staged and acted that we were truly thankful for that wonderful venue of joy tucked away in the woods. It's close to the blacksmith shop of Thaddeus Stevens, whom we both so admire and whose statue stands in front of the Gettysburg courthouse. We grow more grateful each year for the happiness that Pennsylvania provides us, especially when life throws curveballs our way."

— KATHY MEGYERI, ADAMS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative Association, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

NORTHWESTERN REC

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www.northwesternrec.com

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Amy Wellington, Editor

New Co-op Promotion to Expand Broadband Internet in Unserved Areas



RYAN MELLER

PART OF OUR LONG-STANDING MISSION as a cooperative is to help improve the quality of life for members in our areas of influence. We are an electric company first and foremost, but as a member-owned cooperative, we are sometimes asked to bring other services to our rural areas that are scarce or absent.

It was before my time here, but many of you may remember when Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) dabbled in the septic business in the early 2000s. There was a need for a revolutionary septic system that would allow our members

to build their homes in areas where traditional septic systems were denied. After due diligence, a few Pennsylvania co-ops, including ours, introduced the Co-op RFS III, an alternative, onlot sewage disposal system.

Long story short, we are no longer in the septic business, but we were able to help facilitate and satisfy an unserved need in our rural communities. If it makes sense financially (remember: we are a not-for-profit entity, owned by our members), and studies show an unmet need, co-ops will step up.

Long before the COVID-19 pandemic, we studied the need for high-speed broadband internet in our service territory. We surveyed our membership and conducted focus groups on the matter.

There are several internet service providers (ISP) in the area, yet several locations in our service territory do not have any access to high-speed internet. Studies also indicated the cost for Northwestern REC to provide broadband over power lines greatly outweighed what members were willing to pay for the service. Therefore, it didn't make sense financially for the cooperative to dabble in high-speed internet.

So, what can we do to help facilitate and meet the rural broadband challenge? We hope by offering our "One Buck Deal" to all the ISPs in the area, they will jump on our poles at a discounted fee to get high-speed internet to even our most remote members.

Third-party companies must do two things before attaching their cable to a co-op pole: They must apply for an attachment permit and agree to an annual joint-use fee. That fee helps cover the maintenance costs of each pole. Under the One Buck Deal, ISPs must still apply for an attachment permit, but will pay a discounted joint-use fee of \$1 per pole per year for six years.

This deal is only applicable in areas on our lines that do not currently have wired broadband available. An area may still be eligible for the One Buck Deal if broadband internet access can only be achieved via satellite.

We can't promise high-speed internet will be available to all our members any time soon, but we are hopeful this deal will help to expand broadband into many of our unserved rural areas. Watch for more updates on this topic in future issues of *Penn Lines* or feel free to email us at info@northwesternrec.com.

Cooperatively yours,

RYAN MELLER
PRESIDENT & CEO

Thanks and Giving

AMY WELLINGTON, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

SOMEONE ONCE TOLD ME, “If you’re unable to give financially, why not donate your time?” Back then, I was a young mother of three, living paycheck to paycheck, but I was in good health. Her words struck a chord with me. I couldn’t financially donate to the non-profit organization she was championing, but I was able to donate my time.

For several years, I served on the committee responsible for Make a Difference Day in Meadville. With some of my own DIY experience, I ended up being responsible for painting projects, which were considered semi-skilled jobs. It was physically hard work, but I enjoyed helping people. And my children, who also participated, learned the value of volunteer work.

Unfortunately, the physical demands of the work became too much for me, and I eventually had to resign from the committee. But by that time, my kids were adults, and I was in a better place financially to increase my annual monetary donation. Life had come full circle.

Perhaps you’ve had a hard time in your life, too — a time when you were struggling to make ends meet and needed a hand up. Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative’s (REC) Member-to-Member (M2M) fund was created in the 1980s to help struggling members pay their electric bills. Perhaps, facing your own personal struggle, you found it necessary to apply for a M2M hardship grant to keep your lights on. There is no shame in that. The M2M fund was created just for that reason; it’s a hand up, not a handout.

Funds for the M2M program are raised through member

donations and our annual M2M golf outing. If life for you has come full circle, maybe you are now able to pay it forward by making a one-time donation to M2M or by signing up for Operation Round-Up — where your electric bill is rounded up to the nearest dollar and the spare change is donated to M2M.

Winter is hard on electric bills, even for those who have gas as a heating source. In addition to our M2M program, other assistance is available. The opening day of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) was Nov. 1. LIHEAP helps low-income families pay their heating bills, and both cash and crisis grants are available through April 5, 2024. Call 866-857-7095 or visit compass.state.pa.us for more information.

Have you ever considered giving the gift of electricity? A gift certificate can make your gift-giving easy. Best of all, you don’t have to agonize over colors or sizes, standing in line for exchanges is never necessary, and you don’t even have to wrap it. But as with all presents, it truly is the thought that counts.

