

MARCH 2025

PENNLINES

Power in Numbers

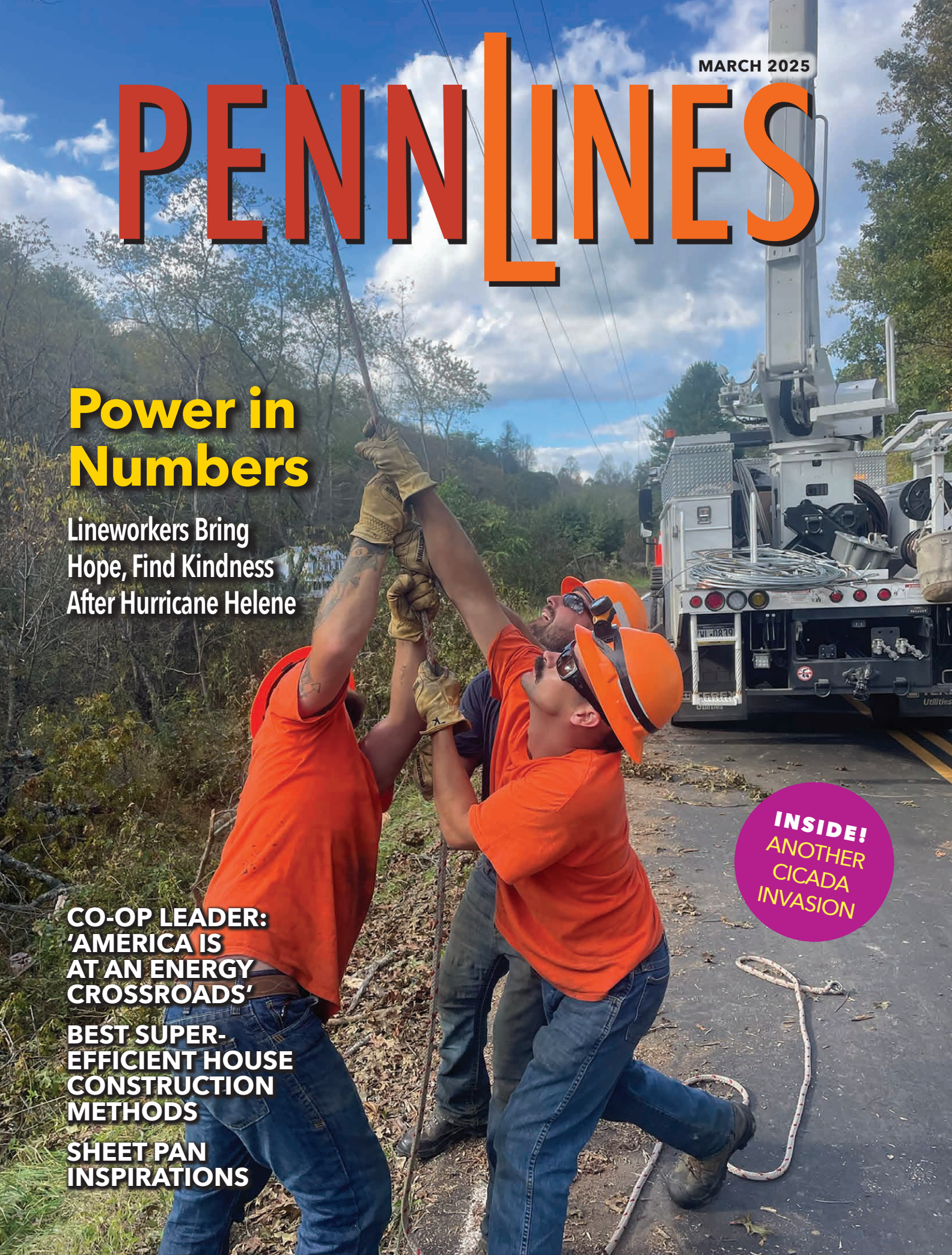
Lineworkers Bring Hope, Find Kindness After Hurricane Helene

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AT AN ENERGY
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BARRY SCHROCK/SOMERSET RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

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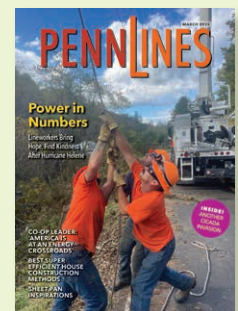
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Georgia, above, North Carolina and South Carolina were the temporary homes for Pennsylvania lineworkers helping communities recover after Hurricane Helene last year.



ON THE COVER
Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) lineworkers – Dave Gardner, Scott Rockwell and Tanner Keeney – help a rural North Carolina electric cooperative rebuild its hurricane-damaged lines.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CLAVERRACK REC

Safety is Everyone's Responsibility - At Work and at Home



DENNIS SHAWLEY

ELECTRICITY IS AN ESSENTIAL PART of our daily lives, but it comes with risks — especially for those who work with it every day.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the people who keep your lights on — your co-op's lineworkers — have one of the most dangerous occupations. In recent years, fatality rates have ranged from 20 to 30 deaths per 100,000 workers, with countless more suffering serious injuries from electrical burns and shocks. These men and women often work in hazardous conditions — snowstorms, high winds, and extreme temperatures — all while dealing with the invisible dangers of electricity.

Here, at the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association, safety is my sole focus, and I've seen firsthand how critical training, awareness, and protective equipment are to preventing tragedies. Cooperative lineworkers follow strict safety protocols, use specialized gear and undergo rigorous training to reduce risks. But one lesson I've learned over the years is that safety isn't just a workplace responsibility — it's something we all need to take seriously, especially at home.

That message has become even more personal for me since becoming a grandparent. My two young grandsons are naturally curious, which is wonderful, but also a little terrifying when it comes to electricity. A downed power line is an obvious danger, but everyday household electrical hazards are just as real, especially for young children who don't yet understand the risks.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, electrical injuries account for thousands of emergency room visits each year. Children, particularly toddlers, are at higher risk because they explore the world with their hands and mouths. Here are some key safety steps every family should take:

- ▶ **Cover outlets** — Young children are naturally curious and may try to stick objects — or even their fingers — into outlets. Use outlet covers or install tamper-resistant receptacles, which have built-in shutters that block foreign objects.
- ▶ **Teach kids about electrical safety** — Start early by explaining, in simple terms, that outlets, cords and appliances are not toys.
- ▶ **Check cords and appliances** — Frayed or damaged cords can expose live wires, increasing the risk of shocks and fires. Regularly inspect and replace worn cords and never run them under rugs where they can overheat or become damaged.
- ▶ **Keep cords out of reach** — Kids love to pull and tug on things, which can lead to accidents. Keep lamp cords, chargers, and power strips out of their reach to prevent shocks or strangulation hazards.
- ▶ **Be cautious with water and electricity** — It may seem obvious, but kids don't always make the connection. Never let them use electrical devices near water, whether it's a hairdryer in the bathroom or a phone charger near the kitchen sink.
- ▶ **Know what to do in an emergency** — If a child suffers an electric shock, don't touch them if they're still in contact with the electrical source; unplug it first or turn off the power at the breaker. Seek medical attention immediately, even if they seem OK, as internal injuries can occur.

Just as lineworkers rely on teamwork and training to stay safe on the job, we all have a role to play in keeping our homes safe. Electricity is an incredible tool, but it demands respect — whether you're working with high-voltage power lines or plugging in a nightlight for your child.

By staying vigilant and teaching children about electrical safety from an early age, we can help prevent injuries and ensure our homes are places of comfort rather than danger. After all, safety isn't just a rule to follow — it's a responsibility we all share. 🡕

DENNIS SHAWLEY

MANAGER, JOB TRAINING & SAFETY
PENNSYLVANIA RURAL ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION/
ALLEGHENY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

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EDITOR

Peter A. Fitzgerald

MANAGING EDITOR

Jill M. Ercolino

SENIOR TECHNICAL EDITOR

Michael T. Crawford

LAYOUT & DESIGN

Kaylin E. Acri

ADVERTISING & PRODUCTION

COORDINATOR

Michelle M. Smith

CONTRIBUTING COLUMNISTS

**James Duley, John Kasun,
Anne M. Kirchner,**

Yvonne Butts-Mitchell, Steve Piatt

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THE POWER OF FOCUS

Lineworkers do some extraordinary things. You can read about some of their incredible work down South in this month's feature story by Paula Piatt. Paula highlights the experience of cooperative line crews from Pennsylvania who helped restore power to sister cooperatives in Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene. Bringing these communities back online required a superhuman effort and, I believe, a kind of superpower.

