

FEBRUARY 2026

PENNLINES

BIG DEMANDS, BIG QUESTIONS

What Data Centers Mean for
Communities and the Grid

MAKE YOUR OLD
WINDOWS OPEN
AND CLOSE LIKE NEW

SHARE A
HEARTWARMING
DISH

SEED-STARTING
MISTAKES... AND
HOW TO AVOID THEM

INSIDE!
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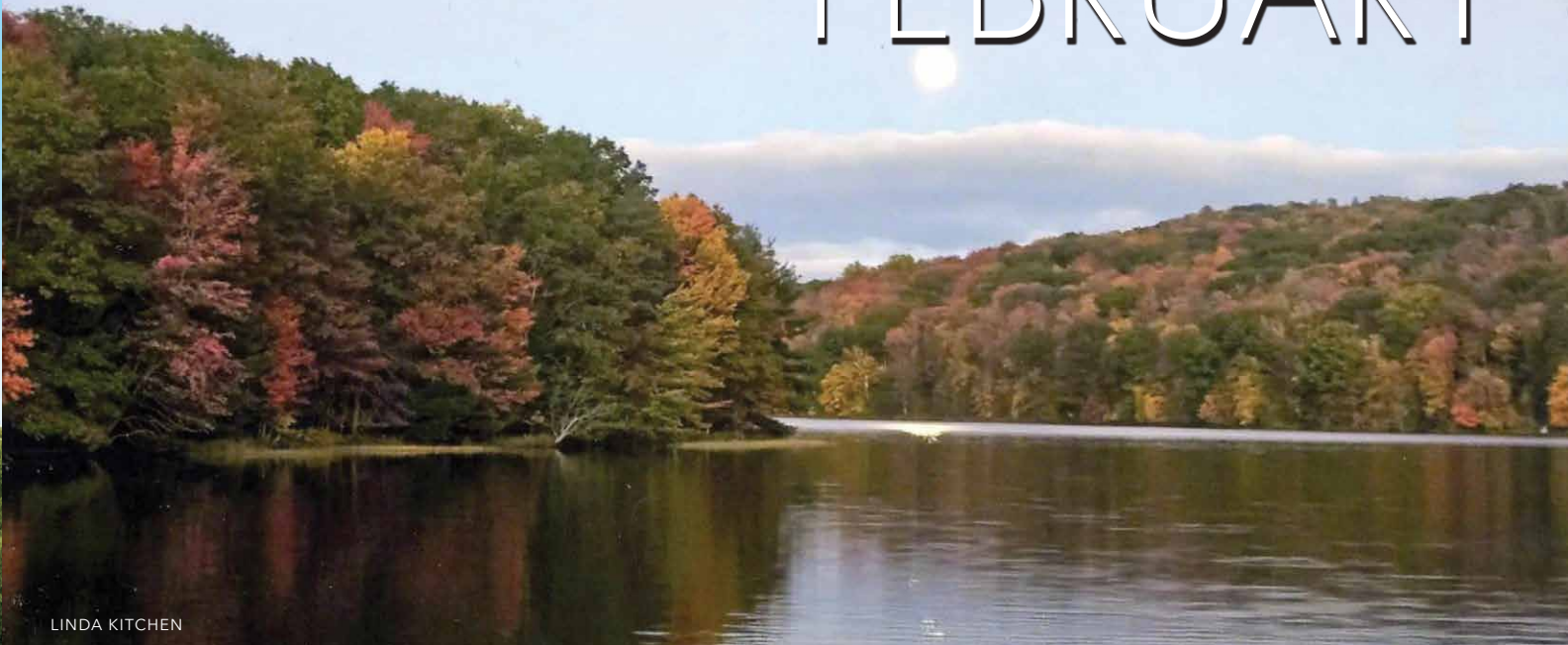


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FEBRUARY



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ON THE COVER
Data centers feed our need for everything from email to artificial intelligence and consume as much electricity as small cities. Some say Pennsylvania is "quickly emerging" as a major hub.

Delayed Delivery

When December Comes in January, it's a Problem for Our Readers



JILL M. ERCOLINO

MY PARENTS LOVE PENN LINES. They read it every month, often calling or texting with a comment about a story, a photo or a recipe they want to try. The December issue was no exception.

There was just one problem: That issue arrived a month late — in January.

As editor, that moment landed harder than I expected. Not because my parents complained — they didn't — but because it reflected what a growing number of readers have experienced in recent months. Too many issues of *Penn Lines* are arriving late. And when a magazine misses its moment, it's more than an inconvenience. It undermines its purpose.

So let's talk about why this is happening — and what it means.

First, what this is not. Late delivery is not the result of missed deadlines or production delays. Our communications team meets — and often beats — our printer deadlines every month. Stories are edited, designed, approved and sent on schedule. Our printer performs reliably and consistently. From our end, *Penn Lines* enters the mailstream on time.

But what happens after that is largely beyond our control.

Mail delays are a nationwide problem, not one unique to *Penn Lines* or to Pennsylvania. Periodicals across the country are experiencing inconsistent delivery, with rural areas often hit hardest. Changes in postal operations and transportation networks have made mail delivery less predictable, even when publications are mailed on schedule.

That unpredictability has real consequences for electric cooperatives.

When *Penn Lines* arrives late, time-sensitive information loses its effectiveness. Deadlines pass. Event notices arrive after the fact. Important updates meant to inform and protect members risk causing confusion instead. For cooperatives that rely on the magazine as a primary communications tool, delayed delivery undercuts its value.

Advertisers feel the impact as well. Businesses invest in *Penn Lines* to reach readers at the right time, whether to promote seasonal offerings, events or important enrollment periods. When delivery is delayed, that investment loses value.

This problem is not going unnoticed in the electric cooperative community. At the national level, co-op leaders are backing a resolution that urges the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, our advocate in Washington, D.C., to work with Congress, the administration, and the U.S. Postal Service to safeguard the needs of electric cooperatives and the communities they serve.

The resolution emphasizes the importance of the Postal Service's Universal Service Obligation, which requires it to provide reliable and affordable mail delivery for all, regardless of location. It also calls for solutions that will allow the Postal Service to uphold this obligation while improving rural service and keeping postal rates affordable.

These are not abstract policy concerns. They directly affect how cooperatives communicate with their members and how rural communities stay informed.

At *Penn Lines*, we take our responsibility seriously. We will continue to meet our deadlines, work closely with our partners, and advocate for the readers and advertisers who count on this magazine.

My parents eventually enjoyed their December issue — even if it arrived a little late. But for all of us on the magazine's staff, "eventually" isn't good enough. When *Penn Lines* is mailed on time, it should arrive on time. Reliability matters, whether we're talking electricity or a monthly magazine. Please, if you have additional questions or concerns, email me at editor@prea.com. 📧

JILL M. ERCOLINO
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FEBRUARY 2026
Vol. 62 • No. 2

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Penn Lines (USPS 929-700), the newsmagazine of Pennsylvania's electric cooperatives, is published monthly by the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association, 212 Locust Street, P.O. Box 1266, Harrisburg, PA 17108-1266. *Penn Lines* helps 168,000 households of co-op consumer-members understand issues that affect the electric cooperative program, their local co-ops, and their quality of life. Electric co-ops are not-for-profit, consumer-owned, locally directed, and taxpaying electric utilities. *Penn Lines* is not responsible for unsolicited manuscripts. The opinions expressed in *Penn Lines* do not necessarily reflect those of the editors, the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association, or local electric distribution cooperatives.

Subscriptions: Electric co-op members, \$8.52 per year through their local electric distribution cooperative. Preferred Periodicals postage paid at Harrisburg, PA 17107 and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes with mailing label to *Penn Lines*, 212 Locust Street, P.O. Box 1266, Harrisburg, PA 17108-1266.

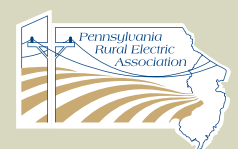
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CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION

In college, I used to think my mass communication teacher invented TMI – too much information. Week after week, he buried us in data: articles, news stories, magazine clippings – you name it, he dumped it on us. Reams of information flowed down the aisle in each class. This was long before email, so data overload was something you physically carried around with you.

Given the sheer volume, our concern was how much of it would be on the exam. As it turned out, none of it. He was just showing us mass communication in action. To him, if we got something out of all that information – if we found something interesting, or if we learned something new – then the transfer of knowledge was a success.

The Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association (PREA), the service organization that represents your local electric cooperative, has long believed information is essential to empowering cooperatives, their communities, and their members. PREA launched *Penn Lines* in 1966 with that purpose in mind: “To keep you up to date on matters pertaining to and affecting rural electric cooperatives.” As we celebrate 60 years of *Penn Lines*, that cooperative mission continues.

This year, PREA is introducing another effort to keep co-op communities informed.

Launched last month, “Inside the Lines” is a new podcast that highlights issues facing electric cooperatives across our region. In addition to important policy updates, the monthly podcast will also feature insights from cooperative leaders and the people who make our rural communities special.



The debut episode featured a discussion with Steve Brame, president & CEO of PREA and its sister organization, Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc., the generation supplier for our electric cooperatives. This month, the podcast explores data centers, which is also the focus of our February cover story in *Penn Lines*. “Inside the Lines” is available on Spotify, Apple Music, and wherever you get your podcasts, so please consider subscribing.

Rural electric cooperatives have a long tradition of communicating with their members. The podcast is just another way to continue the conversation – and keep that information flowing. I think my college professor would approve.

PETER A. FITZGERALD
EXECUTIVE EDITOR



CLOSE ENCOUNTERS: Pennsylvanians, puzzled by what they were seeing in the sky, have been sharing their stories with the National UFO Reporting Center. According to the group’s records, 135 unidentified flying objects were reported in such places as Clearfield and Altoona in 2025.

COMPANY IN THE COMMONWEALTH?

More than 100 UFO sightings reported across Pa. in 2025

Triangle-shaped lights in Clearfield. Teardrop-shaped lights in Altoona. A shaky, floating orb coinciding with a power outage in Bradford County. These were just some of the reports that the National UFO Reporting Center (NUFORC) received from Pennsylvanians in 2025.

In all, the center claimed 135 reports of unidentified flying objects (UFOs) were recorded throughout the Keystone State last year. Of those, the organization confirmed at least 20 came from satellites or rockets launched at night.

The NUFORC believes many sightings can be attributed to everything from Chinese lanterns to blimps, balloons and even search lights. That said, the organization acknowledged that some reports continue to have no solid explanation.

For humans — and aliens — who might be interested in launching their own investigations, the 2025 Pa. UFO reports can be found at nuforc.org.