If you would like to make a gift of electricity to a fellow cooperative member, fill out the coupon below and return it with your payment enclosed to Northwestern REC. We’ll either send you the certificate or, if you wish to remain anonymous, we’ll send the acknowledgement to the member. You can also make an anonymous payment online with the “Quick Pay” option at NorthwesternREC.com.

May your Thanksgiving be full of life, and your life be full of thanks and giving. 🍂

GIFT CERTIFICATE AVAILABLE FOR ANY HOLIDAY:

To: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

I would like to purchase a \$_____ gift of electricity to be credited to the account of the person(s) above.

From: _____

I wish to remain anonymous.

Please make checks payable to: Northwestern REC, P.O. Box 207, Cambridge Springs, PA 16403.

Co-op Teacher Grant Helps Save the Day

AMY WELLINGTON, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

RIGHT BEFORE THE 2022 SCHOOL YEAR BEGAN, DeAnna Sopher, then a sixth grade teacher at Seton Catholic School in Meadville, was assigned to teach first grade technology. Like those in so many other school districts today, Seton students are assigned iPads to use for classwork throughout the school year.

“The best way to learn technology at this age is to play learning games on learning apps like ABCYa,” Sopher says. “I want them to explore and try out different activities that are engaging, meaningful, and fun. I don’t want them focused on getting the ‘perfect’ score.”

But without a paid subscription, the ABCYa app was limited to a few games and featured cumbersome advertisements. In September 2022, Sopher reached out to Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) for a Clearly Brighter Teacher Grant to help cover the subscription fee, which would provide unlimited (and ad-free) access to the app for up to 30 devices.

Sopher was one of 14 teachers to receive a Clearly Brighter Teacher Grant in 2022. At Northwestern REC, we recognize the children of today are the members of tomorrow. The Clearly Brighter Teacher Grant Program is designed to reach these kids by helping their teachers afford innovative and effective educational curriculum not covered by traditional school financing.

Individual teachers can apply for grants up to \$250, while teams of teachers (two or more) can apply for grants up to \$500. Each year, the co-op awards a total of \$4,000 through this grant program. (Grant applicants or their schools are not required to be on co-op lines, but are expected to be located within Northwestern REC’s service territory.)

Now in its 20th year, the Clearly Brighter Teacher Grant is the epitome of co-op principle No. 7, “concern for community.” Northwestern REC is locally owned and operated. The communities we serve as a cooperative are the same communities our employees are raising their families in. At Northwestern REC, we want the best for our communities and all our children.

“I want to thank you for allowing teachers like me the opportunity to apply for grants that help us out in the classroom,” Sopher says. “The subscription to the ABCYa website without ads and access to all the games was a big help with my last-minute assignment of teaching first grade technology.”

Without the members of Northwestern REC, the Clearly Brighter Teacher Grant would not exist.

The next Clearly Brighter Teacher Grant application season will open on May 1, 2024. More information can be



found at [NorthwesternREC.com](https://www.northwesternrec.com).

Northwestern REC is happy to announce the award recipients for 2023:

- ▶ Bradley Dutchcot, Cambridge Springs Elementary; elementary technology classroom resources, kindergarten to sixth grades
- ▶ Jennifer Higgins, Cambridge Springs Elementary; reading/math intervention tools, second to sixth grades
- ▶ Tina Walsh, Cambridge Springs Elementary; Telestrations drawing game, third to sixth grades
- ▶ Beth Heuchert, First District Elementary; cooking supplies and books to complement curriculum, primarily second and third grades
- ▶ Holly Yoder, homeschool program; Homeschool Journey, kindergarten through first grades
- ▶ Scott Hutchison, James W. Parker Middle School, advanced robotics, seventh to eighth grades
- ▶ Amber Frazier, Maplewood Elementary; Little Engineers Soaring to Great Heights, fifth to sixth grades
- ▶ Carissa Williams, McKean Elementary; Adopt a Pet & Run an Animal Shelter (reading and writing), third and fourth grade learning support*
- ▶ Shea Herbstritt, Meadville Area Senior High; Learning Life Skills, ninth to 12th grades
- ▶ Carissa Williams, Meadville Area Senior High; vinyl cutter and supplies for technology education classroom, ninth to 12th grades*
- ▶ Chris Greco, Saegertown High School; increasing biology knowledge through hands-on learning, ninth grade
- ▶ Annette M. Egan-Kidd, Seton Catholic School; flexible seating for students in the library, prekindergarten through eighth grades
- ▶ Cathleen Gorman, Seton Catholic School; exploring science with “Brainpop,” sixth to eighth grades
- ▶ Laura McWright, Seton Catholic School; middle school math games, fifth to eighth grades 📧

*No relation

What to Do with a Smart Plug and Other Surprising Energy Savings Tips

AMY WELLINGTON, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

DO ANY OF YOU REMEMBER the Clapper? I was surprised (and proud) my Gen Z daughter was familiar with the “clap-on, clap-off” device from the 80s. The Clapper can switch any gadget on or off with a hand clap.