I noticed this power recently at a business meeting, of all places. It was a conference for lineworkers and safety personnel, and what struck me about this meeting was how focused the attendees were. They maintained a high level of attention not just for the opening speaker, but for all the speakers and sessions throughout the two-day event. Sure, it was a good conference with great speakers, but I thought there was something more to it.



In a world where digital distraction is the norm, the focus of these line and safety personnel seemed out of the ordinary. Meeting culture has shifted so much that it's become quite common to see people scrolling on their smartphones at these events, responding to texts and emails, and not really focusing on the meeting. (According to reviews.org, Americans check their phones more than 200 times a day, about once every five waking minutes.) But that's not what was going on at this meeting. People were paying attention.

Computer science professor and author Cal Newport has described this ability to focus without distraction as a new "superpower." He says it's something that's becoming increasingly rare as our attention is under constant attack from social media platforms, news feeds, entertainment apps and the constant stream of emails, texts, and notifications.

But considering the nature of their work, I began to understand how these line and safety personnel avoid distractions. Their work is among the most dangerous professions in the world, requiring intense concentration. While some of us can get away with an occasional diversion, line work is unforgiving. As a result, lineworkers have to nurture a high level of focus and attention. A single lapse can mean the difference between life and death.

In this age of distraction, that ability to focus isn't just an essential skill – it's a superpower.

PETER A. FITZGERALD
EDITOR



COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG

DOWN UNDER: Fayette County's Laurel Caverns could become Pennsylvania's 125th state park if lawmakers approve Gov. Josh Shapiro's recent budget recommendation. This also would be the first underground state park in the Commonwealth.

SUBTERRANEAN RECREATION

Pennsylvania takes deep dive with new state park proposal

A new state park could be coming to western Pennsylvania under a plan proposed by Gov. Josh Shapiro. If given the greenlight, Laurel Caverns in Fayette County would become the Commonwealth's 125th state park — and its first underground one.

Known as "the caverns in the clouds," the site is home to Pennsylvania's largest natural calcareous sandstone cave and is about 50 miles south of Pittsburgh. The state would acquire the property through a donation from the present owner. Future work would

include infrastructure and safety improvements. Park tours would also be offered.

"Pennsylvania is home to some of the most beautiful and remarkable places in the country, and I want more people to experience them," Shapiro said when making the announcement during his February budget address.

The governor's plan includes other outdoors initiatives. Among them: transferring 391 acres in Carbon County from the Pennsylvania Game Commission to Lehigh Gorge State Park. This expansion of the park would also lead to safety improvements along the scenic Glen Onoko Falls Trail, currently closed to the public.

WANTED: PAMPERED PETS FOR PENN LINES FEATURE



How pampered is your pet? Do they have their own bed? Their own room? Social media presence? Don't be ashamed – brag about it. Better yet, brag about it in *Penn Lines*.

We're looking for pet moms and dads to show the rest of us how it's done. Tell us – in 100 words or less – how you pamper your pet for an opportunity to be featured with your best furry friend in an upcoming issue of *Penn Lines*.

Send your essay and a photo of your pet to PennLines@prea.com or *Penn Lines*, P.O. Box 1266, Harrisburg, PA 17108. All essays must be received by **Friday, March 21**. Please be sure to include your name, address, daytime telephone number, and the name of the cooperative that serves your home, business or seasonal residence.

CICADA INVASION

Insects to emerge from 17-year slumber in mid-May

Pennsylvania is one of several states that will be inundated with cicadas this spring. Experts say the insects will come up through the ground in mid-May after a 17-year slumber.

According to Penn State Extension, cicadas are not dangerous; however, the state could see a near-record number of them in the following counties: Adams, Bedford, Berks, Blair, Centre, Clearfield, Clinton, Cumberland, Franklin, Huntingdon, Lackawanna, Lehigh, Luzerne, Lycoming, Mifflin, Montour, Northumberland, Perry, Potter, Schuylkill, Snyder, Tioga, Union and York counties.

Once they emerge, cicadas stay active for about four to six weeks before disappearing. The next round isn't expected to emerge again in Pennsylvania until 2029, the extension says.

To learn more, go to extension.psu.edu/periodical-cicada.

POACHED!

State Police asking for public's help in cracking missing egg case

Pennsylvania made national news when 100,000 eggs — estimated to be worth \$40,000 — were stolen in February from a Franklin County farm.

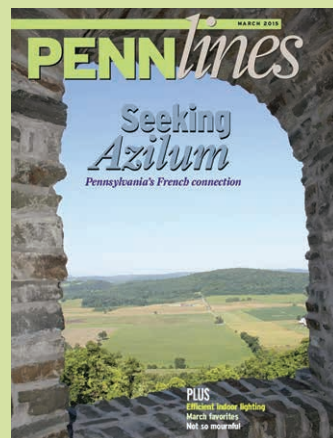
State police report the eggs were poached from the back of a distribution trailer at Pete & Gerry's Organics in Greencastle. A \$1,500 reward is being offered to the person who can help police crack the case.

The theft comes at a time when egg prices are nearing \$8 a dozen due to a nationwide bird flu outbreak.

"Pete & Gerry's is ... actively working with local law enforcement to investigate," the egg supplier said in a statement. "We take this matter seriously and are committed to resolving it as quickly as possible."

Anyone with information about the theft is asked to call Pennsylvania State Police in Chambersburg at 717-264-5161. 📞

TIME LINES



A decade ago, the pages of *Penn Lines* recounted the story of French Azilum, a community in Bradford County developed in the late 1700s for refugees fleeing the the French Revolution. The 1,600-acre site fell to ruin when the refugees were granted amnesty after the war and either returned to France or settled elsewhere in the U.S. Today, the site — gone but not forgotten — is dotted with farms and gas wells. Pennsylvania is home to a number of other "ghost towns," some of which were featured in the October 2024 issue of *Penn Lines*.



COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG



GET WISE

Get out of the house and learn something new about the oil industry — past, present and future — at the annual Wisdom & More lecture series, held every Thursday in March at the Drake Well Museum and Park, Titusville. Admission is \$5 for members of Friends of Drake Well and \$10 for non-members. Learn more at drakewell.org/events.

SHAKE YOUR SHAMROCK

Pennsylvania is the only state with two cities — Pittsburgh and Philadelphia — ranking in the Top 10 of St. Patrick's Day parades. This year, grab your green and go on a road trip. Pittsburgh's annual Irish spectacular is March 15, followed by Philadelphia's on the 16th. Learn more at pittsburghstpatrikdayparade.com and phillyparade.com.



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GO MAD FOR MAPLE

We're in the midst of maple season, and if you're looking to indulge, head to northwestern Pennsylvania, site of the Annual Maple Taste and Tour Weekend, March 15 and 16. Visitors are invited to explore 20 different sugarhouses and their unique way of producing maple syrup. Admission is free. Learn more at pamaple.org/taste-tours.

HOLD ONTO YOUR HATS!

Attention, cowboys and cowgirls: The 2025 Bullride Mania Winter Finals — featuring music by Uncle Kracker — are coming to the Pennsylvania Farm Show Complex in Harrisburg March 29. Tickets are still available at bullridemania.com.



HELP AFTER THE HURRICANE: Dustin Crum, in bucket, and Chris Peters, on ground, journeyman linemen for Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative in Cambridge Springs, Pa., help with hurricane cleanup and service restoration in rural Georgia. Northwestern also sent crews to North and South Carolina.

ROSS THOMAS/NORTHWESTERN REC



POWER IN NUMBERS

Lineworkers Bring Hope, Find Kindness After Hurricane Helene

PAULA PIATT

Penn Lines Contributor

Editor's note: This is the first of a two-part series about the power behind our power, Pennsylvania's lineworkers. This month, we spotlight those who traveled south last fall to rebuild power lines in rural communities devastated by Hurricane Helene. Next month, in part two, we talk to their families, who make their own sacrifices to keep the lights on.

LAST FALL, ROSS THOMAS, a 22-year veteran lineman with Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative (REC), got in his truck in Meadville and drove 840 miles to Georgia.

