

# 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

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**Lisa Chausse, District 9**  
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**Corporate Safety & Compliance**

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**Clarissa Schneider, Executive Secretary &**

**HR Assistant**

## 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**

## Guest Column



## Changing of the guard

By Amy Wellington, *Director of Communications*

AT A special meeting on April 13, 2022, the board of Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) Association, Inc., regretfully accepted the resignation of Bill Buchanan as president and CEO. His last day was May 6.

Buchanan was hired by Northwestern REC's board in late 2018, with an official start date of Feb. 2, 2019. In his short time at Northwestern REC, Buchanan focused his efforts on streamlining management and realigning business functions.

Board Chair Kathryn Cooper-Winters announced the resignation to employees shortly after the meeting. During her announcement, Cooper-Winters wished Buchanan all the best in his future endeavors.

Cooper-Winters also said the board unanimously appointed the co-op's Chief Operating Officer Ryan Meller as interim president and CEO. The board has the utmost confidence in Meller's abilities to lead the cooperative.

Meller was first hired at the co-op in 2011 as an engineering intern. During his time at the cooperative, Meller and his team were instrumental in administering the co-op's distribution system

upgrades, which now allow automated power monitoring and switching.

Today, Meller is an electrical engineer, having earned a master's

degree in power transmission and distribution from Gonzaga University and a doctorate in systems engineering from Colorado State University. Meller and his wife, Elana, live on co-op lines in Cambridge Springs.

Over the next several months, Northwestern's board will explore its options for a permanent replacement as president and CEO.

Northwestern REC is also happy to announce the recent addition of Nicholas Eakin as the new Member Services Team Leader. Overseeing a team of seven, Eakin will develop and implement strategies to address organizational needs. He

also will work closely with members to resolve billing concerns that arise.

Eakin and his wife hail from the Cochran area, where they live on co-op lines.

As Winston Churchill once said, "There is nothing wrong with change, if it is in the right direction." ❁



Ryan Meller



Nicholas Eakin

# **18th Annual Member-to-Member Golf Outing**

## **June 15, 2022**

### **Whispering Pines in Meadville**

Shotgun Start — 9 a.m.

Cost per player — \$70; Cost per team — \$280  
Co-op retirees pay \$60 per player or \$240 per team.

Skins included in entry fee.

*Golfer fee includes \$15 donation. Thank you.*

50/50, chance auction and other special events available.

Line prizes and team prizes to reward superior skills.

Door prizes, lunch and dinner will be provided.

The Member-to-Member, Inc. program collects contributions to help Northwestern REC members with financial difficulties keep their electric bills paid.

Registration deadline is June 8.

Register by calling Northwestern REC  
at 800-352-0014.

#### **Sponsorship Opportunities**

**\$1,500 Substation Sponsor:** Four golfers, top billing PLUS food, beverage or hole-in-one sponsor (you pick!), inclusion in Facebook and Twitter ads, personal recognition at the event, event exhibit available, and inclusion in all advertising to promote the event.

**\$1,250 Power Line Sponsor:** Four golfers, top billing, inclusion in Facebook and Twitter ads, personal recognition at the event, event exhibit available, and inclusion in all advertising to promote the event.

**\$600 Bucket Truck Sponsor:** Two golfers, premium billing, one-year inclusion in Facebook and Twitter ads, personal recognition at the event, event exhibit available, and inclusion in all advertising to promote the event.

**\$300 Water Heater Sponsor:** High-profile listing, personal recognition at the event, inclusion in Facebook and Twitter ads, event exhibit available, and inclusion in all promotional advertising.

**\$150 Transformer Sponsor:** Hole sponsor. Signage on a tee will recognize your support.

**Meter Sponsor:** We appreciate any monetary donation or door prizes you can offer to help make this event a success and to promote your business.

# Virtual reality: Could it be the future of co-op meetings?

And what we covered at the 2022 pop-up events

By Amy Wellington, *Director of Communications*

**THE FUTURE?** Believe it or not, virtual reality (VR) is not a new concept. The modern idea of VR has been around since the creation of science fiction. Even gamers began using VR devices in the early 1990s.

This thought, that VR could be the future of co-op meetings, came up in a recent conversation I had with Ryan Meller, our interim president and CEO. After a two-year COVID-19 hiatus, we brought back a version of our spring member meetings, which were held in April and May.