If you attended our 87th Annual Meeting in August, you received a similar device. Like the original Clapper, our smart plug allows you to power any gadget using your voice through Alexa or Google Home Assistant or via an app on your smartphone or tablet.

These handy devices can ultimately help reduce your electric bill and provide some peace of mind as well. As a novice quilter, I plan to use my smart plug with my clothes iron. So every time I leave the house and wonder if I left the iron on, I can open the app from my smartphone to check and then power it off remotely, if necessary.

How are you using your new smart plug? Send your suggestions to info@northwesternrec.com.

If you want to get super “smart” in your home and save even more on your electric bill, consider installing smart lightbulbs or smart power strips. They work the same way as smart plugs.

Programmable light switches work in a similar way. They are inexpensive and easy to install. You might spend up to \$15 on a programmable switch, but they can automatically control lights and fans when someone forgets to flip the switch.

Wasted electricity, also known as “vampire load,” adds up quickly. According to the National Resource Defense Council, the average American spends around \$200 a year on inactive electronics so be sure to shut those devices off.

To further save on energy bills, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) also recommends the use of dishwashers. These machines use 4 to 5 gallons of water



per cycle, compared to the 20 gallons typically used with handwashing. The air-dry setting on dishwashers also uses 15% less power.

And one last surprising energy-saving tip: The EPA estimates an average family could save more than 330 kilowatt-hours of electricity each year by replacing its showerhead with an energy-efficient one. That’s enough power to run your home for 11 days!

As your Touchstone Energy Cooperative, we are always here for you. Providing education and training is one of our seven cooperative principles. Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative is a self-sustaining, not-for-profit rural electric distribution cooperative owned by those who receive its service — you, our consumer-members. It is our duty to help you find ways to be more energy efficient and ultimately save on your electric bill. For more energy-saving tips and related articles, visit NorthwesternREC.com.

Need Help? Don't Know Where to Turn?



DIAL 2-1-1

or visit PA211NW.org

FIND HELP. GET CONNECTED.

2-1-1 connects you to information about:
Aging Services • Child & Youth Services
Counseling • Education/Training • Food/Shelter/Clothing
Health Services • Parenting • Support Groups
Substance Abuse • and much more!

PENNSYLVANIA
2-1-1
Northwest



Power Pole Clutter

Flyers, satellite dishes, posters, basketball hoops, decorative lights, even hunting stands. You name it, someone has tried to staple, nail or tie it to a power pole. Here's a quick look at the dangers and pitfalls associated with unauthorized pole attachments.

Illegal

Many state and local laws and the National Electrical Safety Code prohibit any unauthorized items on poles. Utilities can face fines if these attachments aren't removed.



Pole Damage

Even small holes can allow moisture and insects past the pole sealant, which can shorten the life of the pole or weaken it and cause it to fall in a storm.



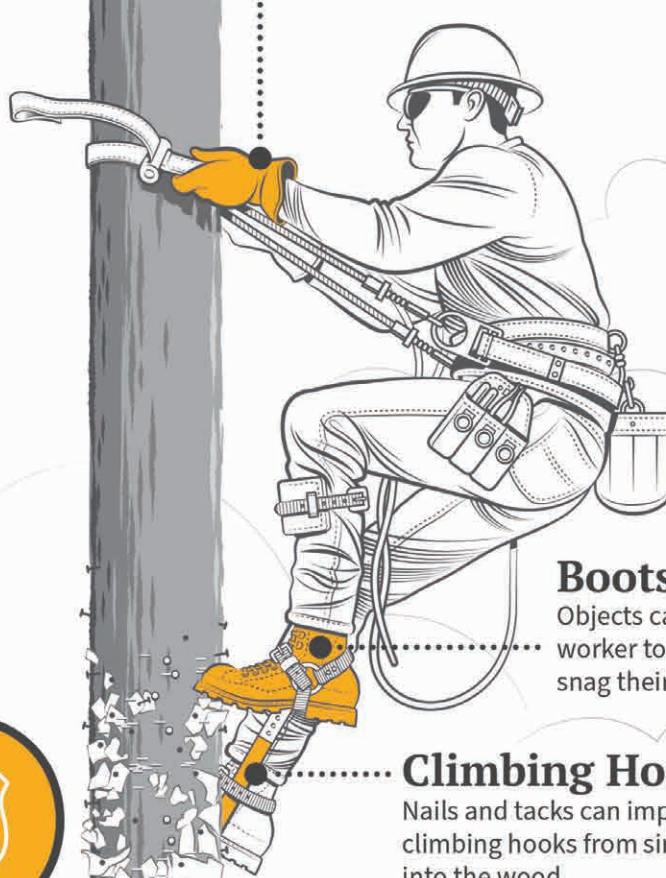
Hinders Repairs

Posters and flyers can hide identifying markers on poles and slow repair work.