The experience, he admits, was surreal, seeming at times he had only gotten as far as Punxsutawney.

"It was Groundhog Day. Every day," says Thomas, one of hundreds of cooperative lineworkers who provided mutual aid to communities devastated by Hurricane Helene. "You woke up, ate, went to the shop, got your stuff, met up with your tree crew and worked all day. At the end of the day, you go back to the shop, clean up all your stuff,

eat, go to bed, get up the next day and do it all over again."

The Category 4 storm made landfall in September, causing death and destruction from the Gulf Coast to the North Carolina mountains. More than 100 people died and 1.25 million rural electric cooperative members lost power.

"I've never worked anything like it; it was nine counties of devastation [in Georgia]. Everywhere, the grid was gone," says Thomas, still marveling at the power of Mother Nature. Pennsylvania's sporadic tornadoes, he adds, will occasionally blow out a section of line, but "we put everybody on it and get it going in a day or so. But this ... it just went on and on and on. It was crazy."

'Unfathomable'

Thomas and his Northwestern REC crew joined lineworkers from 10 other Pennsylvania and New Jersey cooperatives to provide much-needed manpower down South — in Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina. In Georgia, Satilla Rural Electric Membership Corporation — a co-op with 7,000 miles of line and 57,000 members



— had to be completely rebuilt. In North Carolina, almost 80% of Blue Ridge Energy's 80,000 members lost power following the destruction of 6,800 miles of power line.

"It was almost unfathomable," remembers AJ Jablunovsky, chief lineman for REA Energy Cooperative, based in Indiana, Pa. He recounts seeing recreational vehicles lodged in trees 10 feet off the ground; roofs torn from homes and dotting the landscape; and foundations sitting empty, save for the tents pitched by homeowners awaiting help. "It was just hard to even comprehend."

Local cooperative crew members — called "bird dogs" — would shepherd out-of-town crews to their next assignment, often sending GPS coordinates and photos to point them in the right direction. However, it was all "before" information.

"I was in the right place, but it wasn't adding up," Thomas says of one job. "Then, I see a pole laying on the ground with no wire. The transformer is still in the energized position, but with no wires hooked to it. And I look over this field, and there's the house that used to be there with the wire that used to feed the pole that was now laying on the ground."

Once "up the pole" — usually after they installed a new one — the surroundings became a bit more familiar.

"A lot of co-ops have the same specifications for their power line builds, so that helped," explains Scott Rockwell, a journeyman lineman for Wysox-based Claverack REC, who spent a dozen days with Blue Ridge Energy. The Claverack crew, like the others, rolled in with their trucks and simply got to work.

"At first it seemed fairly similar, but then as you got into the more 'out there' places, it was devastating. The magnitude was greater than anything I'd seen," says Scott Tubbs, a lineman with DuBois-based United Electric Cooperative. "Around here, you get a thunderstorm, and you've got a handful of trees blown down. But there, as far as you could see — in every direction — you had trees down, you had roads washed out. It was just ... wow."

The terrain of North Carolina and Georgia was also new.

"Their mountains down there are nothing like ours — they have real mountains. We were climbing straight up cliffs, and sometimes, you were holding on to the wire to pull yourself up the side of the mountain," says Dave Gardner, another journeyman lineman with Claverack. "The concept was the same, but the terrain was completely different."

Crews battled the remnants of wind and water, the likes of which they had never seen. On its way to a crest of 18.3 feet

DEVASTATION: This scene shows just some of the damage in the territory covered by Blue Ridge Energy in North Carolina. Nearly 6,800 miles of the cooperative's power lines were destroyed during Hurricane Helene.

(well above the low of 2 feet only four days prior), the New River in Ashe County, N.C., swept poles and wires downstream.

“We had to cross the river with the wire multiple times,” Jablunovsky says. “Sometimes, they’d have a drone fly the string over for us or we would use a slingshot and a string. One day, I waded up the river to get the string; that was an experience. We’ve never done anything like that [in REA’s territory].”

‘People who had nothing were giving it to us’

A master plan kept each crew busy, usually building on the last crew’s hard work — if not by fellow lineworkers, then by the heavy equipment operators who first rebuilt the roads. According to Chief Lineman Bryan Schrock of Somerset REC, the rebuilds began at the substation.

“The first crew there did all of the three-phase work,” he says. With the feeder lines up, Schrock’s crew then worked on the final supply, or tap, lines that would carry power to the utility poles once they were replaced. “We just went down the road and every tap we came to, we just rolled it out and put it on.”

That is, if there was a home to connect it to.

“The pictures on the news, they didn’t do it justice,” Rockwell says. “Seeing it with your own eyes, it’s a different story. People’s homes were in trees, and there were numerous places you couldn’t even tell where the power lines were supposed to be.”

And here is where the story gets personal for the crews. Throughout their days, folks would come out of their dark homes, not to ask about their power, but to offer gifts. There were, in fact, many times lineworkers were greeted — truly greeted — by people who had no home left to energize.

“It’s the real deal,” says Schrock of southern hospitality. “They were some of the nicest people I’ve ever met. For them to be out of power for three weeks and then just bending over backward to make you a meal [or to give you] anything you needed. We stayed at a church, and the kids made cards and put a Reese’s Cup or something on the bed every night ... I went down to help those people, and they helped me.”

“This woman came out and gave us some bags of pecans,” recalls Thomas, who was schooled on the pronunciation, which is “pec-ANS.”

“I asked her where she lived and she said, ‘Over there.’ I had to tell her, I didn’t know if we were even going to get to that today, but she said, ‘Well, here you go. We sure appreciate what you’re doing.’ Who does something like that?”

Apparently, most of the people the crews met.

“They were acting like we were the ones in need, always

SCOTT TUBBS/UNITED ELECTRIC



HELP ARRIVES: Eleven Pennsylvania and New Jersey cooperatives were able to provide mutual aid in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene.

Above – Journeyman Lineman Scott Tubbs, second from left, and Crew Chief Dan Marshall, far right, of United Electric Cooperative pose with lineworkers from North Carolina’s EnergyUnited.

Below – The crew from Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative gets ready to go to work in North Carolina. They are, from left: Journeyman Lineman Scott Rockwell, Crew Chief Brandon Griffiths, Journeyman Lineman Dave Gardner, Crew Chief John McKernan, Journeyman Lineman Leonard Fowler and Apprentice Lineman Tanner Kenney.

SCOTT ROCKWELL/CLAVERRACK REC



offering us water and things,” Rockwell says. “There were days (the local cooperative) would send us with a bag lunch and we didn’t even get to eat it because everybody was bringing us food.” Local fire companies delivered barbecue lunches, he recalls, and churches — “there seemed to be one on every corner” — were offering meals all day long.

“We got this one line on, and a guy comes out with a basket his three young daughters made. And his wife made a card, and they all signed it: ‘Thanks to the linemen for getting our electric on,’” Thomas says. “So, you just take

it and say, ‘Thank you,’ but you’re thinking, ‘Are you sure you don’t need this?’ People who had nothing were giving it to us.”

Man camps and making a difference

At the end of each day, the lineworkers would roll back to their accommodations, which varied depending on the location. Crews assigned to North Carolina lodged in motels and short-term rentals that had been reserved ahead of the storm. Others bunked in churches.

The guys in Georgia stayed at a man camp, where circus-like tents housed up to 500 lineworkers. In another, food was served, and semi-trailers offered showers and laundry service. All lineworkers were fed breakfast (usually by the local cooperative), sent out with a lunch and returned to a full meal at dinner.

“They provided you with everything you needed,” Thomas says. “The cots were something, though — 30 inches wide by 6 feet long. It was tough for our one guy ... he’s 6-5.”

They weren’t on the cots for long, though. Sixteen- to 18-hour days were the norm; not all of them seemed fruitful.

“You might work a whole day and get five people in power,” recalls Schrock, who was stationed in Georgia. Scott Tubbs saw the same thing in rural North Carolina.

“The very last day we were there, we put up 12 spans of primary [line] and four or five spans of neutral wire. We didn’t get anybody turned on,” he says, with a bit of resignation in his voice. A new crew from United Electric provided relief and worked another day or two to restore 20 members.

But the work did bring satisfaction — words and phrases like “helping,” “making a difference” and “rewarding” were common when the lineworkers spoke of the experience.