Considering the lower-than-usual turnout for these meetings, Meller and I were chatting about the changes we've had to make to combat COVID-19's impact on our business practices. Most notably, for the past three director elections, we have used a member-led committee to accept nominations, rather than host nominating meetings. We traditionally provided a full meal at the spring meetings, but opted to serve a simple dessert for the 2022

pop-up events.

What will be the new look of our future member meetings? How can we attract a new, younger generation of members? Amid our chat, I thought of my own millennial son, who spent many hours in front of his gaming console during high school.

I was truly joking when I said to Meller, "We could make the meetings gamer-like." But then, as those words came out of my mouth and I mimicked playing a video game with my hands, I realized that wasn't as far-fetched as I thought.

"Or we could host a meeting using virtual reality!" I blurted. A millennial himself, Meller had a glimmer in his eye, and I could tell he was not opposed to the idea. Mark my words, we will see this come to fruition in my lifetime.

## The present

At the 2022 pop-up events, board Chair Kathryn Cooper-Winters and

Meller welcomed around 75 co-op members. They discussed a wide array of topics, from the director nominating procedures to our 2021 power mix (which will be featured in the July annual report).

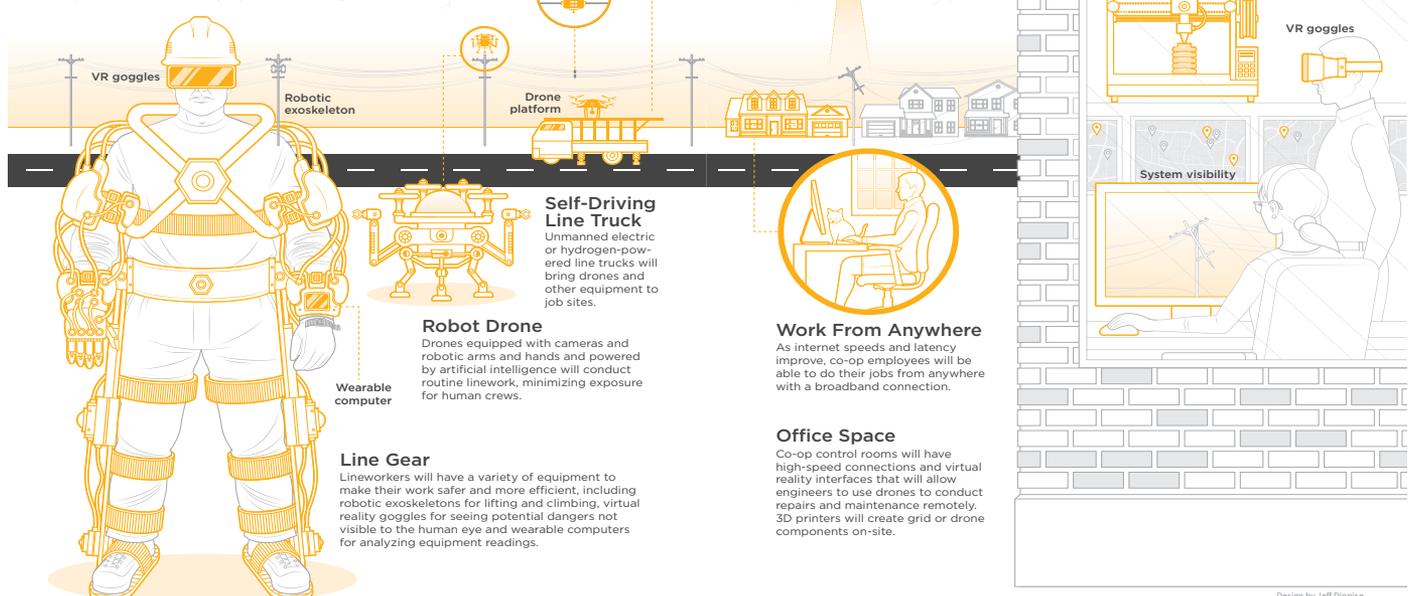
Cooper-Winters expressed her gratitude to be face-to-face once again. She personally invited each member (including you, the reader) to join us at the 86th annual meeting of the membership on Aug. 20 at New Beginnings Church of God in Meadville.

Meller described in layman's terms how averted outage minutes are calculated. He said if 100 members were able to avoid a 1-minute outage with the co-op's switching equipment, that would equal a total of 100 averted outage minutes. In 2021 alone, Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative was able to reroute power to avoid 6,499,843 outage minutes.