Gloves

Staples, tacks and nails can puncture a lineworker's insulated rubber gloves and expose them to electric shock.



Boots

Objects can cause a worker to fall if they snag their boots.

Climbing Hooks

Nails and tacks can impede climbing hooks from sinking into the wood.



Dangerous

A person who gets too close to energized lines while attaching an object can be electrocuted.



Distraction

Some materials posted on poles, like mirrors or holiday decorations, can be a distraction to drivers.

Energy-Saving Gadgets and Gizmos

Four tips for getting the right smart technologies for your home

PAUL WESSLUND

WITH THE HOLIDAYS APPROACHING, shoppers will soon be eyeing an abundance of devices and gadgets for friends and loved ones — or to buy for themselves.

When it comes to cool new technology, many consumers are turning to smart home devices that offer convenience as well as other benefits, including one often-overlooked perk: energy savings. With so many options available, choosing the best tech for your needs can be overwhelming.

Here are four tips to help you determine the right smart home technologies for your home:

1. Ask yourself how smart you want your home to be.

Smart plugs, energy-use apps and home monitors are cool devices that

can help you save energy. But to make the most of them, it helps to understand how they work. Before investing your time and money, ask yourself: How much technology do you want? What are your habits when it comes to setting up and using the latest “thing”? If you like to tinker, an energy app on your phone could be fun and help you save money. But as electronics get smarter, even non-tech savvy people are finding them easier to use.

2. Get the most bang for your buck.

The most frequently recommended energy-saving device is a smart thermostat. And that makes sense because the thermostat controls your heating and cooling, which account for the most energy consumption in your home. With a smart thermostat, you can do things like program an energy-use schedule, which will adjust the heating or cooling when you’re sleeping or away from home. Additional smart thermostat features include detecting movement in a room to adjust energy use, learning your daily habits, responding to voice commands and tracking the weather.

Other devices that can produce energy savings for minimal cost and effort include smart lightbulbs, outlets, and charging stations.

3. Determine your energy-saving goals.

A home energy monitor is one way to save on electricity, and the range of choices means you’ll need to ask how much you’re willing to pay and if it’s worthwhile. One study found that spending about \$1,800 on a full-home, commercially installed energy monitor could save about 16% on electric bills and pay for itself in 10 to 15 years.

Another, less-ambitious option: Download an app on your phone so you can keep track of your electricity use, and even turn smart appliances on and off when you’re away.

4. Do a simple energy checkup.

Take a walk through your home and identify everything that uses electricity. You’ll likely notice a lot of functions that could be managed with smart devices.

If your phone sits plugged in long after it’s charged, smart power strips and smart outlets can stop the electricity use when the battery is at 100%. Smart lightbulbs can be controlled with an app, saving energy and giving your home that lived-in look when you’re away. Ceiling fans can now adjust themselves for the best air flow depending on the temperature. Motion detectors can turn indoor lights on and off when you enter or leave a room, and even solar-powered outdoor lights can detect when you’re approaching and light the way.

With just a little planning, you can make sure this gift-giving season is merry, bright — and smart. 🎁

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.

GERALD, PIXABAY USER



GET SMART: When it comes to cool new technology, many consumers are turning to smart home devices that offer convenience as well as other benefits, including energy savings.

Scientific Discovery Stuns Doctors

Biblical Bush Relieves Joint Discomfort in as Little as 5 Days

Legendary “special herb” gives new life to old joints without clobbering you. So safe you can take it every day without worry.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 54 million Americans are suffering from joint discomfort.

This epidemic rise in aching joints has led to a search for alternative treatments—as many sufferers want relief without the harmful side effects of conventional “solutions.”

Leading the way from nature’s pharmacy is the new “King of Oils” that pioneering Florida MD and anti-aging specialist Dr. Al Sears calls “the most significant breakthrough I’ve ever found for easing joint discomfort.”

Biblical scholars treasured this “holy oil.” Ancient healers valued it more than gold for its medicinal properties. Marco Polo prized it as he blazed the Silk Road. And Ayurvedic practitioners, to this day, rely on it for healing and detoxification.

Yet what really caught Dr. Sears’ attention is how modern medical findings now prove this “King of Oils” can powerfully...

Deactivate 400 Agony-Causing Genes

If you want genuine, long-lasting relief for joint discomfort, you must address inflammation. Too much inflammation will wreak havoc on joints, break down cartilage and cause unending discomfort. This is why so many natural joint relief solutions try to stop one of the main inflammatory genes called COX-2.

But the truth is, there are hundreds of agony-causing genes like COX-2, 5-LOX, iNOS, TNF, Interleukin 1,6,8 and many more—and stopping just one of them won’t give you all the relief you need.

Doctors and scientists now confirm the “King of Oils”—Indian Frankincense—deactivates not one but 400 agony-causing genes. It does so by shutting down the inflammation command center called Nuclear Factor Kappa Beta.