“You really feel like you’re making a difference in someone’s life. We work in a very skilled trade, and you’re happy to be able to use your skills and knowledge to be able to bring a little bit of light to these people’s lives,” says Claverack’s Dave Gardner, remembering people clapping and saluting as lineworkers would roll through a neighborhood. “It was awesome to see, and it made the long days and hard work worth it. I would do it again — in a heartbeat.”

As would the others who made the trip south.

“It was a very, very humbling experience,” Jablunovsky says. “I watched a lady just break down in tears when we pulled into her lane one day; she was just so excited to see the truck.”

Brothers on the line

And the opportunity to work with their southern colleagues was a bonus. There are a lot of new Facebook friends today because lineworkers are lineworkers, no matter their home cooperative.

“When you work with someone from a different area, it’s like having a brother next to you; you don’t miss a beat,” Rockwell says. “It’s just a different type of career; there’s a camaraderie there. Even when you’re with a guy from another area, you just find a way to work together.”

Working alongside their brothers from the South also provided an opportunity for a little cultural exchange. Georgia lineworkers discovered they had “cricks” running through the valleys, and the Northerners learned that “up yonder” is about a mile and a half.

“After three or four days, I found myself developing a southern accent,” Tubbs says with a laugh.

Bringing the crews together for meals to start and end the day only strengthened their resolve and brotherhood.

“Every morning, as we would have breakfast, one of the linemen would give a blessing and spoke of a lineman’s heart. When it came time to help, all those guys, all far away from home, they never batted an eye,” Jablunovsky says. “The [local co-op crewman] who was leading us around, said to us one night, ‘Do you mind staying a little longer? We’re so close.’ None of the guys even hesitated — they just didn’t.”

While hoping never to see that devastation again, they know the possibility sits on the horizon, as it did on one of the last nights Schrock worked in Georgia. He remembers watching Hurricane Milton come ashore from his perch on a power pole.

“We were working on the first [hurricane], and then the second one hit,” he says of Milton as it slammed into Siesta Key, Fla., on Oct. 9 at about 8:30 p.m. “We didn’t get a drop of rain, and the sky that night was crazy red — just an unbelievable, beautiful sky — but we knew what was happening.”

And somewhere, some lineworker was preparing to do it all over again. 🌩️

“We stayed at a church, and the kids made cards and put a Reese’s Cup or something on the bed every night ... I went down to help those people, and they helped me.”

LENDING A HAND DOWN SOUTH

The following rural electric cooperatives express their appreciation to the cooperatives in Pennsylvania and New Jersey that were able to provide mutual aid following Hurricane Helene:

Georgia: Habersham Electric Membership Corporation and Satilla Rural Electric Membership Corporation

North Carolina: Blue Ridge Energy, EnergyUnited and Haywood Electric Membership Corporation

South Carolina: Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative and Broad River Electric Cooperative

The following Pennsylvania and New Jersey cooperatives were able to provide assistance: Adams Electric Cooperative; Central Electric Cooperative; Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative (REC); New Enterprise REC; Northwestern REC; REA Energy Cooperative; Somerset REC; Sussex REC; Tri-County REC; United Electric Cooperative; Valley REC

Local Lore

Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative

CCC to the Rescue

Coal mining and lumbering have profoundly influenced the history of the Commonwealth. In Bradford County, semi-bituminous coal and lumber were the economic blood of the region as far back as the early 1800s, according to the LeRoy Heritage Museum, which is about 20 miles from Wysox-based Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative.

Drawn from what is now referred to as Barclay Mountain — featured in the October 2024 *Penn Lines* — the coal and lumber made their way across the northeastern United States. By the turn of the 20th century, however, the mining companies had all but abandoned the area, and by 1932, many of the lumber operations had shut down as well, leaving behind the ghost towns of Barclay and Laquin.

More than a century of mining and lumbering had an impact on the land, too, resulting in acid runoff, extensive clearcutting, displaced wildlife, poor drainage and other issues. In 1933, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt



GARY WELLS/FINDAGRAVE.COM

GHOST TOWNS: Bradford County was once home to the mining community of Barclay and the logging community of Laquin, now ghost towns. The Barclay Cemetery still holds memorials to those who tried to settle the area. A significant number of graves belong to children who died of diphtheria, typhoid, whooping cough or in mining accidents.

(FDR) introduced the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), a voluntary work relief program for unemployed, unmarried men ages 17 to 28. The CCC was part of FDR's New Deal, which led to the creation of the Rural Electrification Administration and the earliest rural electric cooperatives.

The first CCC workers arrived in Bradford County in 1933 to restore Barclay Mountain. Their efforts continued for seven years. They planted hundreds of thousands of trees and shrubs, collected hundreds of pounds of hardwood seeds for nurseries, constructed and maintained dozens of miles of truck trails and bridges, and developed

springs and ponds. Today, these lands are part of Pennsylvania State Game Lands Nos. 12 and 36.

To learn more about the region's past, visit the LeRoy Heritage Museum website, leroyheritage.org. Let us know the stories of your communities at communitycorner@prea.com. 📧



Main Office: Wysox, Pa.
Consumer-members served: 19,017
Website: claverack.com

Holy Cow!

This month's artwork is from Sienna Hawke, who turns 9 this summer. According to her mother, a member of Wysox-based Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative, Sienna loves to dance, has a kind heart and is always willing to help. The local farms served by the cooperative inspired her to draw this picture. Thanks, Sienna!



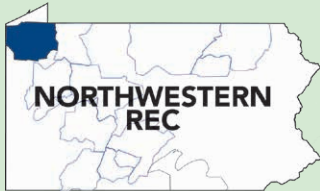
CALLING ALL KIDS, ages 5 to 17:

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 okay! 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.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives
serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

NORTHWESTERN REC

P.O. Box 207
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www.northwesternrec.com

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Emily Sonntag, Editor

What Does it Mean to be a Cooperative?



RYAN MELLER

OUR COOPERATIVE WAS FOUNDED to address the need for electricity in rural Pennsylvania. Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) is proud of its history and the monumental challenges it has overcome to provide safe, reliable, and affordable energy for its members.

Democratic control

Northwestern REC is a not-for-profit organization, democratically controlled by consumer-members and governed by a member-elected board of directors. Owned by those it serves, Northwestern

REC operates under the seven basic cooperative principles: voluntary and open membership; democratic member control; members' economic participation; autonomy and independence; education, training and information; cooperation among cooperatives; and concern for community. Each principle plays a pivotal role in how cooperatives have endured the test of time.

Democracy ensures all voices are heard and brings unlimited value to the cooperative and our community. Northwestern REC is governed by a board of 10 directors who represent each district in our territory. They are elected by their fellow members and live in the communities we serve. The board provides strategic direction and guidance to ensure we continue to serve members' best interests.

Budgeting and setting rates

The board of directors and co-op staff are responsible for creating and reviewing the budget. The co-op has two main objectives for its annual budget. First, it aims to cover all costs associated with providing electricity "at the flip of a switch." Second, it seeks to maintain the lowest possible rates for its members. Every three to five years, the co-op conducts a cost-of-service (or rate) study, which assesses all operational expenses, such as purchased power, maintenance, depreciation, taxes, and desired financial margins. This study determines the revenue needed to cover costs and ensure financial stability. The primary goal is not to maximize revenue but to operate at cost.

Net margins

The "net margins" of a cooperative do not belong to the utility; they belong to you, the members. These margins are set aside to build and maintain the co-op's infrastructure and facilities. Any remaining net margins are later returned to members through capital credit payments. The capital credits program enables the co-op to distribute margins back to members, unlike an investor-owned utility, which would provide those margins to shareholders.

Final thoughts

Electric cooperatives, including Northwestern REC, hold a unique and celebrated place in our country's history. The people of rural America pioneered the movement to electrify their communities through the Rural Electrification Administration and showed the true strength of the cooperative business model. It was the collective

Continued on page 14D

Start Preparing Today for When Mother Nature Strikes

EMILY SONNTAG, COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING SPECIALIST

SPRING IS KNOCKING ON THE door as we enter March, and we could not be more excited to say hello to warmer weather and, of course, sunshine. Springtime is exciting, but as temperatures heat up, conditions are ideal for severe storms.