More details about the state of the co-op in 2021 will be featured in the next issue of our *Penn Lines* magazine. 🌟

## The Future of Co-op Work

Over the next two decades, electric co-op work will be defined by enhanced internet connectivity, more sophisticated drones and robots and machine learning, developments that will improve linework safety, system reliability and member service.



# New ways to use electricity

IF YOU listen carefully, you can hear a quiet transformation happening. Electric appliances and equipment are becoming more popular than ever among consumers.

Advancements in technology and battery power, coupled with decreasing costs, are winning over consumers looking for comparable utility and versatility. A bonus is that electric equipment is quieter and better for the environment.

Inside the home, consumers and homebuilders alike are turning to electric appliances to increase energy efficiency and savings. Whether a traditional electric stove or an induction stovetop, both are significantly more efficient than a gas oven. That's because conventional residential cooktops typically use gas or resistance heating elements

to transfer energy with efficiencies of approximately 32% and 75%, respectively, according to ENERGY STAR®. Electric induction stoves, which cook food without a flame, reduce indoor air pollution and can bring water to a boil about twice as fast as a gas stove. Robotic vacuums are also gaining in popularity. *Fortune Business Insights* attributes the growth and popularity of robotic vacuums, like Roomba, to a larger market trend of smart-home technology and automation (think Alexa directing a Roomba to vacuum).

More tools and equipment with small gas-powered motors are being replaced with electric ones that include plug-in batteries. In the past few years, technology in battery storage has advanced significantly. Hand-held tools with plug-in batteries

battery chargers.

Keith Dennis, an energy industry expert and president of the Beneficial Electrification League, notes, "A few years back, the list of new electric product categories that were making their way to the market was limited — electric scooters, lawn mowers, leaf blowers and vehicles."

Today, the number of electric products available is exploding.

"There are electric bikes, school buses, pressure washers, utility terrain vehicles, backhoes — even airplanes and boats," Dennis says. "With the expansion of batteries and advancements in technology, we are seeing almost anything that burns gasoline or diesel as having an electric replacement available on the market."

A case in point is the increased use of electric-powered tools and equipment, with more national brands offering a wider selection, including lawn mowers, leaf blowers, string trimmers, and snow blowers. The quality of zero- or low-emission lawn equipment is also improving.

Electric equipment also requires less maintenance, and often the biggest task is keeping it charged. In addition, electric equipment is quieter, so if you want to listen to music or your favorite podcast while performing outdoor work, you can — something that isn't possible with gas-powered equipment. On the horizon, autonomous lawn mowers (similar to robotic vacuum cleaners) will be seen dotting outdoor spaces.

Another benefit of using electric appliances or equipment is that by virtue of being plugged into the grid, their environmental performance improves over time. In essence, electricity is becoming cleaner through increased renewable energy generation, so equipment that uses it will have a diminishing environmental impact over time. That's quite a hat trick: improving efficiency, quality of life and helping the environment. 🌱

## SAVE MONEY

Electricity is becoming cleaner every day and can save consumers money on their energy costs over time.

**Did you know...**  
Replacing your HVAC system with an electric heat pump can **save you nearly \$1,000 per year** on your heating and cooling bills.<sup>1</sup>

**Did you know...**  
The average cost of **charging an electric car** is equivalent to **\$1.20 per gallon of gasoline**.<sup>2</sup>

**Did you know...**  
Owning an electric vehicle can **save you over \$800** in annual maintenance.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.energystar.gov/iaq/indoorairquality/energy\\_savings](https://www.energystar.gov/iaq/indoorairquality/energy_savings)

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.energystar.gov/iaq/indoorairquality/energy\\_savings](https://www.energystar.gov/iaq/indoorairquality/energy_savings)

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.energystar.gov/iaq/indoorairquality/energy\\_savings](https://www.energystar.gov/iaq/indoorairquality/energy_savings)

**GO ELECTRIC**  
It's the SMART choice

Tri-State Energy  
Cooperative  
The power of human connection.

NRECA  
National Rural Electric Cooperative Association

can hold a charge longer and offer the user the same versatility and similar functionality as gas-powered tools. For do-it-yourselfers and those in the building trades, national brands, such as Makita, Ryobi and Milwaukee, offer electric versions of their most popular products, like drills, saws, sanders, and other tools. In addition to standard offerings, consumers can now purchase a wider array of specialty tools that plug in, such as power inverters, air inflators and