MAKING NO CENTS

Penny production ends after more than 230 years in circulation

A penny can no longer be offered for your thoughts now that the U.S. Mint in Philadelphia has said it will end circulation of the one-cent coin in early 2026. The decision came after it was revealed that production costs outweighed the coin’s value. In 2024, it cost 3.69 cents to make a single penny, which resulted in an \$85 million loss for the U.S. Treasury.

Despite the halt in production, pennies will remain legal tender, as 114 billion of them remain in circulation and won’t be recalled or demonetized.

It was 1792 when the penny’s life began — the same year the U.S. Mint opened. Early copper coins featured Lady Liberty, while the familiar Lincoln cent was introduced in 1909. The most recent design, which began production in 2010, featured the Union Shield.

CELEBRATING 250 YEARS

Special exhibits, programs in Pa. celebrate founding of United States

With the United States turning 250 in 2026, the Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission has announced an array of events and programs to honor the anniversary.

“Pennsylvania 250: The Keystone of American History,” is a statewide initiative designed to showcase the Commonwealth’s central role in the founding and evolution of the nation.

At the State Museum of Pennsylvania in Harrisburg, “Revolutionary Things: Objects from the Collection” will feature more than 140 artifacts spanning three centuries of Pennsylvania and American history. The exhibition runs concurrently with “Illuminating Independence,” which features 35 original hand-illuminated copies of the Declaration of Independence created in the 1920s by Harrisburg penman Sherman Notestine. They will be on view at the museum through Aug. 2.

Other events slated for 2026 include

those at Old Economy Village in Ambridge, which will explore craftsmanship as a civic tradition, an event that will culminate with a Civil War Weekend May 2; and the Erie Maritime Museum, which will mark the return of the U.S. Brig Niagara on July 2 followed by a major July 4th celebration.

TRAVEL EXPENSES

Pa. Turnpike tolls to increase for 18th straight year

For nearly two decades, the price to travel along the Pennsylvania Turnpike has increased with the start of a new year, and 2026 is no different. On Jan. 4, a 4% hike in tolls went into effect across one of the state’s most traveled thoroughways. The increase is the lowest since 2014.

The additional revenue will be used to pay the Act 44 debt service. Act 44 requires the Turnpike Commission to provide \$450 million for repairs to statewide roads. As such, the commission said it will be required to raise tolls through at least 2051 because of its Act 44 obligations. 📌

TIME LINES



FEBRUARY 2016

A decade ago, *Penn Lines* examined something sweet for the month of February – but it wasn’t chocolate. Instead, it was Pennsylvania’s maple syrup scene, which continues to thrive today. Among those profiled were a Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) member who had a 200-tap sugar camp in Cambridge Springs, and another producer who carried on a syrup tradition started by his grandparents at Patterson Farms, served by Tri-County REC. In all, their stories proved how sweet it is to call rural Pennsylvania home.

FEBRUARY



WINTER LECTURE SERIES

The Winter Lecture Series at Gettysburg National Military Park is set for 1:30 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays through March 8 at the museum and visitor center. Free tickets are available. Learn more at nps.gov/thingstodo/gettysburg-winter-programs.htm.

GET OUT!

Cast aside your winter doldrums at the Pithole Cabin Fever Party, set for 11 a.m. Feb. 7 at the Drake Well Museum and Park, in Pleasantville, Venango County. Admission is free. Find out more at drakewell.org.



WINTER WINE & CHOCOLATE

If you happen to be near Dushore in Sullivan County on Valentine’s Day (Feb. 14), check out the Winter Wine & Chocolate Walk. The event will feature a chocolate dessert recipe contest and is open to the public. Learn more at dushore.com.

SOUP, ICE SCULPTURES AND MORE

Ice sculptures. Live music. Ice skating. Curling. The Winter Soup Stroll. It’s all part of the 2026 Erie Winter Carnival set Feb. 27 to March 1. Located at Perry Square in downtown Erie, the gathering will take place from 4 to 7 p.m. the first two days and from noon to 7 p.m. the final day. Learn more at visiterie.com.



BIG DEM BIG QUE





MANDS ESTIONS

**What Data Centers Mean for
Communities and the Grid**

MICHAEL T. CRAWFORD
Senior Technical Editor

FOR NEARLY 60 YEARS, the Homer City Generating Station in Indiana County was a coal-burning, energy-producing powerhouse. In its heyday, the plant — the largest of its kind in Pennsylvania — employed thousands and supplied millions with electricity.

By the mid- 2000s, however, natural gas began overtaking coal as the primary source for electric generation in the U.S., a movement driven by the shale gas boom. Ironically, Indiana County — like much of western Pennsylvania — sits atop the vast, energy-rich Marcellus Shale, which since its uncovering two decades ago, has turned the Commonwealth into a major natural gas producer, second only to Texas.

While the growth of natural gas generation eventually led to the closure of Homer City's coal plant in 2023 and its recent demolition, it has just as quickly led to the site's rebirth. Today, a new natural gas complex, the proposed \$10 billion Homer City Energy Campus, is taking its place to electrify another kind of powerhouse — the 21st-century, technological kind: massive data centers.

Now, as one energy chapter closes and another, much different one begins in this pocket of Pennsylvania, the project has raised broader questions about the impact of data centers on host communities, surrounding regions and Pennsylvania as a whole.

"What's happening at Homer City is bigger than one project," says Steve Brame, president & CEO of the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association (PREA) and Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc. (Allegheny), which represent the

14 rural electric cooperatives in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. "It reflects how our energy story keeps evolving — and why it's so important to understand not just what's being built, but how it fits into our communities, our grid, and our long-term energy needs."

Welcome to the future

Some, including Gov. Josh Shapiro, are welcoming data centers as job creators and economic drivers and dumping billions into their development. Last year, for instance, at the inaugural Pennsylvania Energy and Innovation Summit in Pittsburgh, President Donald Trump and U.S. Sen. Dave McCormick (R) announced the Commonwealth would be receiving more than \$90 billion in private investments to build data centers and power plants to support them.

Others have been more cautious, raising concerns about grid reliability (large data centers use as much electricity as a small city), the environment and increasing electric rates.

"Data centers are really driving the conversation in the energy sector and beyond," says Matt Leonard, PREA/ Allegheny manager of government & regulatory affairs. "There is real increased demand on the energy grid coming from the construction and operation of these data centers, and it's impacting all Pennsylvanians. That's true whether you're a consumer-member of an electric cooperative or a customer of any other power provider in the Commonwealth."

A NEW CHAPTER: The Homer City coal plant was once a powerful resource for electricity in western Pennsylvania. Today, the site below has been cleared to make room for a multi-billion-dollar natural gas facility that will energize multiple hyperscale data centers.

When it opens — 2027 is the target date — the reborn Homer City site will house the nation’s largest natural gas-powered plant, which will energize multiple, 300-megawatt (MW) data centers. The campus is located in a rural area neighboring territory served by REA Energy Cooperative.

REA’s President & CEO Chad Carrick, who also serves as treasurer of the Indiana County Chamber of Commerce, sees the potential of the project, which is expected to create thousands of jobs and bump up local tax revenues.

“There are a lot of positives,” he says. “This is an area that’s lost population throughout the years, and when you lose population, you lose your tax base. So when the Homer City power plant shut down, that was a tax base that went away. Now that’s coming back — and then some.”

In Loudoun County, Virginia — more often referred to as Data Center Alley because of its high concentration of data centers (around 199, with 117 more planned) — the facilities generate nearly half of the county’s property tax revenue, according to the county’s website.

Since 2008, data centers have reduced the county’s property tax rate by more than 37% and added \$26 in tax revenue for every \$1 in services they use. Land value has also surged to more than \$2.1 million per acre.



FEEDING A NEED: Packed tight with servers and computer processors, data centers power the systems behind emails, video streaming, online banking, cloud-based storage, social media – and even your cooperative’s coordinated load management system.

The evolution of data centers

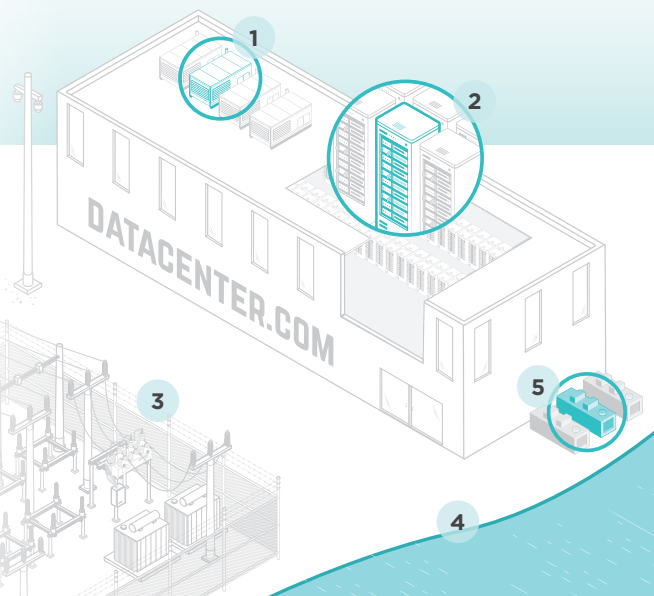
As for Pennsylvania, at least one research organization has said it’s “quickly emerging” as a major hub for gas-powered data centers, with more than two dozen currently looking to call the Commonwealth home.

At its most basic level, a data center is a building that holds large-scale computers. The first — the Electronic Numerical

Big Data, Bigger Demands

Many companies are choosing rural areas for their data centers because of cheaper land, available power and potential tax breaks. Data centers require huge amounts of electricity to operate, which presents new opportunities and challenges for electric co-ops.

- 1 HVAC:** Constant cooling is needed to ensure the servers function properly.
- 2 Servers:** Servers run applications and process data 24/7. One server rack can consume enough electricity to power a small home. A large data center can house thousands of server racks.
- 3 Infrastructure:** Data centers often require new electrical infrastructure to meet their power needs.
- 4 Water Source:** Many large data centers are deploying evaporative cooling, which is more efficient than compressor-based systems.
- 5 Backup Power:** On-site generators keep data centers running during power outages and can also be used to help lower demand when electricity use spikes.



COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE ASSOCIATION

Integrator and Computer — was developed in 1945 at the University of Pennsylvania so the U.S. Army could compute firing tables for artillery. It occupied 300 square feet and used about as much energy as 125 homes.

Data centers, as we know them, took off during the dot-com era in the late 1990s and early 2000s, and they've continued to grow as internet-connected devices have become more commonplace. They power the systems that make emails, video streaming services, online banking, cloud-based storage, social media and even your cooperative's coordinated load management system possible.