Two prime examples are the storms Northwestern Rural Electric (REC) endured March 25 and April 1, 2023. The heavy winds caused severe damage across our service territory, leaving broken poles, downed wires, tree limbs and debris. In fact, this was the first time in Northwestern REC's history that we required mutual assistance from our fellow cooperatives in Pennsylvania.

Northwestern REC crews are always prepared and on standby for whatever Mother Nature may bring.

You can practice safety and preparedness, too, and protect your family during storms and outages. There is no way to predict outages, but planning ahead can reduce stress and lessen the impact.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency recommends taking the following steps as you begin to prepare for storms and other natural disasters. Also, be sure to visit ready.gov for additional resources.

- **Stock your pantry** with a three-day supply of non-perishable food, including canned goods, energy bars, peanut butter, powdered milk, instant coffee, water and other essentials (i.e., diapers and toiletries). If you

have furry family members, ensure you have plenty of supplies for their essential needs.

- **Have adequate sanitation and hygiene supplies**, including towelettes, soap, and hand sanitizer.
- **Ensure your first-aid kit is stocked** with pain relievers, bandages, and other medical essentials and ensure your prescriptions are current.
- **Set aside essential household items** like flashlights, batteries, a manual can opener and a portable battery-powered radio or TV.
- **Store emergency supplies in one easily accessible location** so every family member knows where to find them.

The cooperative's territory is vast, serviced by more than 2,500 miles of line and approximately 45,000 poles across five counties. As a result, some power outages may take longer to restore than others. In a prolonged outage, turn off major appliances, TVs, computers and other sensitive electronics. This will help avert damage from potential power surges and prevent circuits from being overloaded during power restoration. Always keep one light on so you know when power is restored.

If you plan to use a portable generator, ensure it is rated to handle the amount of power you need; regularly review the manufacturer's instructions to operate it safely; and hire a professional electrician to install a generator transfer switch to avoid life-threatening accidents to you and others.

For storm updates, listen to local news or National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Radio and sign up for NOAA emergency alerts and warnings. Also, check Northwestern REC's Facebook page for restoration updates. If you do not have Facebook, you can access our posts at northwesternrec.com.

Severe storms with strong gusts and heavy rain can occasionally bring down power lines. If you see a downed line, always assume it is energized and never approach it. If flooding occurs, never walk through areas where power lines could be submerged.

Members should report outages by calling 800-352-0014 or using the SmartHub app. These are the fastest ways to let us know if your power is out.

While we can never predict what Mother Nature will do, we can plan and prepare ahead of time, lessening her impact. No matter what weather we encounter this spring and summer, our crews will be ready to quickly and safely restore outages. We recommend you start making your plan today, too — because storm preparedness is always our best defense. 🌩️



BE PREPARED: The Federal Emergency Management Agency recommends preparing for storms and other natural disasters. Have adequate first-aid and sanitation supplies, along with household essentials, such as flashlights and manual can openers.

Calling All Members: Seeking Director Candidates for Team Northwestern REC

MEMBERS IN GOOD STANDING with Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) can seek election to the board of directors. It is critical to have an engaged team of members who are interested in serving as cooperative leaders.

Northwestern REC is governed by a board of 10 directors. Elected by the membership, they provide strategic direction and guidance so the cooperative can serve your interests.

Democratic control is one of the seven cooperative principles that ensures Northwestern REC prioritizes its members over profits. As a member-owned electric service utility, our mission is to seek innovative ways to provide safe, reliable and economical services to improve our territory's overall quality of life. Therefore, it is critical we hear from the diverse voices of our members and work toward meeting the ever-changing power needs of the communities we serve.

Being a co-op board member requires a commitment of time and effort and the attitude of a servant-leader who is committed to making a real contribution to the membership and the community. This year, Districts 1, 2 and 4 seats are up for election.

If you are interested in running for your district or would like to nominate another member, we invite you to attend any of our nominating meetings for dinner and presentations from CEO Ryan Meller and Board Chair Lisa Chausse. Members seeking a director candidate nomination must meet the following qualifications:

(**Note:** This is not the complete list):

- ▶ Your primary residential home (within that district) must have received Northwestern REC electric service for at least one year prior.
- ▶ You must be a member in good standing with no outstanding balances for at least one year.

- ▶ You cannot be an employee of any cooperative or association within the past three years.
- ▶ You cannot be a close relative of an employee or current director.
- ▶ You cannot be convicted of a felony within the past five years.
- ▶ You cannot be a candidate or incumbent for elected public office at the county, state, or federal level.

For a complete list of qualifications, please review the director position description and qualifications at northwesternrec.com/content/running-board.

No matter what district you live in, you can nominate candidates from those districts up for election at the upcoming member/nominating meetings or by petition. Please note, however, nominees must live in the districts where they are being nominated.

If you're unable to attend the nominating meetings, we encourage you to join us for our Member Resource Meeting on Wednesday, March 19. See more details on these meetings below. Invitations will also be emailed and mailed to members.

Once director candidates are certified, voting will begin in June with electronic and mail-in ballots. Election results will be announced during the 89th Annual Meeting, scheduled Saturday, Aug. 2, at 22534 State Highway 86, Cambridge Springs.

If you are interested in serving your community and co-op by being on the Northwestern REC Board of Directors, we'd love to hear from you. Please contact Executive Administrator Clarissa Schneider, at cschneider@northwesternrec.com or 800-352-0014. 📞

2025 MEMBER & NOMINATING MEETINGS

DATE	MEETING	LOCATION	TIME
MARCH 18	District 4 Nominating Meeting	Lakeland Senior Center	6-8 p.m.
MARCH 19	Member Resource Meeting	Movies at Meadville	6-8 p.m.
MARCH 20	District 2 Nominating Meeting	Nick's Place	6-8 p.m.
MARCH 31	District 1 Nominating Meeting	Edinboro McKean VFW	6-8 p.m.

All meetings begin at 6 p.m. with dinner. Presentations to follow. Email reservation (include name, date of event and number of attendees) to info@northwesternrec.com.

FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO

Continued from page 14A

effort of rural residents that gave rise to what we now recognize as the cooperative difference. What sets us apart from investor-owned utilities is the central role our members play. At Northwestern REC, our members are at the heart of everything we do.

With that, I would like to personally invite you to one of our meetings in March, which are scheduled throughout our territory (see page 14C). We will discuss what it means to be a cooperative, along with other topics in more detail. I hope to see you there! 🍷

Cooperatively yours,

RYAN MELLER
PRESIDENT & CEO

Power Restoration is a Team Effort

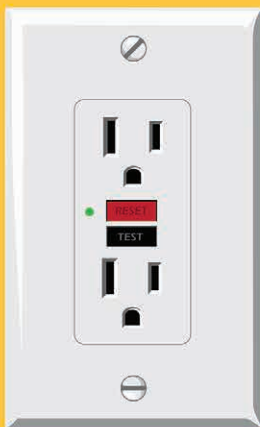
POWER RESTORATION IS A TEAM EFFORT, and at Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative (REC), each team member has the same goals in mind: getting power restored and returning home safely. All of our employees play a pivotal role in restoring power. Our members are also part of the team, serving as all-star players in our defense against Mother Nature.

The play clock begins when your power goes out. When you call or report your outage to our hotline (800-352-0014) or SmartHub, our field service representatives take your information. At the same time, engineers and field staff are surveying for damage. Getting power restored quickly is vital to us, but so is the safety of our crews. Once everything is assessed, dispatchers organize crews and send them into the field. When information about the restoration effort is available, our communicators work diligently to share the progress with our members.

Power restoration can be labor- and time-intensive depending on the damage left in Mother Nature's wake. During lengthy outages, our members' continued trust allows our crews to keep pushing through extreme conditions. Crews often work through the night and into the early morning and still have the same goal: complete power restoration.

Our members are at the heart of everything we do at Northwestern REC. We do our best to avoid power disruptions, but when they occur, our team does whatever is needed to restore power as quickly and safely as possible. 🍷

WATT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

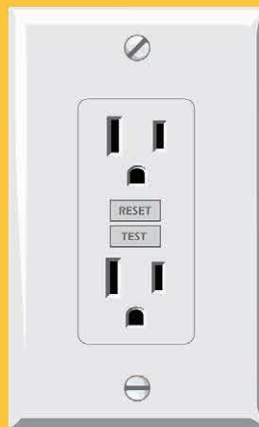


Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter

Prevents electrical shock by detecting variations in current.