NK-Kappa B is like a switch that can turn 400 inflammatory genes “on” or “off.” A study in *Journal of Food Lipids* reports that Indian Frankincense powerfully deactivates NF-Kappa B. This journal adds that Indian Frankincense is “so powerful it shuts down the pathway triggering aching joints.”

Relief That’s 10 Times Faster... and in Just 5 Days

Many joint sufferers prefer natural solutions but say they work too slowly. Take the best-seller glucosamine. Good as it is, the National Institutes of Health reports that glucosamine takes as long as eight weeks to work.

Yet in a study published in the *International Journal of Medical Sciences*, 60 patients with stiff knees took 100 mg of Indian Frankincense



The active ingredient in Mobilify soothes aching joints in as little as 5 days

or a placebo daily for 30 days. Remarkably, Indian Frankincense “significantly improved joint function and relieved discomfort in as early as five days.” That’s relief that is 10 times faster than glucosamine.

78% Better Relief Than the Most Popular Joint Solution

In another study, people suffering from discomfort took a formula containing Indian Frankincense and another natural substance or a popular man-made joint solution every day for 12 weeks.

The results? Stunning! At the end of the study, 64% of those taking the Indian Frankincense formula saw their joint discomfort go from moderate or severe to mild or no discomfort. Only 28% of those taking the placebo got the relief they wanted. So Indian Frankincense delivered relief at a 78% better clip than the popular man-made formula.

In addition, in a randomized, double blind, placebo controlled study, patients suffering from knee discomfort took Indian Frankincense or a placebo daily for eight weeks. Then the groups switched and got the opposite intervention. Every one of the patients taking Indian Frankincense got relief. That’s a 100% success rate—numbers unseen by typical solutions.

In addition, *BMJ* (formerly the *British Medical Journal*) reports that Indian Frankincense is safe for joint relief — so safe and natural you can take it every day.

Because of clinically proven results like this, Dr. Sears has made Indian Frankincense the centerpiece of a new natural joint relief formula called **Mobilify**.

Great Results for Knees, Hips, Shoulders and Joints

Joni D. says, “**Mobilify** really helps with

soreness, stiffness and mild temporary pain. The day after taking it, I was completely back to normal—so fast.” Shirley M. adds, “Two weeks after taking **Mobilify**, I had no knee discomfort and could go up and down the staircase.” Larry M. says, “After a week and a half of taking **Mobilify**, the discomfort, stiffness and minor aches went away... it’s almost like being reborn.” And avid golfer Dennis H. says, “I can attest to **Mobilify** easing discomfort to enable me to pursue my golfing days. Definitely one pill that works for me out of the many I have tried.”

How to Get Mobilify

Right now, the only way to get this powerful, unique formula that clobbers creaking joints in as little as five days without clobbering you is with Dr. Sears’ breakthrough **Mobilify** formula. It is not available in stores.

To secure your bottle of this breakthrough natural joint discomfort reliever, buyers should call with Sears Health Hotline at **1-800-211-9162**. “The Hotline allows us to ship the product directly to customers.”

Dr. Sears believes in this product so much, he offers a 100% money-back guarantee on every order. “Just send me back the bottle and any unused product within 90 days, and I’ll send you your money back,” said Dr. Sears.

The Hotline will be taking orders for the next 48 hours. After that, the phone number may be shut down to allow them to restock. Call **1-800-211-9162** to secure your limited supply of **Mobilify**. If you are not able to get through due to extremely high call volume, please try again! Call NOW to qualify for this limited time offer provided at a significant discount. To take advantage of this exclusive offer use Promo Code: **PLMB1123** when you call.

Mini-Split Systems are Gaining Traction

LESLIE TATE

A DUCTLESS AIR CONDITIONER, also referred to as a mini-split system or air-source heat pump, offers a variety of options for heating and cooling, particularly for older homes and buildings. Several years ago, mini-split models were thought to be inefficient for colder climates, but these systems have made great strides, making them a more viable option for most U.S. regions.

Installing a mini-split system can provide several benefits, but the capability to regulate temperatures in specific rooms or areas of the home is the most attractive feature.

An indoor air-handling unit (evaporator) and an outdoor compressor/condenser are the two major components of a mini-split system. In many ways, mini-split air conditioners operate like conventional air conditioning systems. In cooling mode, the system transfers heat from inside the home to the outside. With a central air system, cold air is blasted through all of the ducts in the home from a single air handler, such as a large fan in an attic or basement. Because a mini-split can blow air from up to six independent air handlers, it can regulate temperatures for different rooms or areas inside the home.

Mini-splits are a viable alternative to duct systems for home additions or for homes where a duct system may not be practical. When a duct system is too expensive to install, a mini-split system can efficiently heat and cool a space while keeping installation costs down.

