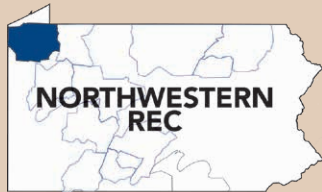


Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative Association, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

NORTHWESTERN REC

P.O. Box 207
22534 State Highway 86
Cambridge Springs, PA 16403
www.northwesternrec.com

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Lisa Chausse, District 9
Chair

Marian Davis, District 8
Secretary

Earl Koon, District 2
Treasurer

June T. Shelhamer, District 1

Candy Brundage, District 3

Robert G. Agnew, District 4

Kevin R. Cox, District 5

Kim Docter, District 6

David "Earl" Snyder, District 7

Lanny Rodgers, District 10

STAFF

Ryan Meller, President & CEO

Kathy Lane, VP & CFO

Stephen Miller, COO

Thomas Dimperio, Director of IT

Kerri Fleet, HR Director

Amy Wellington, Director of Communications

Clarissa Schneider, Executive Administrator

MAIN ACCESS NUMBER

1-800-352-0014

EMERGENCIES/OUTAGES

1-800-352-0014

FAX

814-398-8064

OFFICE HOURS

Monday through Friday
7 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Amy Wellington, *Editor*

Commitment to Innovation and Safety: Northwestern REC's 88th Annual Meeting



RYAN MELLER

AS YOUR PRESIDENT & CEO, it was an honor to address you at Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) Association's 88th Annual Meeting. Reflecting on our shared mission, I am reminded of our unwavering commitment to providing safe, reliable and economical electric service to enhance the quality of life in our communities.

Safety remains at the core of everything we do. It's not just a priority but a way of life at Northwestern REC. We've made significant strides in safety practices through technological advancements and comprehensive training. Our apprentice lineworker program is rigorous, ensuring the development of the next generation of skilled and safety-conscious workers. Our veteran line crews also undergo regular training to stay up-to-date on the latest safety practices. These efforts ensure all our employees are "people you can count on."

We've embraced new tools and technologies to improve our operations. Drones, for example, have allowed us to conduct overhead inspections, identifying issues that might otherwise go unnoticed. In 2023, drone inspections led us to replace or repair 34 poles, while regular inspections flagged 337 poles for action. Our proactive right-of-way maintenance also plays a crucial role in preventing outages and ensuring continuous power delivery.

As we look ahead, Northwestern REC is focusing on rebuilding our large three-phase lines, the backbone of our distribution system. This shift will enhance our ability to reroute power, improving reliability for our members. A significant project in the Centerville area will introduce a new delivery point, further ensuring consistent and reliable power for years to come.

We, however, face challenges beyond our local efforts. New regulations on power plants from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency threaten grid reliability. These regulations, in my view, are unrealistic and could undermine the stability of the national electric grid. Public policy is moving faster than technology can support, and it is critical we engage with policymakers. I encourage you to visit voicesforcooperativepower.com to learn how you can share your concerns with elected officials.

Thank you to all our members who participated in the 88th Annual Meeting drive-thru and canned food drive. We had approximately 1,000 memberships attend, and 1,500 pounds of food was donated. Each participating membership received a complimentary gift and a \$25 electric bill credit.

We also announced the results of our director elections at the annual meeting. Members re-elected Candy Brundage of District 3 and Lanny Rodgers of District 10. Kevin R. Cox was elected to serve as the new director for District 5.

In closing, I want to express my deepest gratitude to all of you — our employees, members and friends of Northwestern REC. Your support, trust, and partnership are the foundation of our success, and I am truly grateful for the opportunity to serve you. 🙏

Cooperatively yours,

RYAN MELLER
PRESIDENT & CEO

A Legacy of Service: Reflecting on 36 Years of Dedication to the Cooperative

AMY WELLINGTON, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

FOR MORE THAN THREE DECADES, a commitment to community, innovation and member service has defined the career of a dedicated leader who has left an indelible mark on the cooperative world. Her story is one of evolution, challenges and unwavering dedication to Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative's (REC) members and community.

From humble beginnings to leadership

Starting as an employee in member services and communications from 1973 to 1981, Kathy Cooper-Winters and her journey at the cooperative began with the basics: educating members through *Penn Lines* articles, introducing new energy-efficient technology and promoting energy conservation. Craft shows and hotline demonstrations became familiar tools in connecting with members.

This early hands-on experience laid a solid foundation for a leadership

path that culminated in the role of cooperative director for 36 years. In that time, Kathy served as board chair for 22 years, vice chair for two years and treasurer for 11 years.

In 1999, she was appointed to Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc.'s board, a position held until 2024. Additionally, nine years of service with the National Cooperative Service Corporation, a subsidiary of the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation, showcased a broader commitment to the cooperative movement at a national level.

Embracing innovation and navigating change

Kathy witnessed significant transformations over the years, and one of the most important has been the adoption of technology in the member services department. Gone are the days of the large rolodex. Today, thanks to computers, member information is instantly

accessible at the fingertips of member services representatives. This shift has streamlined operations and enhanced the quality of service provided to members.

As for the line crews, the emphasis on safety has dramatically increased over the years.