Install in areas where water and electricity are in close proximity.

Test outlets with GFCIs monthly; if they don't work properly, consult your electrician.

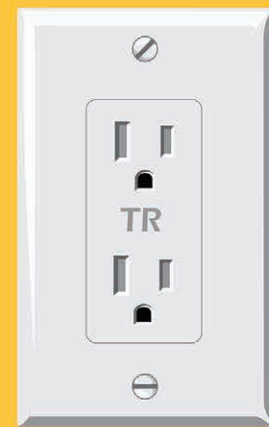


Arc Fault Circuit Interrupter

Prevents electrical fires caused by arc flash. Usually installed by an electrician.

An arc is an electrical discharge that can cause intense heat or light.

It interrupts the circuit when it detects an arc or other abnormalities in the flow of electricity.



Tamper Resistant Outlet

Prevents shocks caused by tampering with an outlet.

The protective shutters are designed to move when a plug is correctly inserted.

Became part of the National Electrical Code in 2008; if your home does not have these, install childproof devices.



CALL BEFORE YOU DIG



To help stay safe and prevent accidents, call 8-1-1
before you dig to get underground utilities marked.

Once all utilities are marked, respect the boundaries, and dig carefully. Keep at least 24 inches away from the utility line markings. Stop work immediately if contact is made with an underground line. Your first priority should be evacuating the area for safety. Call 911 to notify emergency personnel and the affected utility. Do not resume work until the area has been confirmed safe by your electric utility.

For more information on digging safety visit SafeElectricity.org



Co-op Leader: 'America is at an Energy Crossroads'

SCOTT FLOOD

IN THE LEAD-UP TO THE 2024 election, energy policy didn't receive as much time in the spotlight as other issues. Now, however, it seems the second Trump presidency is likely to result in significant changes to how our nation approaches its ever-growing demand for electric power.

"America is at an energy crossroads, and the reliability of the electric grid hangs in the balance," says Jim Matheson, CEO of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), which represents your local cooperative and nearly 900 others nationwide. "Critical generation resources are being retired faster than they can be reliably replaced.

"At the same time," he adds,

"electricity demand is skyrocketing as power-hungry data centers and new manufacturing facilities come online. Smart energy policies that keep the lights on are more important than ever."

Protecting co-op interests

Shortly after the election, the North American Electric Reliability Corp. (NERC) — the nation's grid watchdog — warned that many regions face an elevated risk of electricity shortfalls in the face of extreme weather. While solar and wind farms have been sprouting up, they can't deliver the always-available electricity that coal- and gas-fired plants have long provided.

NRECA, Matheson said, wants to work with the new administration and Congress to protect energy affordability and reliability, and most important, the interests of the nation's electric cooperatives during this transition.

At the state level, Pennsylvania's electric cooperatives — in collaboration with their trusted partners, the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association and Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc. — have already taken a leadership role in advocating for their communities to ensure policy doesn't override practicality.

Cooperatives here and across the country, for instance, have benefited from federal funding and tax credits. In Pennsylvania and New Jersey alone, cooperatives are slated to receive as much as \$30 million in federal grants. This funding helps solidify their ability to provide affordable energy in our rural communities — and that's something all cooperatives want to maintain.

At the national level, NRECA is

also working to secure a positive and resilient energy future for co-op communities.

For example, NRECA has been pressing Congress and the administration to overhaul outdated permitting laws that delay efforts to build new infrastructure. Policymakers are also being urged to address public lands and conservation regulations that make it challenging to operate powerlines, maintain rights of way, and reduce potential wildfire threats.

During this transition, it's important to remember change doesn't happen quickly in Washington. For example, undoing the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's power plant rule, which is likely to shut down crucial coal and natural gas plants, will require a robust and lengthy regulatory process.

NRECA and your local electric cooperative are prepared to see things through. We're also committed to making sure federal and state lawmakers are aware of the importance of ensuring reliable, affordable electricity for all Americans. The strength of the electric cooperative movement is positioning us for continued success as we work with the new administration. 🔄

About the author: For more than four decades, business writer **SCOTT FLOOD** has worked with electric cooperatives to build knowledge of energy-related issues among directors, staff and members. Scott writes on a variety of energy-related topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 electric co-ops.

About Allegheny: **ALLEGHENY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.**, based in Harrisburg, Pa., is a generation and transmission supplier serving the 14 rural electric cooperatives in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. The cooperative has a proud history of investing in sustainable energy solutions to benefit the communities it serves while providing reliable energy at an affordable price.



TOM FISK

A VITAL ROLE: Policymakers from both parties have consistently commended electric cooperatives as reputable energy providers and engines of economic development that play a vital role in transforming the communities they proudly serve.

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When a Closet Prompts a Story

MITCHELL KYD

“EVERY CLOSET TELLS A STORY.” I wrote that years ago, but I think my theory continues to be valid. Even a quick look behind closed doors reveals some truths about who we are.

For many of us, that space has become an archive, too, with secrets about who we were, and occasionally, who we thought we wanted to be. That’s why things continue to hang there that are the wrong size, out of style or have price tags permanently attached.

One old closet, or more accurately, the memory of it, led me to explore a mystery. It also prompted me to create a treasured gift for my son, something that might be valuable for your family, too, if you’re interested in your history.

When I picture my dad’s closet even now, I always see his Army uniform squared away among the hangers. His uniform and my mom’s scrapbook of yellowed WWII news clippings were all that connected me to his military service when I was a kid. Like many veterans, he never talked about that former life, one he lived before I promoted him to “Dad.”

My son is an Army veteran, too, and when I decided to surprise him with a scrapbook about his grandfather’s service, I started with a call to my genealogist friend, Pam. She immediately sent me to the website for the archives of military service records. While I dug in to gather information needed for his records request, Pam excavated dozens of local news items and public records specific to my dad, including a copy of his enlistment form. All that was gold for this tale weaver who could suddenly envision her dad at his lean-and-mean weight at age 21. I was also struck by how quickly he was awarded his promotions.

The clips also named dozens of other local men who had been drafted, passed their physicals and were accepted for active duty. Growing up, I knew many of those men, too, but knew nothing of their histories. In small communities like mine, most faces are familiar although their stories go untold. All those soldiers have passed now, and when I see their faces on the roadside

veteran’s banners, I wish I had known earlier to thank them for their service and perhaps collect their stories.

The veterans records center sent me everything they had about my dad and told me how to request duplicates of his awards. Unfortunately, his records were part of what had been destroyed in a major fire at the center in 1973, which made all the local news clips and other public records more valued. I loved all the small details hidden in those documents.

For instance, my dad was already working for the phone company when he was drafted and was required to have a phone at home, a bit of a luxury in his large family. His enlistment form included my grandparents’ first phone number. It was 139R14, a number on a party line that

had to be connected by an operator. Only a distinctive ring pattern completed manually at the switchboard, like one long ring and four shorts, indicated which calls were truly intended for which homes. That meant everyone had to respect the privacy of their neighbors — or at least be discreet about picking up the receiver before eavesdropping.

In the end, I assembled 18 pages of documents, clips and a few precious photos in time for my son’s birthday. The library at the U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center in Carlisle, Pa., promises to be the start of Volume II for research on Dad’s division and unit histories.

Visit archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records to request veteran records. For WWII research, specifically, consider ordering a copy of the book, *Finding Your Father’s War*. If you’d like more detail about where I found what I needed to submit my records request, email me at mkydfreelancer@gmail.com. Your veteran’s story might be waiting to be told; be the storyteller now. 📖



YVONNE BUTTS-MITCHELL celebrates the joys and poignant moments of rural living under the pen name Mitchell Kyd. Her stories from the Path Valley Hotel were hatched by encounters with contractors, critters and creepy crawlies while rehabbing the family cabin after its 17-year stint as a giant closet.

Scientific Discovery Stuns Doctors

Biblical Bush Relieves Joint Discomfort in as Little as 5 Days

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

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

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

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

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

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

Deactivate 400 Agony-Causing Genes

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

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

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

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

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

Many joint sufferers prefer natural solutions but say they work too slowly. Take



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

the best-seller glucosamine. Good as it is, the National Institutes of Health reports that glucosamine takes as long as eight weeks to work.