A mini-split can also settle ther-



PHYXTER HOME SERVICES

TALK TO AN EXPERT: A qualified contractor can offer advice on the size of the system and the number of units you will need.

mostat disagreements in a home or business for those with different comfort preferences. For example, to give teachers control over the temperature in their spaces, mini-split systems are frequently installed in classrooms.

Compared to conventional HVAC systems, mini-splits can significantly reduce energy consumption and have the potential to save up to 30% on cooling costs and 50% on heating costs. Additionally, inverter technology, which enables variable-speed operation, is frequently included with mini-split systems. This results in increased energy efficiency and a cheaper cost of operation as the system adjusts its output based on the actual heating or cooling demand.

In addition to greater control over heating and cooling, mini-splits can also be managed with a mobile app, smart thermostat or remote control. They provide better air quality, and homeowners can easily replace the filters themselves, saving money on the pricey duct cleanings needed for

conventional air conditioners. Reheat dehumidification is a common feature of mini-split systems to maintain a steady room temperature while lowering humidity.

A few factors should be considered before installing a mini-split system. Determining the right size and quantity of units is a key first step. The location of the system is another important factor to consider. A mini-split should be installed where it will help maximize air distribution throughout the home. Additionally, your home should be properly sealed for the mini-split system to operate efficiently. A qualified contractor can offer advice on these factors.

For many homeowners, a mini-split ductless heating and cooling system can be a fantastic alternative for heating and cooling. 🏠

LESLIE TATE 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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 **86%** of home heating fire deaths involve space heaters.

Source: National Fire Protection Association (NFPA)

Safe Electricity.org

Time Together in a Tree

STEVE PIATT

IF YOU'RE A PENNSYLVANIA HUNTER, chances are pretty good the white-tailed deer is your main focus when you head afield. That's not the case with Paula and me; we're passionate spring gobbler hunters and also prefer to pursue pheasants in the fall with our two Labrador retrievers.

That said, we enjoy our time in a tree stand every fall, whether I'm going solo with a bow or we're double-teaming whitetails in our two-person stands.

With any luck, I will have already tagged a buck during the archery season, so by the time the Keystone State's firearms opener arrives, I'm serving as a *de facto* hunting guide, with Paula as the shooter.

We know full well we could mathematically double our chances if we took separate watches. But we're perfectly content to enjoy the excitement and anticipation of opening day together, our confidence in our setup typically confirmed by trail camera images and scouting missions.

That confidence can slowly erode, however — and in some years, by 10:30 a.m. — when we've already eaten our sandwiches, drank most of our coffee, and haven't seen a squirrel, let alone a whitetail buck or doe.

Suddenly, the guide's decision-making is called into question, especially at midday when several deer bound along the ridge well above our location but tight to another tree stand you decided wasn't where you would set up this morning.

"They always run that ridge," Paula says.

I say nothing, a lesson learned after 36 years of togetherness.



Paula and Steve Piatt

We return home, bail the dogs out of their kennel, put our guns and gear away, and consider tomorrow's options, of which there are several. We decide to remain together, convinced the deer — including a couple of fine bucks we've seen regularly on camera — are still in their typical patterns of movement. We take the upper stand the next morning, armed with rifles, sandwiches and coffee.

By noon, we've heard a couple shots in the distance, watched a porcupine occupy his — and our — morning by doing very little, and caught a glimpse of a fisher bounding through the woods, even documenting the rare sighting with some cellphone video.

But no deer.

The guide is feeling the pressure and begins his own mental second-guessing, debating stand selection and location, and kicking himself for not moving one ladder stand further down the hill a month or so earlier. He tries to keep his hunter/wife patient while hiding his own impatience.

It's that way nearly every year, it seems: a roller coaster of frustration mixed with occasional success.

Heading into another season, Paula offers up her own idea.

"I think we should split up," she concedes.

"What? After 36 years?" I know what she means but feign ignorance, which I can do with relative ease.

"I mean hunt different stands," she says, knowing I know she means just that and tossing me a "you're an idiot" look.

I take it a step further, sending Paula out to a stand of her choice on opening day while I mentor an adult hunter just getting into the game. She checks in occasionally via text message, updating me on deer movement and letting me know she's safely in the lower stand.

Heath and I hunt on another property a few miles away, one with spotty cell service. But eventually a text from Paula works its way to my phone.

"Buck down."

Heath gladly agrees to exit his stand and help Paula with the field dressing and drag, knowing it's all part of the hunting experience. He admires Paula's 7-pointer and takes a lead role in hauling it up the hill to our truck.

"We can hunt together this week," Paula says as she replays her hunt.

I'll let Paula decide which stand we'll take. 🍷

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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Learn more at

The logo for Safe Electricity.org features the word 'Safe' in a bold, black, sans-serif font above the word 'Electricity.org' in a similar font. A stylized black circle with a white dot inside is positioned to the left of the text, partially overlapping the 'E' in 'Electricity'.

