

DECEMBER 2025

# PENNLINES

## Small Towns, Big Sound

Neighbors Find Harmony  
in Community Choruses

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WOULD BENEFIT  
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# DECEMBER



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**ON THE COVER**  
Kathy Butler sings as part of the Clearfield Choral Society, one of many community choirs living up the holidays in rural Pennsylvania.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE CLEARFIELD CHORAL SOCIETY

# Paying the Price

## Winter Storm Elliott's Legacy and the Hard Choices Facing Your Co-op



**STEVE BRAME**

**CHRISTMAS EVE 2022.** I remember it well — and not for the reasons you may think.

Sure, there were presents under the tree, holiday favorites playing in the background and family gathered around the table.

It felt safe, just like Christmas should. Outside, though, it was a different story.

Winter Storm Elliott had come to town, putting Pennsylvania and several other states in its icy grip. Blizzards, high winds and record-breaking cold temperatures did more than ruin travel plans: The storm crippled power plants and led to unprecedented demand as families cranked up their thermostats to stay warm.

As problems mounted, rolling blackouts — intentional power shutoffs used as a last resort to avoid a total grid collapse — started taking shape in places like Tennessee and the Carolinas. PJM Interconnection, our regional grid operator, warned of the potential for blackouts impacting generators in the Commonwealth, including Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc. (Allegheny), which provides the power Pennsylvania's cooperatives distribute to local homes and businesses.

So while most people settled into their Christmas Eve traditions, cooperative leaders across the state spent those early holiday hours closely monitoring the grid. We watched energy demand climb as temperatures plummeted — the last thing anyone wanted was to cut power to rural members on Christmas Eve.

Fortunately, our part of the grid avoided blackouts. But that doesn't mean we escaped Elliott unscathed. The crisis exposed just how vulnerable the grid had become — and how unprepared it was for extreme conditions. We may have avoided paying the price that night, but we're certainly paying it now.

Your local cooperative leaders understand their responsibility: to provide you with safe, reliable, and — most important — affordable electricity. Yet today, co-op boards across Pennsylvania face a tough reality. To keep the lights on, they must raise rates — rates they pay themselves as fellow members and neighbors.

No one likes higher bills. But it's important to understand the "why."

Winter Storm Elliott revealed major flaws in the system. But since then, policymakers have made decisions that have increased electricity demand, accelerated the closure of always-available generation, and sidestepped meaningful energy policy. Meanwhile, new data centers are requiring staggering amounts of power — enough to serve millions of homes.

The markets have responded, and not in a good way. The cost of securing reliable power has climbed to levels no cooperative can absorb alone. These increases are not driven by your local board or by the men and women who work at the co-op. They stem from market conditions and policy decisions well beyond your cooperative's control.

Even so, your co-op leaders have worked hard with Allegheny to soften the impact on consumer-members — including using our "rainy day fund" to lessen the pressure on rates. Thanks to these efforts, your generation rates remain among the lowest in the region.

We shouldn't need another Winter Storm Elliott to remind us not to take reliable power for granted. As we head into another holiday season, I know I'll be watching the thermometer. And you can trust that your cooperative's top priority is ensuring your family has the energy you need to stay safe and warm. 🌞

**STEVE BRAME**, PRESIDENT & CEO  
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## CHRISTMAS COOPERATION

This month's First Word column (on page 4) reminds me of one of my favorite Christmas specials, "The Year Without a Santa." Not that the 1974 classic had anything to do with rising energy prices, but it showed how Mother Nature can play a key role in Christmas weather.

The column discusses Winter Storm Elliott, which took place on Christmas Eve in 2022 and continues to have lingering implications for our grid. With rolling blackouts in several states, the severe cold-weather event showed just how vulnerable we are when Mother Nature's not happy.



The Christmas special took a playful turn on the seasons – but showed us just how divided we can be about something as fundamental as the weather. In the story, Mother Nature mediates a bitter feud between Heat Miser and Snow Miser, two brothers so entrenched in their positions that they'd rather let Christmas go away than give an inch to the other side.

On the heels of the longest government shutdown in history, this may sound familiar. Unfortunately, the shutdown was not a TV Christmas special. Instead, it showed us our real-world divisions have real-world consequences, like delayed paychecks, suspended food assistance, and imperiled home heating aid – just ahead of the holiday season.

These divisions show up in how we approach energy policy. Like the bickering Miser brothers, each administration seems determined to undo its predecessor's work when it comes to energy and environmental priorities. This windshield wiper effect, swinging wildly from left to right every four to eight years, has left us without a coherent national energy strategy – and with a vulnerable grid.