Yet in a study published in the International Journal of Medical Sciences, 60 patients with stiff knees took 100 mg of Indian Frankincense or a placebo daily for 30 days. Remarkably, Indian Frankincense “significantly improved joint function and relieved discomfort in as early as five days.” That’s relief that is 10 times faster than glucosamine.

78% Better Relief Than the Most Popular Joint Solution

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

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

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

In addition, BMJ (formerly the British Medical Journal) reports that Indian Frankincense is safe for joint relief — so safe and

natural you can take it every day.

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

Great Results for Knees, Hips, Shoulders and Joints

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

How to Get Mobilify

To secure the hot, new **Mobilify** formula, buyers should contact the Sears Health Hotline at **1-800-299-6108** TODAY. “It’s not available in retail stores yet,” says Dr. Sears. “The Hotline allows us to ship directly to the customer.” Dr. Sears feels so strongly about **Mobilify**, all orders are backed by a 100% money-back guarantee. “Just send me back the bottle and any unused product within 90 days from purchase date, and I’ll send you all your money back.”

Use Promo Code **PLMB325** when you call to secure your supply of **Mobilify**. Lines are frequently busy and due to heightened demand, supplies are limited. To secure your supply today, call **1-800-299-6108**.

Best Super-Efficient House Construction Methods

JAMES DULLEY

DEAR JIM: We are exploring super-efficient construction types for our new house. What are our options for one that is reasonably priced and homey for a family of four? — *Brooke C.*

DEAR BROOKE: When people think of super-efficient houses, they often think of bizarre shapes, all or no windows, strange exterior materials, etc. Actually, there are many super-efficient construction methods that look relatively conventional and have normal interior room layouts.

Don't immediately write off conventional stick-built lumber construction. To achieve super-high efficiency, wood framing techniques, such as staggered double-stud walls, 2-by-8 framing and thick exterior

rigid foam sheathing, can be used. These improvements, however, can significantly increase the construction costs over a standard code-built house.

Foam-block construction is very efficient, and these houses look like typical stick-built houses. Large, hollow foam blocks made for your specific house plans are stacked up to create the walls. The foam provides wall insulation levels as high as R-30. The blocks are designed so that there are open channels inside connecting them together.

Once the lightweight blocks are stacked, which the homeowner can help with to lower costs, concrete is pumped up and into the top blocks. The concrete flows down through all the open channels to form a super-strong, rigid core when cured. The interior and exterior walls can be finished with any commonly used materials.

A circular panelized house is another unique efficient design. For a given amount of usable floor space in a house, a circular house has less exterior wall area than a rectangular one. Cold winter winds flow smoothly around a circular house, creating fewer pressure gradients and less air infiltration. Notice that most animals build their nests and dens with a circular shape.

One unique circular house design uses self-supporting roof trusses with no interior supporting walls. This provides greater interior layout flexibility and an open-floor plan. This is an advantage when using solar or other alternative supplemental heating. Heavily insulated, R-30, 8-foot-long exterior wall panels create the circular appearance.

Foam-core wall panels are another super-insulated and airtight construction method. Structural insulated panels (SIPs) use thick foam sandwiched between two strong skins for up to R-45 insulation. They are designed for your specific house

plan and locked together by various methods to create the walls. SIPs are strong enough to be self-supporting with no other extra framing. If you prefer to use wall framing or like the interior appearance of timber framing, for example, less expensive, standard foam-core wall panels are available. These are as efficient as SIP construction.

Steel-framed wall construction can be very efficient. Although steel conducts heat, the strong, heavy red-iron framing members can be spaced far apart. This reduces the amount of uninsulated areas (called thermal bridges) for better overall insulation levels, up to R-40. Steel (mostly recycled) framing is extremely strong, so the house never settles and stays airtight. It also offers architectural design flexibility.


Geodesic dome construction is extremely efficient, too, because the shape is spherical, minimizing the exterior area; however, it looks quite nonconventional. One unique design uses thick foam blocks, up to R-60, which are attached with supporting wood framing. Concrete is poured into steel reinforced channels. The wood framing is then disassembled and used for interior walls. These have withstood the most powerful hurricanes.

Straw-bale wall construction is certainly not a new method, but it's efficient and relatively inexpensive in rural areas where straw is plentiful. The straw bales are stagger-stacked, similar to bricks, with a long vertical steel rod through them to create the walls. The interior and exterior are usually finished with cement, plaster or stucco to create a strong attractive house. With 2-foot-thick walls, insulation is as high as R-50. Check your local building codes for approval with any non-typical construction method. 🏡

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





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IT'S CONTEST TIME!

Guess who has a date with *PENN LINES*?

It's you! *Penn Lines* has a big birthday coming up, and we want you to be a part of our 60th anniversary celebration. Before the confetti flies in 2026, though, we're **kicking off a handful of photo contests this year**; enter one — or all three. Here are the details about **Contest No. 3**:

We'll be honest: We like it when we get to go to some place nice. For this contest, here's what we're asking you to do:

- Take your favorite issue of *Penn Lines* to some place special in your community and snap a photo of yourself with the magazine

WE WILL NEED: your name, address, daytime telephone number, the month and year of the magazine, and the name of the cooperative that serves your home, business, or seasonal residence

PRIZE FOR THE FANCIEST PLACE PHOTOGRAPHED: \$50 gift card; the photo will also be featured in *Penn Lines* in 2026

DEADLINE: Friday, Oct. 31

SEND ENTRIES TO: PennLines@prea.com (put "A Date with PL" in the subject line) or *Penn Lines* Editor/A Date with PL, P.O. Box 1266, Harrisburg, PA 17108-1266



Sheet Pan Inspirations

ANNE M. KIRCHNER

PHOTOS BY ANNE M. KIRCHNER



SHEET PAN NACHOS

- 1 pound ground beef
- 3 tablespoons taco seasoning
- ¼ cup water
- 1 (11-ounce) bag tortilla chips
- 1 can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 pound cheddar cheese, shredded
- 1 large tomato, diced
- ½ yellow onion, diced
- 1 jalapeño pepper, diced
- ½ cup black olives, sliced
- ¼ cup cilantro, chopped

Brown the ground beef in a skillet. Add the taco seasoning and water; cook until the moisture evaporates. Spread the tortilla chips on a 13-by-18-inch sheet pan. Top the chips with the seasoned beef, black beans, cheddar cheese, tomato, onion, jalapeño and black olives. Bake the nachos at 400 degrees for 15 to 20 minutes. Garnish with cilantro and serve family style. *Makes 4 to 6 servings.*



SHEET PAN ROASTED VEGETABLES

- 3 large carrots, peeled and sliced
- 1 pound Brussels sprouts, quartered
- 3 medium beets, peeled and chopped
- 4 cups cauliflower pieces
- ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tablespoon whole thyme
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon coarse black pepper

Place all vegetables in a large bowl and toss with the olive oil, thyme, salt and black pepper. Spread the coated vegetables in a single layer on a 13-by-18-inch sheet pan. Roast for 20 to 25 minutes at 400 degrees. Serve as a vegetarian entrée over polenta or with braised meat. *Makes 6 to 8 servings.*



SHEET PAN CHICKEN FAJITAS

- 1 pound chicken tenders
- 1 (20-ounce) can pineapple chunks, drained
- 2 green bell peppers, cut into strips
- 1 small red onion, sliced
- 1 jalapeño pepper, diced
- ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
- 2 tablespoons taco seasoning
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 tablespoon lime juice
- ¼ cup cilantro, chopped

Cut the chicken tenders into chunks and place in a large bowl. Add the pineapple chunks, green peppers, red onion and jalapeño pepper. Toss the ingredients with the olive oil, taco seasoning, kosher salt and lime juice. Spread the coated ingredients in a single layer on a 13-by-18-inch sheet pan and roast for 30 to 35 minutes at 400 degrees. Sprinkle with cilantro and serve over a bed of rice or with soft tortillas. *Makes 4 to 6 servings.*

Flies Catch Fish – and Fly Fishers

STEVE PIATT

I'M A FLY FISHERMAN, or at least I consider myself one, even though I'm not averse to grabbing a spinning rod from time to time, especially when it involves smallmouth bass on the Susquehanna River.