Today, a single data center can occupy hundreds of thousands of square feet and use more energy than all of Pittsburgh. These hyperscale buildings are generally warehouses packed tight with computer processors powering artificial intelligence (AI). One study found that when someone poses a question to an AI platform — popular ones include ChatGPT, Copilot, Gemini and Claude — it requires about 10 times more electricity than a Google search.

Needless to say, their hunger for power has grabbed the energy industry's attention and increased worries that their large loads and constant demand will overwhelm the grid. Continued rate spikes are another concern.

Last December, PJM Interconnection, the regional grid operator for Pennsylvania and 12 other states, projected electricity demand will grow by 32 gigawatts (GW) by 2030,

with nearly 30 GW of that driven by data centers.

"We've spent a considerable amount of time preparing for the growth of data centers," Brame says. "That includes planning for how they will impact the grid and how to manage those that may eventually want to connect to a local electric cooperative."

Consumers, cooperatives weigh in

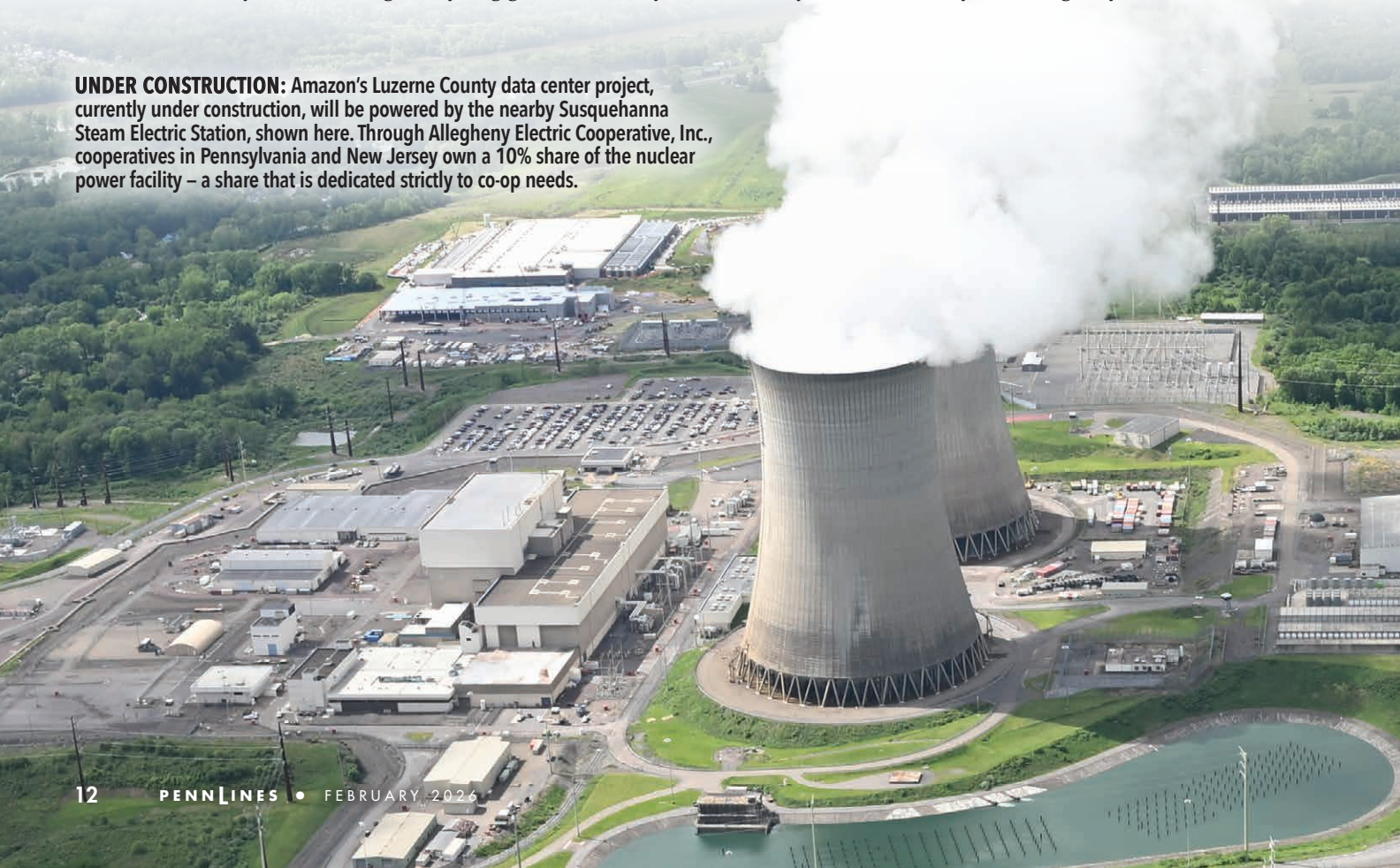
Steve Allabaugh, president & CEO of Wysox-based Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative (REC), says getting involved at a project's ground level is key.

Like their neighboring cooperative, Mansfield-based Tri-County REC, Claverack has invested in bringing fiber-based broadband internet to the region, something data centers require to reach end-users. However, significant infrastructure development — and lots of analysis — would still be required if any hyperscale data centers, defined as those requiring 100 to 300 MWs of around-the-clock electricity, were proposed in Claverack's service territory, he says.

"The electrical demand of a big data center is multiple orders of magnitude larger than what a typical distribution system is designed to handle," Allabaugh says. "Our local distribution substations have the capacity to support a big data 'closet,' not a data center.

"So if we were approached about a data center here," he adds, "we would have to conduct an extensive engineering study and work closely with Allegheny, our transmission

UNDER CONSTRUCTION: Amazon's Luzerne County data center project, currently under construction, will be powered by the nearby Susquehanna Steam Electric Station, shown here. Through Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc., cooperatives in Pennsylvania and New Jersey own a 10% share of the nuclear power facility — a share that is dedicated strictly to co-op needs.



provider, to ensure we could safely and reliably secure the power needed to support such a request.”

Still, the economic benefits may not be enough to justify the cost for some communities.

Aaron Young, co-president & co-CEO for Tri-County REC, says residents raised concerns about data centers at a recent meeting in Tioga County, which is part of the cooperative’s service territory.

“Obviously, there’s the potential impact on the grid, but without an engineering study, there are still a lot of unknowns,” Young says. “Our experience deploying fiber broadband taught us the importance of planning for infrastructure and community needs.”

In addition to electricity, data centers also rely on specialized computer components that generate intense heat, requiring robust cooling systems to keep operations stable. Those systems often depend on a continuous water supply — sometimes millions of gallons per day — which raises questions about sustainability and resource allocation in rural communities.

“Beyond infrastructure, residents have expressed broader concerns about how large-scale projects could affect local resources, quality of life, and short- and long-term planning,” Young says. “These conversations underscore the importance of transparency and collaboration as utilities and developers collaborate and weigh the benefits against potential community impacts.”

‘Our members are first and foremost’

Meanwhile, in Luzerne County, Amazon has been constructing a 300-MW data center right outside the Susquehanna Steam Electric Station, a nuclear power plant that provides Pennsylvania and New Jersey cooperatives with more than half of their energy. The plan there is similar to the one in Homer City: directly connect the data center to a 24/7 power plant to minimize the possibility of disruption.

Through Allegheny, cooperatives own a 10% share of the plant, a stake they don’t share with any other users.

“Our 10% is for our members,” says Todd Sallade, PREA/Allegheny vice president — power supply & engineering, “and it won’t go to large loads or new data centers.

“We have a responsibility to our members to ensure they’re not subsidizing the build-out of these projects,” he adds, noting it’s important that cooperatives not only work with developers but also hold them accountable. “There has to be a plan to ensure the money will be there, and our members aren’t left holding the bag if things don’t pan out.”

Back in Indiana County, REA Energy is doing just that, designing rate and cost-share systems to ensure that whatever happens in Homer City, it’s not at the expense of the co-op’s consumer-members.

“We want to make sure,” Carrick says, “that our members are first and foremost.”

How big is that data center?

Source: NRECA Research

DATA CENTER TYPE	POWER USAGE	LOAD COMPARISON
Micro/Edge	Under ~0.1 MW	25-100 average homes
Small/Enterprise	~0.1-1 MW	Supermarket or medium-sized public school
Medium/Regional	~1-5 MW	Regional hospital
Large/Co-Location	~5-20 MW	Automobile plant or university campus
Hyperscale	>20 MW (often tens to hundreds of MW)	Heavy industrial facility or medium/large airport

Supply Chain Kinks Still Challenge Mission for Affordable, Reliable Service

CATHY CASH

KINKS IN THE SUPPLY CHAIN caused by the COVID-19 pandemic may be in the rearview mirror for consumers, but new bottlenecks in the flow of goods and services are challenging electric cooperatives to deliver affordable and reliable service. And the circumstances squeezing the supply chains for electric co-ops are unlikely to ease in the foreseeable future.

With all things digital — from phones to thermostats — electricity use is up. To sustain the growing digital economy, huge data centers with appetites for electricity akin to that of a small city are sprouting up across rural America and co-op service territories. These centers soak up extreme amounts of power to serve the internet's relentless demand for high-speed networking, data storage and artificial intelligence.

We're talking about a higher demand for electricity, but supply of equipment needed to maintain or build more power plants has not kept up. Then there's a skilled labor short-

age and tariffs on imported materials. All these things add up to delayed energy projects at increased costs.

After the pandemic forced manufacturing to shutter for months in 2020, a lot of experienced employees retired or never even went back to their jobs making transformers and other equipment essential to distributing electricity to consumers. The supply of some transformers has never been fully replenished, and the lack of a competent workforce today makes that a constant game of catch-up.

U.S.-based engineering, procurement and construction firms are scrambling to meet work orders for new power projects as there is more demand today than they can keep up with, says Stephanie Crawford, regulatory affairs director at the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

As a result, equipment crucial for electricity projects — from new substations to power plant maintenance

and outage repairs after storms hit — are on delay and coming in at much higher prices.

Co-ops are seeing lag times of up to four years between an order for a transformer and its ultimate delivery. Prices are up 70% to 100% compared with 2020. Lead times for new gas turbines for a power plant can range from three to six years and cost 25% more than just three years ago.

According to one industry insider, an electric co-op that spent \$10 million on materials and equipment for electricity projects and maintenance in 2020 had to spend more than \$15.5 million in 2025 to keep up.

To maintain reliable and affordable service, collaboration is key. Co-ops are finding themselves working with equipment suppliers and contractors closer than ever and planning their orders at least a year in advance of construction to work out the snags of the current supply chain.

Knowing their exact inventory and the physical storage space also helps co-ops keep necessary equipment on hand, materials flowing and projects as near to schedule as possible.