Winter Storm Elliott nearly brought the grid in our region to a collapse – Mother Nature's warning to us to find a compromise before it's too late. A functioning grid needs long-term planning and certainty that survives political transitions. It needs Heat Miser and Snow Miser to recognize that their endless battle threatens everyone. We need that compromise now, before Mother Nature delivers another harsh lesson.

When she intervened in the Christmas special, Mother Nature got the brothers to cooperate: Snow Miser got a day of cold in Southtown, Heat Miser got a day of warmth at the North Pole – and Christmas was saved. Cooperation – something electric cooperatives know how to celebrate in any season. Happy holidays.

**PETER A. FITZGERALD**  
EXECUTIVE EDITOR



MCCALL.COM

**GOING GLAM:** Several glamping sites throughout Pennsylvania are set to open in 2026. Glamping is short for "glamorous camping" and features sites with safari-style tents equipped with beds, among other amenities.

## IT'S GLAMOROUS! Glamping sites set to open in Pa. state parks

Pennsylvania residents and visitors will have the opportunity to take their outdoor fun to a new, fancier level in 2026 when 61 glamping sites open in several state parks.

Glamping, short for "glamorous camping," features sites with safari-style tents, equipped with beds, heating and air conditioning, lighting, and outdoor seating.

"This new offering is another way we're ensuring that our state parks remain welcoming and enjoyable for all Pennsylvanians," said Cindy Adams Dunn, secretary of the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR).

State parks taking glamping reservations for 2026 are Hills Creek, Laurel Hill, Pymatuning, Codorus, French Creek, Hickory Run and Promised Land. An eighth park is expected to be added to the list in 2027.

In related news, DCNR is investing \$16 million to upgrade shower house and restroom facilities at three state parks: Gifford Pinchot, Lackawanna and Ricketts Glen. Construction is scheduled to begin in September

2026 and last through early 2028, during which time the campgrounds will be closed. Meanwhile, the parks' day-use areas will remain open to the public.

## SETTING AN EXAMPLE Pennsylvania leads nation with most preserved farms

Pennsylvania now leads the nation after preserving more than 6,600 farms and 650,000 acres of farmland. The milestone was reached in October.

"A farm is the highest and best use of land," state Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding said. "When farmland is sold to become warehouses or housing developments, it's gone forever. By preserving high-quality farmland, we're keeping a promise to future generations that Pennsylvania will continue to feed our nation and strengthen our economy."

Strewn across 658,681 protected acres, Pennsylvania's 6,621 protected farms stretch across 58 counties as part of the Commonwealth's Farmland Preservation Program, which was established in 1988. To date, Pennsylvania has invested more than \$1.78 billion in partnerships

with county and local governments to safeguard agricultural land from sprawl and development.

Agriculture is a major cornerstone of Pennsylvania's economy, contributing \$132 billion annually and supporting nearly 600,000 jobs.

### SAFETY FIRST

#### Boaters required to wear life jackets through April 30

With waters reaching freezing temperatures, boaters in Pennsylvania are required to wear a U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket while in boats under 16 feet long or on any kayak, canoe or paddleboard. The requirement is in place until April 30, 2026.

According to state data, nearly 80% of all boating fatalities occurred because boaters were not wearing life jackets. Since the mandatory



life-jacket law was enacted in 2012, the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission has seen a nearly 50% decrease in boating fatalities during cold-weather months.

### DRYING UP

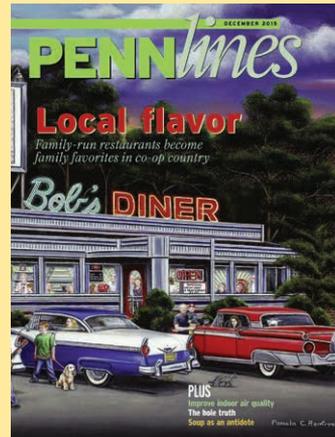
#### More than two dozen counties placed under drought watch

A lack of rain this summer prompted the Pennsylvania Drought Task Force to place more than two dozen Pennsylvania counties under a drought watch.

Impacted counties are Beaver, Bradford, Butler, Cambria, Cameron, Clarion, Clearfield, Clinton, Crawford, Elk, Erie, Forest, Indiana, Jefferson, Lawrence, Lycoming, McKean, Mercer, Potter, Schuylkill, Somerset, Tioga, Venango, Warren and Washington.