Savor the Holidays

ANNE M. KIRCHNER

IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR again. Time to plan the perfect holiday meal. Too often, I obsess over providing creative, tasty meals for Thanksgiving and Christmas gatherings. Too often, I focus on festive table decorations. And too often, I fuss over making sure my house is clean and presentable. Somewhere along the way, I forget the true meaning of the holidays.

This year, I am thankful for family and friends who make my life more meaningful and complete. I appreciate the moments spent together throughout the entire year. Dedicating time to reflect, laugh and support one another is the best way to celebrate the holidays. This month's recipes are easy to prepare, allowing more time to reconnect with those we care about. 🍷

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



HOLIDAY COLESLAW

- 4 cups shredded kale
- 4 cups shredded green cabbage
- 1 large Gala apple, diced
- ¼ cup lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- ½ cup dried cranberries
- ½ cup pumpkin seeds

Place the kale, cabbage and diced apple in a large serving bowl; set aside. In a small bowl, whisk together the lemon juice, olive oil, salt and black pepper. Pour the dressing over the kale mixture and toss to combine. Before serving, add the dried cranberries and pumpkin seeds; toss lightly. *Makes 6 to 8 servings.*



TWICE-BAKED AVOCADO POTATOES

- 6 russet potatoes
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 teaspoon garlic salt
- 3 tablespoons butter
- 1 avocado
- ½ cup plain Greek yogurt
- 2 cups grated cheddar cheese, plus more for topping
- 3 strips bacon, cooked and crumbled
- 1 jalapeno pepper, finely diced

Wash the potatoes, then use a fork to poke holes into each one. Rub the potatoes with olive oil. Place the potatoes on the top oven rack and bake for 60 minutes or until they are easily pierced with a knife. When cool enough to handle, cut the potatoes in half lengthwise. Scoop out the potato leaving enough skin to hold the filling. Place the scooped-out potatoes into a bowl. Add the garlic salt, butter, avocado, yogurt, cheddar cheese, bacon and jalapeno pepper. Smash until the ingredients are well combined. Place the potato skins in a baking dish. Scoop the potato mixture into the skins and top with cheddar cheese. Bake at 350 degrees for 20 to 30 minutes. *Makes 12 servings.*



CRANBERRY APPLE SAUCE

- ½ cup sugar
- ¾ cup water
- 1 teaspoon cardamom
- 12 ounces fresh cranberries
- 1 large Gala apple, peeled and diced

Combine all ingredients in a medium saucepan. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat to medium. Simmer until the cranberries begin to pop and the mixture slightly thickens, approximately 15 to 20 minutes. Remove the cranberry apple sauce from the heat; cool to room temperature or chill before serving. *Makes 8 to 10 servings.*

YouTube, Baked Oatmeal and a Bacon-Scented Candle

MITCHELL KYD

MAPLE BUTTER BROWNIE. SALTED SNICKERDOODLE.

Cinnamon apple crumble. I admit it’s another guilty pleasure. I use my share of scented candles and wax melts, and at this time of year, most of what I’m burning smells like a dessert cart. Sadly, the aromas are present in my kitchen far more frequently than the actual treats (but let’s not muddy the waters with what I’m burning versus what was burnt).

You know what tantalizing smell I’ve never purchased in a jar with a wick? Bacon. Other than the smell of fresh coffee, is there any other scent that can wriggle its way into the farthest bedroom and lure reluctant late-sleepers downstairs with the promise that something great is waiting?

Because cleanup is so easy, I cook bacon in the oven now, not the skillet, but that doesn’t send the same signals to the brain. You must fake it while you bake it, so why haven’t I invested in a bacon-scented candle as a booster?

I warmed my first pumpkin pie melt of the season on a dreary, rainy day in September, and it transported me straight to the coming holidays. Like herding cats, corralling everyone for a family celebration takes more time than you think, so start

early. My holidays always include a gathering with the group I call “my other family.” Unrelated by blood or marriage, we cemented our ties through a tragic loss and have been together for decades.

In the early years, this family was small enough to assemble at Other Mom’s house with the help of highchairs and a kids’ table. As more spouses arrived and new babies followed, we moved to her basement. By the time our count was 30-plus, we had changed the tradition and were meeting in a church social hall.

Other Mom has been gone for several years, and after the pandemic squashed our holiday gathering, it could have been easy to let it fade away. It’s nearly impossible to pin down 55 people — toddlers to retirees — at this frenetic time of year, so we tweaked tradition again. The compromise was convening the full group for a summer picnic, but wrangling

only the senior members and their spouses together in December. That plan has morphed, too, bouncing from dinner in a restaurant to a breakfast potluck with me.

Last year, my kitchen counter was lined with baking dishes that arrived wedged in boxes and swaddled in tea towels. Sausage and egg casseroles, baked oatmeal with all the toppings, overnight French toast — it was all there. All I had to do was lay out the place settings, keep the coffee-maker filled and cook the bacon. There were no delusions about my contributions. Everyone knows my favorite thing to make for an event is a reservation.