By working as a team, electric co-ops, manufacturers, and their industry partners will be able to improve forecasting their equipment needs, stay ahead of potential demand changes, and experience a smoother supply chain. 📦

CATHY CASH writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives. From growing suburbs to remote farming communities, electric co-ops serve as engines of economic development for 42 million Americans across 56% of the nation's landscape.



SHORT SUPPLY: Electric co-ops are seeing lag times of up to four years between orders for transformers and their delivery. The price has also doubled since the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Local Lore

Bedford Rural Electric Cooperative

A Tavern with More Than One Kind of Spirit

COME FOR THE HOSPITALITY, stay for the ghosts.

While that's not the official slogan for Bedford County's Jean Bonnet Tavern, it warrants consideration. Located at 6048 Lincoln Highway in Bedford, the building dates back to the 1760s, when it was constructed as a safe haven for settlers and travelers.

In 1780, the business's namesake bought the property, turning it into a public tavern and inn that has become steeped in history. At one point, the establishment served as a meeting place for angry farmers during the Whiskey Rebellion. On the darker side, hangings have reportedly taken place there, and a skeleton was found under

the floorboards during renovations.

As a result, some say the spirits behind the bar aren't the only ones at the Jean Bonnet.

One former owner noticed that each time she walked past a door in the then-unrented attic apartment, it would be in a different position. Later, a guest invited members of a paranormal group to stay with him in the apartment, where several of the visitors reported being touched by apparitions. An employee even claimed she saw a man sipping a drink in the bar after it had closed for the night.

The site's rich history earned it a place on the National Register of Historic Places in 1979. Today, in addition to being a tavern, the business also operates as a bed and breakfast. Reserve a room at your own discretion, though — paranormal activity has been reported as recently as last year. 🍷



GHOSTLY ENCOUNTERS: The Jean Bonnet Tavern in Bedford County is not only known for its food and hospitality but also for the presence of ghosts, who have allegedly haunted the establishment for decades.



Main Office: Bedford, Pa.
Consumer-members served: 9,591
Website: bedfordrec.com



A Reminder of Home

This month's artwork comes from Willow Zieger, daughter of Timothy and Abi Zieger, members of Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative (Abi is also a *Penn Lines* columnist). Willow was inspired to create this drawing after coming across an image in *Penn Lines*. "I drew a forest with butterflies and flowers because it is pretty. A bird is tweeting. I saw a picture of a tree in the magazine, so I decided to make a forest."

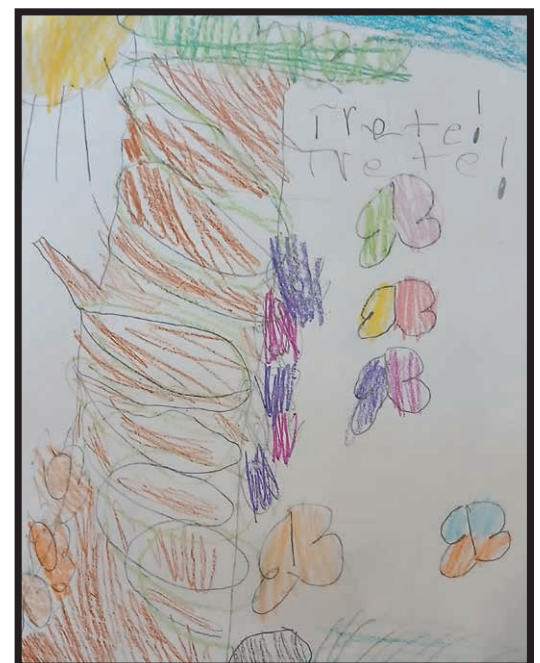
Thank you, Willow, for sharing your artwork with us!

Willow Zieger, age 7, Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative

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

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

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



Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative Association, Inc.

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NORTHWESTERN REC

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Empowering Generations: Tales from Northwestern REC's Founding Years



RYAN MELLER

IMAGINE YOU'RE A NEWLYWED, having grown up with the conveniences of modern life, only to discover that the home you and your spouse have moved into does not have electricity.

No electric lights. No running water. No contemporary appliances. Just darkness.

That was Mary Davenport's experience as she worked to set up house-keeping with her new husband, Don, on a farm near Conneautville in the 1930s.

Before Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) was formed, farmers and other rural folks in northwestern Pennsylvania were literally left in the dark. Because they were so widely scattered, most farms could not receive service from private power companies, and many rural residents like the Davenports resigned themselves to the reality that electric service just wasn't available to them.

Mrs. Davenport's story is just one of many detailed in *Darkness to Daylight, an Oral History of Rural Electrification in Pennsylvania and New Jersey*, a book written by Mary Ellen Romeo and published by the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association in 1986.

"I recall those days with laughter now, but it wasn't funny then," Mrs. Davenport told Romeo. "I remember how Don used to come home from work, and I would be crying, the tears would be running down my sooty face. ... It was really horrible; I couldn't start a fire. And he'd come home, tired from work, and expect a nice, hot supper. There was no supper, there was no fire. There was nothing."

Mrs. Davenport had never been without electricity. A recent college graduate and newly married, her daily battle with the cookstove was a challenge her counterparts who lived in town didn't have to face.

A common experience

The Davenports' experience was not uncommon. In the 1930s, electricity was out of reach for 75% of rural Pennsylvanians. Without electricity, folks were cooking on wood or coal stoves, canning and smoking to preserve food without refrigeration, scrubbing laundry by hand, ironing freshly laundered clothes with flatirons, and lighting their homes with oil lamps. Farms with electricity had access to efficient equipment — they could milk dairy cows quicker and could keep milk colder. Lighting with oil lamps proved hazardous, as live flames were often blown into hay, dust and other combustibles.

Extending electricity to farms was costly — an expense that electric companies did not want to incur. So, farmers became creative, purchasing batteries and generators, and attempting to pay for the infrastructure upgrades needed to connect to central-station power. But even working with the power company was costly, and farmers were expected to assume ownership of the lines they paid for and built themselves to connect to the power grid.

Continued on page 16C



AT THE BEGINNING: Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative's first electric power pole was set just south of Cambridge Springs in Crawford County.

The Power Surge: Factors Driving the Rising Demand for Electricity

EMILY SONNTAG, MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST

POWER DEMAND IS CLIMBING across the country at one of the fastest rates in decades. With the economy increasingly dependent on electricity and new data centers emerging nationwide, electric cooperatives are proactively preparing to meet the challenges of rapidly rising demand.

The North American Reliability Corporation — the watchdog for the U.S. electric grid — recently released the 2025-2026 winter reliability assessment, which echoed other recent reports, including long-term outlooks that anticipate sufficient energy resources during normal conditions but potential supply shortfalls and outages under more intense weather.

Extreme weather, coupled with other factors driving increased demand, creates challenges for electric utilities, including cooperatives, in their mission to provide reliable power around the clock.

Several key factors are driving increased demand, such as economic growth, expanded manufacturing, data center development, and increased electrification in transportation. Together, these trends are reshaping how much electricity we consume and how quickly utilities like Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) must adapt to meet future needs.

One of the biggest drivers of rising demand is increased electrification. More homes and businesses are transitioning to electricity for home heating, water heating and transportation. In fact, electric heat pumps are replacing traditional furnaces in many homes due to their efficiency. These transitions mean greater energy use and increased pressure on our electric grid.

Data centers are another major contributor to rising demand. As artificial intelligence, cryptocurrency, and cloud computing technologies grow, the need for data processing and storage has skyrocketed. Data centers require significant power to operate servers and cooling systems 24/7. Tech companies are building new facilities nationwide — many in electric cooperative-served areas — and these regions are experiencing multi-year surges in electricity demand.

Economic and manufacturing growth also contribute to higher electricity use. As businesses expand and new industries take root, especially in rural and suburban areas, the demand for reliable, high-capacity power is increasing. The resurgence of domestic manufacturing has led to the construction of more facilities, which often

require substantial energy loads. Many also operate continuously to keep production lines running. This growth brings jobs and investment, but it also puts new pressure on the electric grid.

Population growth and housing development are also contributing to rising demand in many regions, and everyday life is becoming increasingly energy-dependent. Smart appliances, connected devices, home offices and entertainment systems are adding to overall consumption, even as efficiency improves.


While increased demand presents new challenges for electric utilities, it also offers co-ops and the communities they serve significant opportunities, including job growth, steady revenue, and improved infrastructure. Electric co-ops are responding by planning carefully for the future — investing in grid modernization and offering programs and services to help members conserve energy.

At Northwestern REC, we are always looking ahead to ensure our members receive the reliability they expect and deserve. Our demand response initiatives — such as our load management program — leverage co-op supplied electric hot water tanks and heating systems that can be remotely adjusted during peak periods. These measures help ease grid strain at critical times.

In addition, continued reinvestment in our distribution system is essential to support expected increases in demand. This means building new power lines, upgrading single-phase to three-phase lines, and increasing conductor size to improve voltage stability and capacity. Co-ops are also pursuing distributed generation options, including utility-scale solar, battery storage, and emerging technologies like hydrogen fuel cells and small modular reactors. Additionally, our cooperative collaborates closely with our generation and transmission partner, Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc., to secure new delivery points and add substations to handle large incoming loads that would otherwise tax our infrastructure.

Electricity powers nearly every aspect of today's economy, and its role will only grow stronger. As electrification accelerates, long-term planning becomes more critical than ever.

Northwestern REC is ready to meet rising demand in our communities. Through innovation, investment, and collaboration, we are preparing for a more reliable and resilient energy future. 🌱



Why is the Demand for Electricity Rising?

Demand for electricity in the U.S. is booming. Recent data shows that power consumption nationwide is set to increase by at least 38 gigawatts (enough electricity to power 3,600 homes for one year) between now and 2028. Meeting this new demand will require a combination of new power plants, grid upgrades and energy storage technology advancements. Here are the key factors that are driving increased demand.

- 1 Increased Electrification:** Electric vehicle adoption, electrification of home heating and industrial electrification are increasing overall U.S. energy consumption.
- 2 Data Centers:** Driven by explosions in AI, cryptocurrency and cloud computing, total U.S. data center load is projected to increase by 65% by 2050.
- 3 Economic Growth:** Residential power consumption is expected to increase by 14% to 22% through 2050 due to increases in population and steady economic growth.
- 4 Manufacturing Growth/Onshoring:** New, expanding and "onshored/reshored" manufacturing capacity driven by federal incentives is expected to increase industrial demand by 13,000 GWh per year.

COFFEE & CONVERSATION 2026 DATES:

ENJOY COFFEE OR BREAKFAST, ASK QUESTIONS, AND GET TO KNOW THE NORTHWESTERN REC TEAM!