"Safety is a huge factor now," the veteran leader says, reflecting on the evolution of training and protocols. This change and technological advancements, like the SCADA system, have improved how outages are managed, ensuring greater reliability and quicker response times.

Staying true to core values

Despite the many changes, the core commitment to members has remained constant at the cooperative. The pride in implementing programs that benefit members economically, such as capital credits, stands out as a key achievement to Kathy. The challenge of ensuring newer members receive capital credits checks



LASTING IMPRESSION: After 36 years of service as a director for Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative, Kathy Cooper-Winters (as pictured over the years) has retired from the cooperative. Her last board meeting was the 88th Annual Meeting held Aug. 3, 2024.

along with long-standing members led to the development of a hybrid method that balances the needs of all members, new and old.

Another ongoing challenge has been maintaining strong communication with members in an ever-evolving technological landscape. From the early days of *Penn Lines* to the current use of social media, Kathy says the cooperative has continually sought to keep members informed and empowered to make wise decisions about energy efficiency and technology.

A legacy of community and innovation

The cooperative model was born out of a need to serve rural areas that were being overlooked by investor-owned utilities. The cooperative spirit of innovation and community service has been a guiding principle throughout the decades for Kathy. Whether through energy audits, the installation of dry hydrants or low-interest loans, the cooperative has consistently stepped up to address rural needs. Programs like the Member-to-Member initiative and Rural Rocks exemplify the cooperative's commitment to lifting

up the community, Kathy says.

Renewable energy has also been a focal point during Kathy's tenure, with the cooperative never shying away from new initiatives. From gathering data with an anemometer to studying solar energy possibilities, the goal has always been to equip members with the knowledge to make informed decisions. With more than 60% of its energy coming from 100% carbon-free sources, the cooperative continues to be a leader in embracing sustainable energy sources, Kathy says.

Words of wisdom and looking forward

As the torch is passed to the next generation of cooperative leaders, Kathy's advice is simple yet profound: "Be yourself, listen, learn from others and don't be afraid to ask for advice."

This wisdom, coupled with a deep sense of responsibility to do what is right for the cooperative, has defined a career dedicated to serving members, employees and the community.

Looking back, Kathy says the friendships and the people stand out the most. After all the years and the countless changes, it's the relationships that have brought

the most fulfillment. And as this chapter closes, Kathy's future holds the promise of quilting, traveling, spending time with family and embracing the joys of great-grandchildren.

A lasting impact

Over the years, much has changed, according to Kathy — her hairstyles, technology, and even the directors who have come and gone. But the essence of the cooperative remains the same: It's committed to providing safe, reliable and affordable electricity to its consumer-members. Through four major building renovations, the transition from manual meter readings to electronic meters and the continuous improvement of safety protocols, the cooperative has remained steadfast in its mission.

The legacy Kathy has left behind is one of service, innovation and a deep connection to the community. As the cooperative continues to evolve, it will do so on the strong foundation built by those who came before — always with the members at the heart of everything it does.

Thank you, Kathy, for your years of service to the co-op. 🍷

T H E F U T U R E I S

COOPERATIVE

CO-OP MONTH 2024

Five Simple Steps to Become a Co-op Voter

AMY WELLINGTON, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

IF YOU COULD SHAPE THE future of our community in five steps, would you? While I know it might seem like an impossible question, the 2024 general election is taking place next month, giving Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) members like you the opportunity to make your voice heard on issues that impact our community. This is our opportunity to elect candidates who support policies that promote safe, reliable and affordable energy.

Northwestern REC understands the importance of voting with co-op issues in mind and is working to ensure all our members go the polls as Co-op Voters. To help, we are partnering with Co-ops Vote, a national, non-partisan initiative that enhances the political strength of electric cooperatives by building relationships with policymakers.

Co-ops Vote provides members of the Northwestern REC community with the resources and information to vote with cooperative issues in mind. So, how can you be a Co-op Voter at the polls? Well, it's as easy as following these five steps:

- 1. Get ready:** Registering to vote is simple and easy. To help, Co-ops Vote has a website full of voter resources and information. You can check it out at vote.coop. Remember, it's essential to regularly check your voter registration information and verify it's correct and up-to-date.
- 2. Get the details:** Every state's election process is different, and it's important to know about upcoming

voter registration deadlines, the process for requesting absentee ballots and more so you don't miss key dates. You can find all the information about voting in Pennsylvania by visiting vote.coop/govt.

- 3. Get informed:** Before you head to the polls, it's important to be educated on the policy issues that ensure our community's power is reliable, affordable and safe. Learn more about these issues by visiting voicesforcooperativepower.com/issues and joining Voices for Cooperative Power, a national network of co-op advocates.
- 4. Get the background:** Once you're registered and informed, it's time to learn about your candidates. You can view a list of current elected officials on the Voices for Cooperative Power website and then click to view their official websites for news releases and official policy positions.
- 5. Get others involved!** As a committed Co-op Voter, it's time to get your family, friends and neighbors involved in the process so share these five steps with them, too.

We encourage you to complete these five simple steps and become a Co-op Voter. America's electric cooperatives, including Northwestern REC, understand the importance of political engagement.

Together, we have the power to educate lawmakers, build awareness about our issues and concerns, and support legislative issues that are important to our communities. The co-op voice is powerful, and it starts with you. 🗳️