During a drought watch, residents are encouraged, but not required, to reduce their water use by 5% to 10%. Drought declarations are based on four factors: precipitation, stream flows, groundwater levels and soil moisture. 🌱

## TIME LINES



DECEMBER 2015

A decade ago, *Penn Lines* chronicled how family-run restaurants have become family-favorite destinations in co-op country. The cover story featured three families – the Otts, the Dudkins and the Frys, who still own and operate Fry Brothers Turkey Ranch in Lycoming County, which is served by Tri-County Rural Electric Cooperative (REC). The restaurant is popular for its family-friendly atmosphere, a reminder that rural cuisine offers more than just great food.



#### SNOWFLAKE SOCIAL

Enjoy live music, hors d'oeuvres, local merchants, a photo booth, and live and silent auctions Dec. 4 as Downtown Bedford, Inc. holds its biggest fundraiser of the year, the Snowflake Social, at the Omni Bedford Springs Resort. The event begins at 6 p.m., and tickets are \$60, plus fees. For more details, visit [downtownbedford.com](http://downtownbedford.com).

PORTFARMS.COM



#### HE'S A MEAN ONE

Gear up for Santa's arrival by grabbing a drink with his rival. Port Farms in Waterford, Erie County, is hosting a meet-and-greet with the Grinch Dec. 20 and 21. The Green One will be available for photos, laughs and beverages, which include hot cocoa as well as cocktails and beer for those 21 and older. Learn more at [portfarms.com](http://portfarms.com).



ENDLESSMOUNTAINS.ORG

#### CELEBRATE THE SOLSTICE

As the seasons change, take time to reflect on the year during the Winter Solstice Walk Dec. 21 at Vosburg Neck State Park in Tunkhannock, Wyoming County. A path lit by luminaries will guide attendees as they wander during the longest night of the year. For more information, visit [endlessmountains.org](http://endlessmountains.org).

#### A WONDERFUL LIFE

Leave it to the Christmas Tree Capital of the World to host the It's A Wonderful Life Festival, which is on tap each Saturday through Dec. 20 in downtown Indiana, Pa. Celebrate the holidays in Jimmy Stewart's hometown with Santa visits, ornament making, selfie spots and unique themes each week. Learn more at [visitindianacountypa.org/IAWL](http://visitindianacountypa.org/IAWL).



VISITINDIANACOUNTYPA.ORG



# Small Towns

Neighbors Find Harmony in Community Choruses

**PAULA PIATT**  
Penn Lines Contributor



# s, Big Sounds

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE EAST BERLIN COMMUNITY SINGERS



**EAST BERLIN COMMUNITY SINGERS**

**MORE THAN LABOR DAY OR VALENTINE'S DAY** or even Fourth of July, the Christmas holidays get everyone humming and toe-tapping. It can be a simple carol, Springsteen warning you that "Santa Claus is Coming to Town," or the beauty of Handel's "Messiah."

And if you're lucky enough to live within earshot of a community choir, the holidays are a special treat — whether wandering the streets of Wellsboro in Tioga County during its Dickens of a Christmas celebration or rejoicing in Blair County with the beautiful "Gloria," accompanied by a dozen brass instruments.

While the holidays bring the groups together for their annual December shows, their love of music keeps them singing year-round. Hundreds of community choruses regularly bring joy to audiences throughout Pennsylvania.

You'll find them in the town square, local church sanctuaries, and schools, at community festivals, and in assisted living facilities — "any time someone asks for a song," according to one chorister with the Wellsboro Men's Chorus. (And, sometimes, people don't even have to ask; the guys in Wellsboro have been known to break into song at the local pub.)

In small towns, these are the folks who are bringing the big sounds.

## Hitting the right notes

Some choirs have been performing for years — Blair County, home of the Blair Concert Chorale, can trace its community choir roots back to the 1930s — while others are just getting started. The East Berlin Community Singers in Adams County first performed just over a decade ago for the town's 250th anniversary. For 30 years, the women in Wellsboro watched their husbands sing in the Men's Chorus before starting their own group.

"They talked about it for several years, and finally in January 1975, they asked the Men's Chorus' pianist, Pat Davis, to be their pianist and director," says Diana Frazier, one of the chorus's current directors. "They met on Thursday nights when the men were finished practicing." The group quickly grew to more than a dozen, and today, numbers close to 50, with one original member still singing.

Talk of a community choir in Clearfield County goes back 100 years, with performances documented through the 1960s, '70s and '80s. Then, for reasons unknown, the group took a 20- to 25-year hiatus. A decade ago, two Clearfield artisans decided to revitalize it.