FEB. 25: AUNT BEE'S
17408 SMOCK DR., COCHRANTON
RSVP BY FEB. 17

MARCH 18: MANDY'S DUTCH TREAT
339 MAIN ST., SPARTANBURG
RSVP BY MARCH 10

APRIL 22: ENLISTED COFFEE
207 HIGH ST., WATERFORD
RSVP BY APRIL 14

MAY 28: PARKSIDE RESTAURANT
118 N. FRANKLIN ST., COCHRANTON
RSVP BY MAY 20

JUNE 24: VACAVI CAFE
100 WATER ST., CONNEAUT LAKE
RSVP BY JUNE 16

JULY 22: BEAN & BEAR CAFE
222 W. PLUM ST. #500, EDINBORO
RSVP BY JULY 14

AUG. 19: COUNTRYSIDE GRILLE
10 S. MAIN ST., UNION CITY
RSVP BY AUG. 11

SEPT. 17: FACTORY RESTAURANT
201 MAIN ST., SAEGERTOWN
RSVP BY SEPT. 9

DATES ARE STILL BEING ADDED

MORE INFO:
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FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO

Continued from page 16A

A visit that changed everything

When C.H. Smith, an early member who took it upon himself to meet with local neighbors to discuss how electrification was possible, stopped by the A.D. Stainbrook farm, Stainbrook had already been searching for an affordable option to power his farm.

"How would you like to have electricity in 90 days?" Smith asked Stainbrook.

Smith then explained that the federal government had established the Rural Electrification Administration (REA) on May 11, 1935, by executive order of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. He asked Stainbrook to help him recruit other folks in the region to help form an electric cooperative, and Stainbrook was happy to help.

Interested neighbors soon began holding meetings in their homes, churches, stores, and anywhere else that could hold a gathering. Soon, they amassed at least three members per mile, which met the REA's minimum requirement for a feasible system. This allowed them to incorporate and apply for an REA loan, forming what is now known as Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

Many of those early members who helped incorporate Northwestern REC gave not only their own money, but also their time to build the cooperative into what it is today. Stainbrook spent countless hours driving to Washington, D.C., and meeting with the REA.

"When you want something bad enough, you don't think much about it," Stainbrook told Romeo. "I lost money every day, but I never begrudged it."

As we celebrate the 90th Anniversary of Northwestern REC this year, I hope you share my gratitude for the early members who sacrificed money and time to bring electricity to our communities. 📍

Cooperatively yours,
RYAN MELLER

Democracy in Action: Understanding Northwestern REC's Election Process

AMBER TILL, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

DID YOU KNOW THAT Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) is owned and governed by the members we serve — members like you?

Each month, representatives of the nine districts within Northwestern REC's territory gather to make important policy decisions, oversee the cooperative's long-term direction and guide the cooperative's business affairs. Your directors' decisions are guided by the seven cooperative principles:

- ▶ Voluntary and open membership
- ▶ Democratic member control
- ▶ Members' economic participation
- ▶ Autonomy and independence
- ▶ Education, training and information
- ▶ Cooperation among cooperatives
- ▶ Concern for the community

As a cooperative, Northwestern REC is a democratic organization controlled by you, our members. Directors are elected from the membership of each district and are accountable to you. While directors can be nominated only by members in their district, the election held each summer is an open one, meaning all members have equal voting rights.

Districts and 2026 elections

According to Northwestern REC's bylaws, directors are normally elected to three-year terms. In a typical year, three seats on the board of directors are up for election. However, in 2025, Northwestern REC redistricted, reducing the number of districts from 10 to nine. This change required an update to the slate, so in 2026, five board seats are up for election:

- ▶ **District 2 for a three-year term** (LeBoeuf, McKean, Summit, Washington, and Waterford townships, and Edinboro and Mill Village boroughs in Erie County)
- ▶ **District 5 for a two-year term** (Cambridge, Richmond, Rockdale, Venango, and Woodcock townships, and Blooming Valley, Saegertown, and Woodcock boroughs in Crawford County),
- ▶ **District 6 for a three-year term** (Athens, Oil Creek, Rome, Steuben, and Troy townships, and Centerville Borough in Crawford County; Eldred and Southwest townships in Warren County)
- ▶ **District 7 for a three-year term** (East Fallowfield, Pine, Sadsbury, Summit, and Vernon townships in Crawford County)

- ▶ **District 8 for a one-year term** (East Fairfield, East Mead, Greenwood, Randolph, Union, and West Mead townships in Crawford County)

Candidates for the board of directors are nominated by members during the spring district meetings — this year in March and April — or by submitting a petition with 15 or more signatures from members in said district 90 days before the co-op's annual meeting. This year, the petition deadline is May 7, as the annual meeting is scheduled for Aug. 5 — the 90th anniversary of the first pole set by Northwestern REC.

If you live in one of these districts and satisfy the qualifications outlined in the cooperative's bylaws, you are eligible to seek nomination to be a member of the board. Nominating meetings will be announced in the March issue of *Penn Lines*. They will also be posted on our website and social media pages and shared on SmartHub. Notice of these meetings will also be mailed to members this month.

Qualifications for nominees and board members

Nominees must be active members and meet qualifications outlined in the bylaws, including being a member in good standing, maintaining a good credit history with the co-op and having a primary residence in the district you wish to represent. Candidates may not be employees of a competing electric service provider, cannot be a current or former employee or the spouse of a current or former employee, and must not have been convicted of a felony in the past five years. For a full list of qualifications, please see Article IV, Section 4, of our bylaws, available on our website, northwesternrec.com/our-bylaws.

Cooperative members have power

As a member of Northwestern REC, you have the power to shape your cooperative's future. Attend the nominating meetings, participate in the election, nominate a member, or even run for the opportunity to serve. Cooperatives bring people with diverse voices together to work alongside one another for the greater good of all co-op members. Make sure your voice is heard by participating in the election process in 2026. 🗳️



WAIT! DON'T EAT THAT

Make sure food is **SAFE TO EAT** after an outage

If there is a power outage for more than an hour or two, the food in your refrigerator or freezer may not be safe to eat.

Unlike mold that visually warns you not to eat old bread or cheese, many foods do not scream *don't eat me, I'll make you sick*. They can look harmless, but bacteria growing in them can bring on a slew of symptoms like nausea, chills, cramps, vomiting, and other unwanted visitors.

During and after an outage, keep these food safety tips in mind:

- ☛ Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed to keep in the cold air.
- ☛ Time the outage. Foods in an unopened fridge up to 4 hours should be safe to eat.*
- ☛ Know the numbers:
 - A freezer that is half full (and is kept closed) can keep foods frozen for 24 hours.*
 - A freezer that is full (and kept closed) can keep foods frozen for 48 hours.*
- ☛ Never taste food to determine if it is safe to eat: **WHEN IN DOUBT, throw it out.**
- ☛ Throw out perishable food in your refrigerator after 4 hours without power or a cold source like dry ice.
- ☛ Perishable foods include meat, fish, cut fruits and vegetables, eggs, meats and leftovers.
- ☛ Throw out any foods with unusual color, odor, or texture.

*According to the CDC

Remember, when in **DOUBT**, throw it **OUT**.

Learn more at:

**Safe
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Make Your Old Windows Open and Close Like New

JAMES DULLEY

DEAR JIM: Our old double-hung, tilt-in windows don't stay open, often sliding half way back down. Is there a simple way I can fix them myself?
– Richard T.

DEAR RICHARD: This is a common problem with older standard or tilt-in double-hung windows, especially heavy ones with efficient double or triple panes. It is not only an annoying issue for ventilation; if someone is not expecting the sash to come

sliding back down, it can seriously injure fingers smashed between the frame and the dropping sash.

It is a simple do-it-yourself project to repair and adjust all your windows so the sashes stay open and slide easily in the frame. Other than some screwdrivers, there is just one special tool you'll need: a spring charger, which makes the job easier. You can purchase one for about \$7.

Spiral counterbalance springs inside the window frame support the weight of the sash when it slides up for ventilation. Shoe blocks hold the sash in the frame channel so it can move up and down. For tilt-in windows, the shoes include a pivoting socket for the sash end pins.

The shoe blocks wear out over many years of use. This reduces the friction that holds the sash open, leaving the counterbalance springs unable to provide enough support to hold the sash open. Also, as the sash is pushed farther up, the springs exert less force, which is why the sash may stay open only part way.

On windows where the sash does not stay up at all, the counterbalance spring has probably broken and must be replaced. Typically, the small plastic end, which makes the spiral spring rotate and tighten, has cracked. You may have heard a "snap" when it stopped staying up. There are two springs per window, and they cost about \$6 each.

A sash without good springs to support it can be heavy, so wear substantial work gloves. Place a wood block or something thick on the window frame under

the sash. This will protect your hand from getting smashed in case the sash slides down while you are working on it.

To replace the spiral springs, raise the sash a few inches and put the wood block under it. Release the sash tilt latches and tilt it in as if for cleaning. Rock one side upward so the sash pin slips out of the shoes and then place the sash on the floor. The plastic sash stops and spring cover snap off easily from the window frame.

Inspect the small shoe blocks and the pivot centers in them. If they feel loose in the frame, replace them. Two new shoes cost about \$3. They range in width from five-eighths to one-half inch. Only one screw holds each spring in place at the top.

The color of the broken plastic tip of the spiral spring indicates how strong it is. The colors are white, red, and blue, and they can handle sash weights of 4-12 lbs., 6-18 lbs., and 10-26 lbs., respectively. The new springs should be the same color or the next stronger one if your sash weighs near the spring upper limit.

Measure the diameter and length of the old spring aluminum tube only, not including the tip, and order this length. New spring tube diameters are either three-eighths or five-eighths of an inch in diameter.

Screw the new springs into the frame at the top again. Push the spiral spring rod up into the tube. Hook the charging tool to the rod end and pull it down. You will feel the spring tighten. Give it an extra turn and hook it into the shoe block. Put the sash back into the shoe blocks, push it level and snap it back into the frame. 🛠️

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



DO-IT-YOURSELF: Other than a screwdriver, the spring-tension charging tool, designed just for the tilt-type spring end, is all you'll need to fix a window that just won't stay open.

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More Than a Sport

ABIGAIL ZIEGER

WE'RE AT THE LOCAL MIDDLE SCHOOL GYM on a Tuesday night. A coach blows twice on her whistle, and my 10-year-old hops from the bleachers, strides to pick up her bow, and walks confidently to the large black line that goes around the perimeter of the basketball court. One more whistle, and now she's stringing arrows to shoot at her target across the gym. One by one, she lets her arrows fly, some hitting the outside of the target, others coming closer to the center. Once she has shot them all, she bounces back to her friends at the waiting line, grinning, until the coach signals that it's time to go retrieve her arrows.