But my true passion is fly-fishing for wild brook trout in the mountains of Pennsylvania, exploring remote waters in search of these incredibly beautiful and fragile fish in places where I'm more likely to encounter a black bear than another angler.

I'll fish larger, stocked waters as well, making regular evening visits to the Loyalsock, Hoagland Branch, Pine Creek, Kettle Creek, and First Fork of Sinnemahoning Creek, often operating from our camper at a nearby state park. And I'll strip streamers for smallmouths on occasion, leaving the spinning rod at home.

I prefer fishing dry flies; it's simply more fun to watch a trout rise to my offering. But there are times when going below the surface with a nymph or streamer pattern is the most productive tactic, so I do, without hesitation.

Over the years I've accumulated hundreds — perhaps thousands — of flies, and I'm convinced that while many of the patterns catch fish, others are designed to attract anglers. Some, thankfully, do both.

In theory, I probably would never have to buy any more flies. But when you stop at a local fly shop before heading out to the water, you always purchase at least a half dozen of the hottest pattern because it's just what you do. Or it's what you should do. I've learned over the years, however, that the red-hot, trout-tempting fly of the day is quite often the one that's been sold out (or close to it). And

with good reason. Look for the empty or near-empty bin and take it as a solid tip.

Admittedly, I have a weakness for flies, some designs more so than others. Terrestrial patterns — grasshoppers, beetles, ants — have a particular “lure,” and my fly boxes are packed with them in various sizes, some of which I sloppily — and with great effort — tied myself.

There are numerous other dry flies that grab my attention as soon as I open my box. A Royal Wulff, Mr. Rapidan, Patriot, Elk Hair Caddis or an Adams Parachute see a lot of action during the course of the season. At times, things get a little more technical, calling on me to attempt to “match the hatch” to determine just what the trout are feeding on. That said, what they're usually rising to is a drag-free drift. Clean up your cast and mend the line, Steve.

My nymph assortment ranges from the basic — Gold-Ribbed Hare's Ear, Golden Stone, Olive Baetis, Green Weenie (hey, they work), and Copper John — to favorites, such as Gary Lafontaine's Emergent Sparkle Pupa in green and brown, which has been responsible for many memorable evenings on numerous waters.

Streamers? I've got streamers, many of them gaudy with catchy names, thanks to the inventor of the pattern. But usually what I tie on is a simple, time-tested Woolly Bugger, in plain black or olive.

You don't have to wait for the formal, first-Saturday-in-April kickoff to the trout season. Pennsylvania offers miles of special-regulation trout waters where fishing is open all year. It may even trigger a road trip into the



HOOKED ON FLIES: Dry flies are a favorite when angling for wild brook trout. And the question is: How many are too many?

southern part of the state, where the weather may be more conducive to fishing. Check your regulations and get out there.

I've been organizing my numerous flies ahead of the season (I have a weakness for those colorful, trout-patterned fly boxes as well), breaking them down into dries, nymphs, terrestrials and streamers, with a separate box solely for wild brook trout.

Taking inventory, I may need to pick up a few more hopper patterns — Dave's or Joe's, or both. I can't resist them. Fortunately, neither can the trout. 🐟

STEVE PIATT is a veteran newspaper editor and outdoor writer who along with his wife, Paula, has hunted and fished across North America. He is most at home on the water and in the fields of the Keystone State. He lives in Bradford County.

ISSUE MONTH AD DEADLINE

May 2025

March 14

June 2025

April 15

July 2025

May 15

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.

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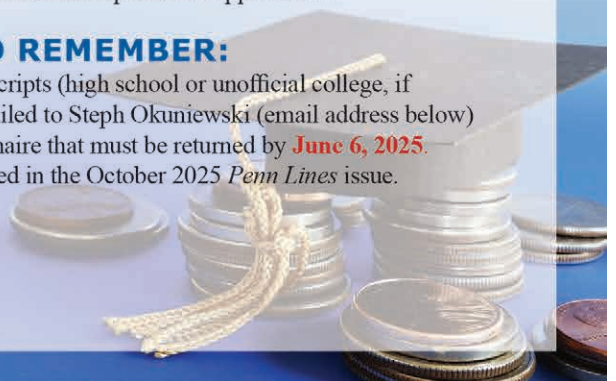
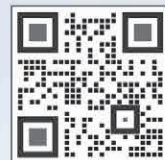
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REQUIREMENTS & DATES TO REMEMBER:

Applicants are required to furnish necessary aptitude test scores, 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 5, 2025**. Finalists will be sent a follow-up questionnaire that must be returned by **June 6, 2025**. Scholarship recipients will be notified in July 2025, and will be featured in the October 2025 *Penn Lines* issue.

QUESTIONS:

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



How Long Can Two Humans Live on Chinese Takeout?

JOHN KASUN

MY WIFE HAS BEEN STRUGGLING with bad knees for several years and finally accepted that they were not going to get better on their own. Bad knees are like bad tires: You can keep putting air in them, but eventually you have to bite the bullet and get new ones.

But unlike jacking your car up and getting all the tires replaced at once, knee replacements are best done one at a time, which means you get to do it twice. So, my wife had her right knee replaced recently and is home in the advanced stages of recovery. Things are going well — from a medical standpoint.

However, what is happening now is much more frightening than the operation because I'm in charge of her care, including preparing meals and taking care of the house. Now, some of this isn't too bad. I've cleaned the house before, run the vacuum, dusted and scrubbed the hallways. It hasn't been often, but enough to know what needs to be done.

When it comes to the wash, I can hold my own, too, except for "delicates" and, of course, colors. I will never forget — or I should say, my wife won't let me forget — the time she wore a pair of white slacks and a red top, and I washed them together. Apparently, my logic — if they got dirty together, you should be able to wash them together — didn't hold up in the family court of "who's right and who's wrong." In my defense, I do an excellent job cleaning the kitchen, with few complaints from management. So, I am part way there in terms of being in charge.

There is a serious shortcoming, however, on the list of my household duties: cooking. A number of men enjoy cooking, and in some households, the man does most of it. My house is not among them. My wife is an excellent cook, but I struggle just to get a failing grade in meal preparation.

As a matter of fact, right after my wife came home

from the hospital, I made two large dishes of Jell-O — and one of them failed. On occasion, I've been known to exaggerate, but this is the truth. My raspberry Jell-O creation, in which I mixed fruit, came out great, but the lemon dish never jelled completely. The recipe for Jell-O is pretty basic: Boil 2 cups of water, add the Jell-O mix, stir, add 2 cups of cold water, stir and place it in refrigerator. I have no idea what went wrong, but I am standing my ground when I say the lemon Jell-O was defective.

It is always best to understand your strengths and admit your limitations in any situation. My wife was aware of my lack of cooking skills, so before her operation, she prepared several meals that I could take out of the freezer and heat up. I am pretty sure she did this as much for herself as for me. However, it didn't take long for us to use up her reserves, and suddenly I was on my own. I tried to sign up for Meals on Wheels, stocked up on anything that could be popped in the microwave, and had the phone number of every takeout restaurant and pizza shop within a 15-mile radius on speed dial. My ace-in-the-hole was Chinese takeout. If you

see a delivery van with Chinese symbols on the side and a red flashing light on top, please pull over and let them pass. Chances are they are heading to my house with a special delivery.

I feel confident my wife will recover from the knee operation if she is able to survive the meals I serve. However, I think she's nearing the end of her patience. The other day, with a tear in her eye, she asked, "How long can two humans survive on Chinese takeout?" 🍲

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.





MOLLY DARRISM • BEDFORD REC

Warming Up

While parts of the Commonwealth may still get a sneak attack of snow this time of year, hope is on the horizon for warmer weather. As you (hopefully) trade the parkas for a light jacket, take some snaps of your world as it wakes up from winter and submit them to the 2025 Rural Reflections contest. See the entry information below. 📷



CAROL ZANG • WARREN EC

REBECCA MITCHELL • SOMERSET REC



BONNIE DICKEY • UNITED EC

How to enter

AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHERS are encouraged to send photos for the 2025 Rural Reflections contest (no digital files) to: *Penn Lines Photos*, P.O. Box 1266, Harrisburg, PA 17108-1266. On the back of each photo, include your name, address, phone number and the name of the electric cooperative that serves your home, business or seasonal residence.

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

ADDRESS CHANGES:

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



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