After a five-star smorgasbord, we all migrated to sofas and recliners to digest breakfast and share news. The tree

lights shimmered and the playlist was streaming. Any leftover stress melted away in the warm glow of the log fire that burned beautifully on the flat screen, all from a fireplace far away thanks to YouTube. It was the perfect setting for posing two questions I had ready.

We went around the room, reflecting and responding to the first: If you could spend one Christmas with anyone, who would it be? I’m sure you can guess no one named an Oscar winner or political

figure. It was an important pause in our day to be grateful for holidays past. The second question lightened the mood: What is the best gift you’ve ever given? Faces lit up and laughter spilled out, but those stories stirred reminders of how much joy we get by giving.

After all our holiday changes, here’s what I know: Traditions aren’t tied to some fickle ideals, rituals, foods or surroundings. They have stronger roots. As long as families — and “other families” — stay connected and choose to get together, it doesn’t matter what shape those gatherings take. The essence of tradition endures. 🍷



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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Actual number of copies of single issue (September 2022) published nearest to filing date, (September 168,806).

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Average Mailed Outside-County Paid Subscriptions, 166,951 (September 167,563).

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Average Outside-County Copies, 339 (September 329).

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TOTAL DISTRIBUTION: Average, 168,064 (September 168,636).

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Peter A. Fitzgerald

Editor

DATE: 9-21-2023

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Nothing Takes a Minute

JOHN KASUN

ASK ANYONE WHAT TIME IT IS, and they normally reach for their cellphone. I remember the day when people were asked for the time, and they looked at their wristwatch. Today, if you want to see a wristwatch, you have to go to a flea market.

If you remember popular, conventional wristwatches, you will recall that men's watches were normally large, bold, striking and powerful looking, often with black faces to accent the fluorescent hands. A man's watch always had an impressive second hand that moved in short, definitive jerks, pausing slightly between seconds. The watch not only showed the correct time, but also was a constant reminder that time never stands still. The mere appearance of a man's watch stressed the importance of time.

Women's watches, on the other hand, were dainty, often contained tiny diamonds or bits of semi-precious stones and featured a coordinating delicate band with a clasp so small a lock pick was required to open it. But the thing I clearly remember about a woman's watch was the tiny, delicate face. It was all the watchmaker could

do to squeeze in some numbers. Many ladies' watches simply had four dots on the face, and I never remember a woman's watch with a second hand. I could be wrong and will pay closer attention to that fact the next time I am at the flea market.

Often, I think about how the size of a young woman's watch impacted the way she thought of time while growing up and how it later impacted her marriage and, in turn, her husband.

I don't know why, but every time my wife asks me to do something, she always says something like, "It won't take long," "It will just take a minute," or my favorite, "I need you for a second." Normally, she completely miscalculates the time required — not only the time to do the job, but also the time to get ready to do the job as well as the time to clean up the mess caused by doing the job.

The other day, I was busy on the computer trying to

meet a deadline for a column when the door to my office popped open and my wife cheerfully said, "I need you for a minute." Continuing to type without looking up, I asked, "Is the house on fire? If not, let me finish this column first."

"No, smarty," she replied, "I need to drill a hole in the wall to hang a plaque I bought. Oh, don't bother. I will do it myself. I'll just get your drill and hammer."

She used the magic words. Any time she asks for tools, she knows I will react immediately to avoid additional repair work. "You can get it hung in 15 minutes at the most and finish your column in plenty of time," she added, handing me the plaque.



It took me a few minutes to locate my drill, and I quickly discovered the battery needed to be charged. There were two hangers on the back of the plaque that needed to be specifically located to ensure it hung straight. I went to my workshop to get a square and got back just in time to remember I also needed a level, so it was back to the shop.

By now, the battery for the drill was charged enough to drill the holes required, and if I had remembered to also get the screws and wire I needed, I could have avoided a third trip to the workshop. The project went smoothly from that point, and after another trip to put all the tools away and a few minutes to clean up, I headed back to my office to complete the scheduled column. I sat down at the computer just as my wife popped in. "Your plaque is hung," I said. "It took me an hour and a half to get it done with all the trips I had to make."

"See, I told you it wouldn't take long," she said, smiling as she walked away.

I am not sure if women don't hear or if they simply ignore us men. I think it has a lot to do with those tiny watches they used to wear. 🙄

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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Thank You For Your Entries

NOVEMBER IS THE TIME to give thanks, and we would like to thank all of the amateur photographers who submitted photos for our 2023 “Rural Reflections” contest, which is now closed. Winning photos, chosen by an independent panel of judges, will be printed in the January and February issues of *Penn Lines*.

You can now begin submitting your photos for the 2024 contest. (See the submission information below.) If your photo wins top honors, you could receive a \$75 prize in one of our five contest categories: artistic, landscape, human subject, animal and editor’s choice. 📷

J.D. EHRENBERGER • UNITED ELECTRIC



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

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

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