It was very different in the beginning. When our daughter first started archery, none of us had any experience with the sport. During her first practice, she struggled to handle her bow, and her arrows clattered to the floor one after the other. She left that first practice discouraged and defeated, saying she never wanted to go back to archery again.

Thankfully, her coaches noticed, and they stepped up and stepped in. One younger coach who had just graduated high school made a point to pull my daughter aside and encourage her, telling her that everyone there had started the exact same way. Another coach made extra time during the next practice to stay by her side and walk her through each step. A third coach, who also happens to be our neighbor, offered to give her a free one-on-one lesson in his yard.

It was our first introduction to this wonderful community. Every single coach was there to help, encourage and be a positive role model to the kids. Again and again, the teachers told the kids it didn't matter how well they shot — what mattered was they were learning and having fun. They were true examples of responsibility, focus and perseverance.

The coaches' positive attitudes and emphasis on hard work rubbed off on the kids. While the archers may have had different backgrounds and interests outside of practice, once they were inside the gym, they came around a common goal. They were all there to support each other,

regardless of ability, to do their very best and have fun. The students, too, brought an attitude of responsibility and a strong work ethic.

Over weeks of archery practice, I gradually saw my daughter's confidence grow. She began to chat with kids next to her. She started to look forward to biweekly practices, and her shooting gradually improved. When a coach saw how much she was enjoying archery, she offered her own child's old bow for free so our daughter could practice at home.

My daughter has been learning archery for a year now. It's been amazing to see her progress in the sport, and I have been so grateful for each and every coach and their positive influence in her life. The best thing of all, however, is seeing her gain confidence,

make friends, and find a community where she feels comfortable, proud, and accepted.

When archery season is over, our team holds a party for all the kids and their families. This involves pizza, soda, a fun shoot with gamified targets and awards for everyone. Every kid walks forward to receive a certificate, and every single coach high-fives them on the way past. The communal sense of pride in the students is palpable.

Archery has become so much more than a sport for us. It's become a community space of belonging and purpose. Whether it's in band, a book club, a church youth group, or some other community, our children need the opportunity to stretch themselves, step outside of their comfort zones, and learn they can grow their skills and build their confidence. They need good adults in their lives to help them see the things they can't see themselves yet. And they need a space with friends to just be themselves. 🍷



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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Policy Form #SRTC/SRTC/R13 or R17, or #SRTC90MA in MA

\$30,000 Children's Life Insurance

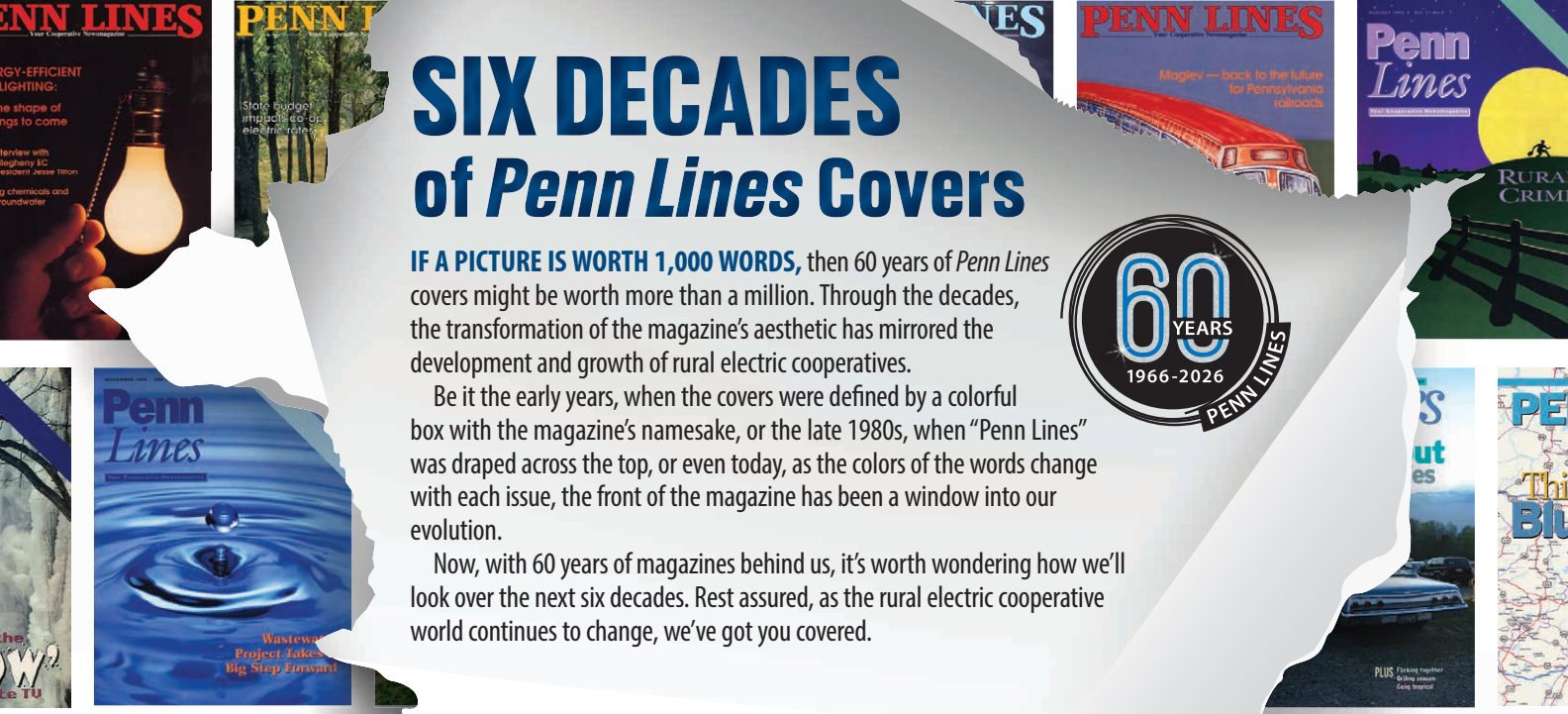
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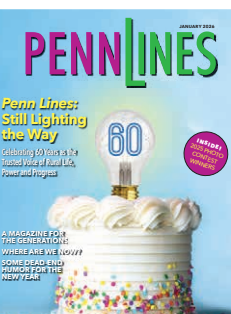
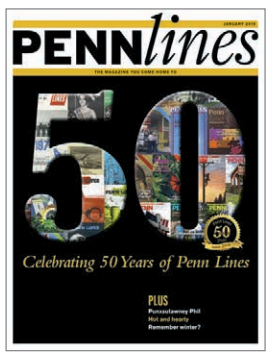
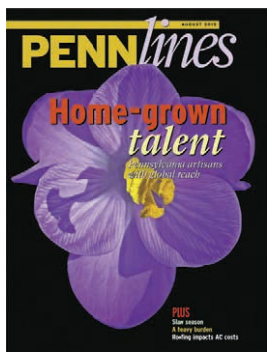
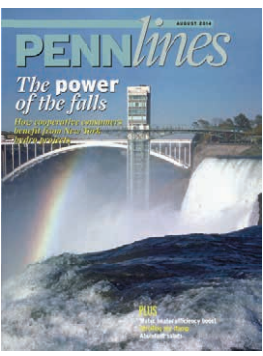
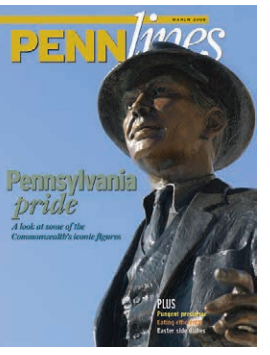
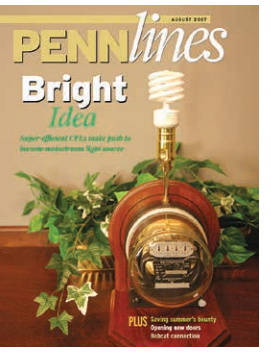
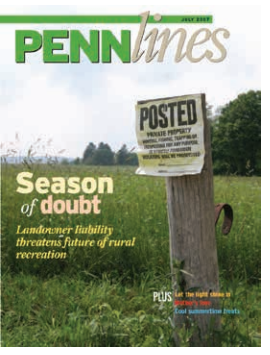
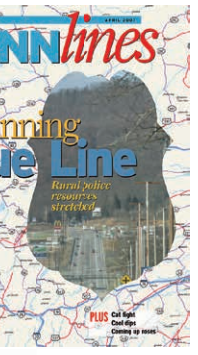
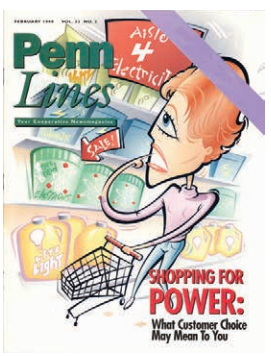
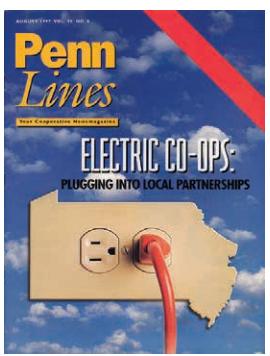
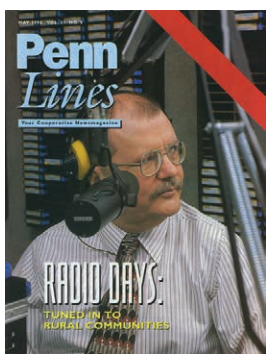
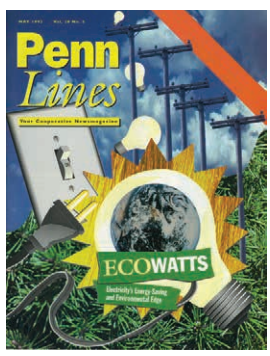
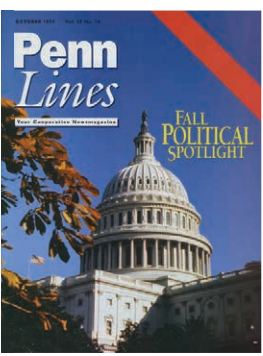
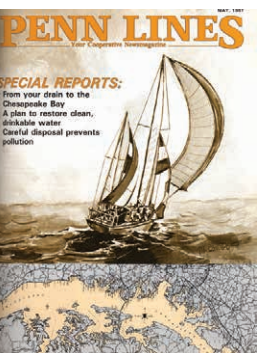
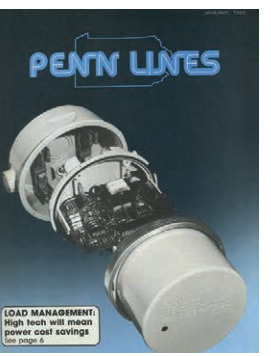
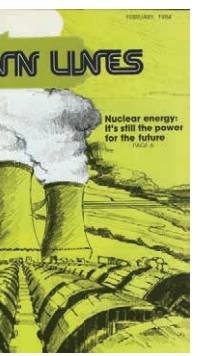
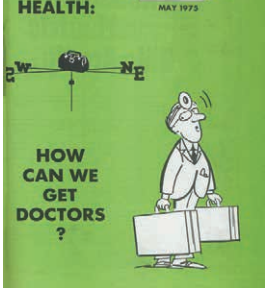
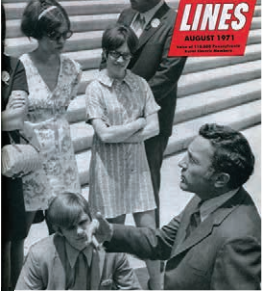


IF A PICTURE IS WORTH 1,000 WORDS, then 60 years of *Penn Lines* covers might be worth more than a million. Through the decades, the transformation of the magazine's aesthetic has mirrored the development and growth of rural electric cooperatives.

Be it the early years, when the covers were defined by a colorful box with the magazine's namesake, or the late 1980s, when "Penn Lines" was draped across the top, or even today, as the colors of the words change with each issue, the front of the magazine has been a window into our evolution.

Now, with 60 years of magazines behind us, it's worth wondering how we'll look over the next six decades. Rest assured, as the rural electric cooperative world continues to change, we've got you covered.





Share a Heartwarming Dish

ANNE M. KIRCHNER

PHOTOS BY ANNE M. KIRCHNER



AS THE CHILLY DAYS OF WINTER LINGER, seek opportunities to connect with others. Plan a warm and cozy meal to serve in your home. What winter foods nourish the body and soul? Which ingredients bring you comfort?

Chicken simmered with onions, garlic and tomatoes brightens the kitchen with garden-fresh aromas. Minestrone Soup fills the tummy and warms the soul. Cinnamon Coffee Cake rouses conversation and a sentimental mood. When you take time to share a heartwarming dish, spirits will lift and the cold, dark winter days will dissipate. 🍷

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

CHICKEN WITH TOMATOES

- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 1 teaspoon garlic salt
- ½ teaspoon coarse black pepper
- ½ yellow onion, sliced
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 4 cups diced tomatoes
- 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- 1 teaspoon maple syrup
- ¼ cup chopped parsley

Warm the olive oil in a skillet on medium-high heat. Season the chicken breast with garlic salt and black pepper. Add the chicken breasts to the skillet; cook 5 to 7 minutes on each side. Remove the chicken and keep warm. Reduce the skillet heat to medium; add the onion and garlic. Cook for 1 to 2 minutes. Add the tomatoes, balsamic vinegar and maple syrup. Cook for 2 to 3 minutes or until the tomatoes soften. Return the chicken to the skillet. Garnish with parsley and serve over fettuccini. *Makes 4 servings.*



MINISTRONE SOUP

- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 cups celery, chopped
- 2 cups carrots, chopped
- 2 tablespoons Italian seasoning
- 1 (28-ounce) can diced tomatoes
- 4 cups vegetable broth
- 1 (14.5-ounce) can green beans
- 1 (15-ounce) can cannellini beans
- 1 cup ditalini pasta
- ¼ teaspoon red pepper flakes
- Salt and pepper, to taste

Warm the olive oil in a large stock pot over medium heat. Add the onion and garlic; cook for 1 to 2 minutes. Add the celery, carrots and Italian seasoning. Cook for 3 to 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add the tomatoes, vegetable broth, green beans and cannellini beans. Bring the soup to a boil, then reduce the heat to a simmer. Stir in the ditalini pasta and cook for 8 to 10 minutes. Season with red pepper flakes, salt and pepper. *Makes 8 to 10 servings.*



CINNAMON COFFEE CAKE

- ¾ cup margarine
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 cup brown sugar, divided
- 2 eggs
- 1½ cups all-purpose flour
- ½ cup whole wheat flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- 2 teaspoons cinnamon, divided
- 1 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1 cup chopped pecans
- 1 cup sour cream

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Using a hand or stand mixer, cream together the margarine, granulated sugar and ½ cup brown sugar. Add the eggs and blend until creamy. In a separate bowl, sift together the flours, baking powder, baking soda, salt, 1 teaspoon cinnamon and nutmeg. Add the flour mixture to the creamed ingredients. Mix in the nuts and sour cream. Spread the batter into a greased 9-by-13-inch pan. Combine remaining ½ cup brown sugar with 1 teaspoon cinnamon; sprinkle the mixture over the batter. Bake for 35 to 40 minutes. *Makes 12 servings.*

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



JODY LOUDENSLAGER SCHOLARSHIP

for the 2026-27 academic year.

ATTENTION FORMER YOUTH TOUR STUDENTS:

The JODY LOUDENSLAGER SCHOLARSHIP

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

REQUIREMENTS & DATES TO REMEMBER:

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

QUESTIONS:

Steph Okuniewski
Member Engagement Specialist
Stephanie_Okuniewski@prea.com
717.982.1455



Seed-Starting Mistakes ... and How to Avoid Them

GEORGE WEIGEL

STARTING YOUR OWN PLANTS from seeds inside over winter is an excellent way to save money and expand your choice of what to grow.

Work your way around these nine possible pitfalls, and you'll have your own greenhouse-caliber starter plants this spring.

1.) Old or bad seeds. Most left-over seeds stored in cool, dry conditions are good for two or three years. But occasionally, even new seeds won't germinate due to production failures or storage deficiencies.

To check germination, place a few seeds wrapped in a moistened paper towel inside a sealed plastic bag in a warm spot, then open after the germination time listed on the packet. If few or none are sprouting, you probably need fresh seed.

2.) Inferior seed-starting mix. Don't scrimp on cheap bags of heavy potting soil or even heavier, bug/disease-laden soil dug up outside.

For best germination, start seeds in containers filled two-thirds with vermiculite (a light-weight, moisture-absorbing mineral sold in garden centers).

Once the first leaves have unfurled, use a pencil or similar pointy object to transplant seedlings into individual pots or cell packs filled with quality potting mix.

3.) Too-deep planting. A quarter-inch deep or less is plenty for most seeds, and a few species even prefer to be pressed into the dampened surface because they need light to germinate. Seed packets will tell you the correct depth.

4.) Too cold or too dry for germination. Your main goal is to persuade the tiny, baby plant already alive inside the seed to break out of its protective coat by supplying the right warmth and light and *especially*



GEORGE WEIGEL

START SEEDING: Seeds sprout best in moistened vermiculite. They can then be transplanted into cell packs with quality seed-starting mix.

consistent moisture.

Most seeds germinate in two weeks or less at 70 to 80 degrees. If your house is cooler than that, place the seeded containers on a heat mat (available in garden centers or catalogs) or on top of a warmth-producing appliance (i.e. refrigerator or water heater).

Keep the vermiculite or your seed-starting mix damp at all times by setting the containers in a tray with water until the medium has soaked up enough to become damp at the surface (i.e. "bottom-watering"). Retain moisture by lightly covering the containers with plastic wrap.

5.) The seedlings get "leggy." Even sunny windows aren't bright enough to yield stocky seedlings. You'll get better results by investing in tubular fluorescent or LED workshop lights and hanging them on chains so you can keep the lights just 2 or 3 inches above the plants as they grow.

Lights should run 14 to 16 hours per day.

Higher-performing T5 fluorescent lights are available that are brighter and equipped with a better light-spectrum profile.

6.) Growing temperatures are too warm. Seedlings grow best in cool temperatures — mid-50s to mid-60s as opposed to 70-degree rooms.

Young plants will "stretch" for the

limited light as they grow faster in warmer temperatures, causing them to become long, thin and leggy.

An unheated basement or enclosed sun room or patio often make good seed-growing locations.

7.) The seedlings rot or get diseased. Seedlings are prone to rotting if the growing medium is poorly drained or the conditions are too humid. Run a fan on low to keep the leaves dry and encourage stockiness. Other good disease-preventers are disinfecting recycled containers with a 10% bleach solution, using quality seed-starting mix and bottom-watering.

8.) Bugs attack. Yellow sticky cards (cheap and available online or at garden centers) are good at capturing whiteflies, fungus gnats, aphids, or other bugs that sometimes show up. If those aren't enough, you may need to spray with horticultural oil or insecticidal soap.

9.) The seedlings are too little (or too big). Start too soon, and the seedlings will flop and become root-bound. Start too late, and they'll be smaller than ideal when it's time to plant. To determine start time, count backward from when you'd like to have planting-sized plants ready.

Allow one to two weeks for seeds to germinate, six to eight weeks to grow and a week to 10 days to acclimate the seedlings outside before planting. Give your seedlings only a couple of hours outside in the shade the first day, then gradually give them more light and more time outdoors until they're outside round the clock for a couple of days before planting. 🌱

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.

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

WILLIAM F. MATSON MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

for the 2026-27 academic year.

ATTENTION HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS:

The Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association Scholarship Trust Fund in Memory of William F. Matson is offering scholarships to high school seniors whose parents or guardians are members or employees of the Pennsylvania and New Jersey electric cooperatives. Scan the QR code below for more information about the scholarship and the application.

REQUIREMENTS & DATES TO REMEMBER:

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

QUESTIONS:

Steph Okuniewski, *Member Engagement Specialist*
Stephanie_Okuniewski@prea.com
717.982.1455



ISSUE MONTH

April
May
June

AD DEADLINE

February 13
March 16
April 17

Please note ads must be received by the due date to be included in requested issue month; ads received after the due date will run in next issue. Written notice of changes/cancellations must be received 30 days prior to issue month.

No ads accepted by phone/email. For more information, please call 717-233-5704.

CLASSIFIED AD SUBMISSION/RATES:**ELECTRIC CO-OP MEMBERS:**

\$20 per month for 30 words or less, plus 50¢ for each additional word.

NON-MEMBERS:

\$70 per month for 30 words or less, plus \$1.50 for each additional word.

SPECIAL HEADINGS:

\$5 for co-op members, \$10 for non-members. The special heading fee applies to any heading not listed under "FREE HEADINGS," even if the heading is already appearing in *Penn Lines*. For ads running a special heading in consecutive months, the fee is a one-time fee of either \$5 (members) or \$10 (non-members) for all consecutive insertions.

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Harrisburg, PA 17108-1266

PLEASE SUBMIT A CLEARLY WRITTEN OR TYPED SHEET WITH THE FOLLOWING REQUIRED INFORMATION:

- Cooperative members should please submit the mailing label from *Penn Lines* as proof of membership.
- Non-members should submit name, address, phone number, and email address, if applicable.
- Month(s) in which the ad is to run.
- Ad copy as it is to appear in the publication.
- Heading ad should appear under, or name of special heading (additional fee). See below for FREE heading options.

FREE HEADINGS:

- Around the House
- Business Opportunities
- Employment Opportunities
- Events
- Gifts & Collectibles
- Livestock & Pets
- Miscellaneous
- Motor Vehicles & Boats
- Nursery & Garden
- Real Estate
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- Tools & Equipment
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- Wanted to Buy

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING

AA ROOFING

EXPERTS IN HARD-TO-FIND LEAKS! Roof repairs - all types. House, barn roofs painted. Slate work, chimney repairs. Southwestern PA for over 40 years. Speedy service! 814-445-4400.

AROUND THE HOUSE

CLOCK REPAIR: If you have an antique grandfather clock, mantel clock or old pocket watch that needs restored, we can fix any timepiece. Macks Clock Repair: 814-421-7992.

SPECIAL OFFER - BOTH COOKBOOKS FOR \$12. "Country Cooking" - \$5, including postage. "Recipes Remembered" - \$7, including postage. Both cookbooks are a collection of recipes from electric co-op members of Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Payable to: Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association, P.O. Box 1266, Harrisburg, PA 17108. Write Attention: Cookbooks.

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AIR-DRIED 40+ YEARS. 5 ft. to 8 ft. long, 2 ft. wide, 2 in. thick. All live edge. Approximately 40 pieces. Have some beautiful crotch pieces. Fair prices. Text 814-603-4561 for photos and information. Rockton, Pa.

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GARY & SONS, INC. NOW OFFERS ELECTRICAL SERVICES to homes within a 45-mile radius of Falls Creek, Pa. We install Generac® generators and do generator maintenance using only American-made Amsoil® synthetic oil. We also install new panels, EV-charging stations, outlets and light fixtures, and do electrical repairs. We have flexible scheduling and experienced electricians. Mention this ad to receive \$500 off a new generator installation. Call 814-204-2633 or go online to garysinc.com. PA192811.

GIFTS & COLLECTIBLES

SPECIAL OFFER - BOTH COOKBOOKS FOR \$12. "Country Cooking" - \$5, including postage. "Recipes Remembered" - \$7, including postage. Both cookbooks are a collection of recipes from electric co-op members of Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Payable to: Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association, P.O. Box 1266, Harrisburg, PA 17108. Write Attention: Cookbooks.

HEALTH INSURANCE

DO YOU HAVE THE BLUES regarding your health insurance? We cater to rural America's health insurance needs. For more information, call 800-628-7804. Call us regarding Medicare supplements, too.

HEATING & COOLING

GARY & SONS, INC. - SAVE MONEY on fuel oil, propane, or your electric bill without sacrificing comfort - add a heat pump! Contact Gary & Sons, Inc. of Falls Creek, Pa., for a FREE estimate. We are a Lennox® Premier Dealer and Mitsubishi® Diamond Elite Contractor, and we service all brands. We service a 45-mile radius around Falls Creek, Pa. Visit us online at garysinc.com or call 814-204-2633. Payment plans offered. PA192811.

MEATS

ANGUS FREEZER BEEF. \$3.50/LB. HANGING WEIGHT, plus processing. No antibiotics or hormones, grass-fed, grain-finished, excellent marbling. By the quarter, half or whole - discount for halves and multiple quarters. Allison Farmz, Alexandria, Pa. 814-669-4014.

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FOR SALE: BUCKETS, FORKS, THUMBS, grapple buckets and pallet forks for skid loaders, backhoes, and excavators. Tires for backhoes, rubber tire loaders and excavators also. Call 814-329-0118.

EXERCISE CLASSES - MONDAYS, 5 P.M. - POWERBALL; Tuesdays, 5 P.M. - Cardio Step; Thursdays, 5 P.M. - Zumba. \$8 per class or \$40/8 classes for a limited time! Private studio with certified instructor. For mature adults, all levels welcome. Please call ahead to confirm! 127 School Street, Boynton, PA 15532. Eve Schott: 814-233-8597.

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WATER ISSUES? IT'S TREATABLE! Gary & Sons, Inc. can install a HALO® Water System to solve chlorine or hard water problems. All natural and environmentally safe, HALO systems do not require mountains of salt and allow healthy minerals to remain in place. Installed by our experienced plumbers, call 814-204-2633 for details or go online to garysinc.com. We now offer residential plumbing services within a 45-mile radius of Falls Creek, Pa. PA192811.

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

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

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WANTED TO BUY

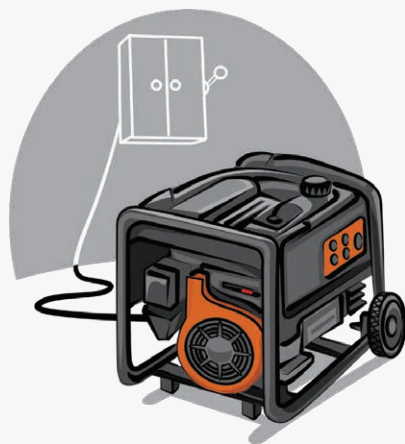
ANTIQUÉ AND CLASSIC American and foreign cars, motorcycles, trucks, Broncos, Blazers and Scouts. Any condition. Will buy entire car collections. krmiller1965@yahoo.com. 717-577-8206.

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

FARM SIGNS - ANYTYPE OF METAL (some are cardboard) advertising pieces, which include equipment dealers, tractors, machinery, fertilizer, seed, barn equipment, gas, oil, etc. Call 570-836-4199. Please leave a message.

1982 OR 1983 AMC EAGLE SX/4 4X4. Finder's fee. Phone: 301-293-2269 or 240-675-1956.

What is a **TRANSFER SWITCH**?



A transfer or throw switch is an essential mechanism that safely shuts off power to the electrical grid before backup power is used. This switch is sometimes referred to as a double-throw switch, as it controls two separate circuits.

The switch's job is to safely transfer power from its primary source to a backup power source, enabling users to maintain power during an outage. It works by connecting a generator to your home's main circuits to provide backup power.

Properly installed transfer switches are essential because they prevent dangerous backfeed into the power grid, which endangers utility workers and others.

Make sure your permanent generator and switch are installed according to code and working properly. Never plug a portable generator into a wall outlet, as this can cause backfeed.

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My Wife is Registered at Harbor Freight

JOHN KASUN

NEXT MONTH IS MY WEDDING ANNIVERSARY. If I told you how many years we have been married, you won't believe it because I look so young. During our many years of marriage, my wife and I have shared everything about our life and associated responsibilities — with the exception of the toilet plunger.

My wife always considered the toilet plunger a tool requiring a degree in engineering to operate. Since I have said degree, I was automatically in charge any time a toilet plunger was required. Aside from that one exception, my wife has always been interested in tools and often offers suggestions when I am involved in any home improvement project. Normally, her greatest contribution is providing encouraging statements, such as, "This shouldn't be hard," or "It shouldn't take long" when she wants a wall moved or two rooms added.

Often when I am slow to react to a request on her "Honey-Do List," she tends to raid my tools in an attempt to get the project started. Knowing how aggressive she becomes when wanting something done, a neighbor and good friend gave her a tool bag as a gag gift for her recent birthday. It was a nice tool bag, filled with a full assortment of hand tools including screwdrivers, a small hammer, wrenches, pliers, a level, measuring tape and assorted hardware. It looked like a small doctor's bag except it was pink and fuchsia and all the tools were pastel colors. The only thing that didn't come with it was a pair of high heels, fish net stockings and lipstick.

Everyone got a good laugh out of it, and I didn't give it much more thought until I started to notice little things around the house. About two weeks after my wife got the tool bag, I came home to find the three photographs she had wanted me to hang in her office for two months neatly hung and evenly spaced above her desk. Pretty good job, I thought to myself. Next, I noticed a loose knob on the closet

door was now as snug as a bug in a rug. Numerous little things I had been meaning to get to were slowly but surely getting crossed off the list. About this time, I was kicking myself for not buying her a tool bag years ago, but then things started to take a different twist.

I was having a difficult time locating some of my personal tools. I admit I have been known to not put all of my tools back as I should, and I often spend a lot of time looking for the tool I need at the moment. In the middle of one such

search, I noticed the handle of the small adjustable wrench I was looking for sticking out of my wife's tool bag, which sat neatly on her hobby bench. Just as I reached for the tool bag a chilling voice behind me said, "Don't touch my tool bag!"

"Hey," I stammered, "I was just getting my wrench."

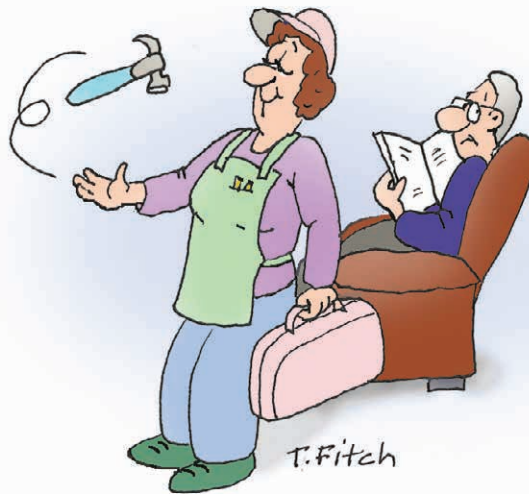
"That's my wrench now," she said, "It's small, and it fits in my bag. You buy yourself another one. By the way, I think you took one of my screwdrivers and didn't put it back."

"How do you know one is missing?" I asked.

She replied, "Because I had three with the X's on the end for those funny-looking screws and now I only have two. I think you took it and left it somewhere, and I want it back. I take care of my tools, unlike someone else I know."

Without waiting for my reply she added, "By the way, I am thinking about getting a hand power saw and drill set. I saw a cute, yellow pair on sale the other day when I was shopping."

My God, I thought to myself, who kidnapped my wife and left Mary the Mechanic in her place? At this rate, for our upcoming wedding anniversary, she'll be registered at Harbor Freight, Lowe's and Home Depot. 📍



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.

Congratulations 2025 RUNNERS-UP

THE WINNERS OF THE 2025 Rural Reflections contest were featured in January's *Penn Lines* and each photographer who took home the top prize was awarded \$75. This month, we feature the 2025 runners-up, each of whom will receive \$25.

In March, we will begin publishing photos submitted for the 2026 contest, so please start sending your snapshots now (no professional photos, please). This year, in addition to prints, we will be accepting digital images — those special ones you have on your phone or tablet — in the contest. For more information on how to enter, see below. 📷



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How to enter

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

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

ADDRESS CHANGES:

For change of address, please contact your local electric cooperative. For cooperative contact information, please visit www.prea.com/member-cooperatives



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