"We just sang hymns and some basic arrangements; it was pretty simple," says Mason Strouse, who along with Catherine Mandell, brought a dozen or so singers together under the reorganized Clearfield Arts Studio Theatre (CAST) in 2015. "A new board of directors came on board and saved CAST; out of that grew this choir as well."

Ten years later — and now known as the Clearfield Choral Society — you wouldn't recognize the group.

"We were borrowing music, and we had performances for 40 or 50 people," remembers Strouse, who also serves as Clearfield's mayor. "Now, with 50-plus singers, we're contracting with musicians and have 200 or 300 people at a concert with online ticket sales. I couldn't have imagined this is where it would be now."

## A community within a community

The resurgence is not just in Pennsylvania. In a 2019 survey commissioned by Chorus America, an astonishing number emerged: More than 54 million people sing in one of the 275,000 choruses around the country. That's more than 16% of the population, or four out of every 25 Americans. Among the findings, not surprisingly,

were that adults who sing in choruses report significant personal benefits, including feeling less lonely and more connected to others; that choral singers are remarkably strong contributors to their communities; and that older chorus members report both a better quality of life and better overall health than the general public.

It's definitely more than the music.

"We have people from many, many walks of life, people from different professions and

**STRONGER THAN EVER:** Within a decade, the Clearfield Choral Society, based in Clearfield County, went from singing hymns with basic arrangements to hosting concerts for large audiences, contracting with musicians and selling tickets online.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE CLEARFIELD CHORAL SOCIETY



different ability levels,” says Jacob Mandell, Clearfield Choral Society’s artistic director and conductor. “For a lot of people, the choral society is their social outlet, the place where they can see their friends and do something that’s very meaningful for them.”

It’s tough, though, to sit and chat during rehearsal, so Steering Committee member Brandy Dixon is working on creating opportunities outside rehearsals for members to get together. “We offer a little community in and of itself, where people make connections,” she says. “We want to provide that type of space, where people can come with their friends to have fun.”

The bonds are strong — even if singers only see each other once a week for an hour or two — and can be far reaching.

The Blair Concert Chorale also draws members from Bedford, Cambria and Huntingdon counties, which cover territories served by several rural electric cooperatives. Its director, Christopher Bartley, makes the weekly 90-minute drive to Altoona to lead the group. Clearfield Choral’s members, some served by DuBois-based United Electric Cooperative, are primarily Curwensville and Grampian area residents; however, some

make the trek from Brookville, Brockway and as far away as Phillipsburg in neighboring Centre County.

And in the Northern Tier, members of the Wellsboro Men’s and Women’s Choruses crisscross Tioga County and Tri-County Rural Electric Cooperative territory to get to the county seat for rehearsals. “We have singers from as far away as Liberty, up in the valley in Elkland, and when Mansfield disbanded its chorus, a lot of the members joined Wellsboro,” says Tom Walrath, a recently retired 42-year member of the Men’s Chorus.

Once together, each group finds its own sense of family.

“We truly look out for each other,” says Diana Frazier of the Wellsboro’s Women’s Chorus, also known as “Sisters in Song.” “If someone is ill, the chorus sends a card, and many send individual cards. One member broke her

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE BLAIR CONCERT CHORALE



**IN TUNE:** The Blair Concert Chorale, based in Altoona, draws members from Bedford, Blair, Cambria and Huntingdon counties, which are served by several rural electric cooperatives. Groups like this have been performing in Blair County since the 1930s.

**“For a lot of people, the choral society is their social outlet ...”**

shoulder, and meals were supplied for her.”

It’s much the same with the Clearfield Choral Society, Mason Strouse says: “When someone has a baby, we’re cheering with them, and when someone, unfortunately, experiences a loss, we’re grieving with them.”

As with any family, choral groups are multi-generational. You’ll often find parents singing next to children, spouses harmonizing, and young and old coming together to make that joyful noise.

“We’ve had 20-year-olds, and we’ve had 85-year-olds,” says Jane Johnston, director of the East Berlin Community Singers, a retired Bermudian Springs High School choral director and an Adams Electric Cooperative member. “I’ve got some of my former students and some of their parents singing with us and maybe even their grandparents.”

In Clearfield County, some families carpool to rehearse at the Presbyterian church.

“We are truly an inter-generational choir that brings in high school students from the county to sing with people of all ages, abilities and professions, and we have a lot of families,” Jacob Mandell says. “Just last year, we had six or seven different families. Both my parents sing, and my mother is involved as the assistant. It’s very special that we bring in the generations.”

### **Wanted: a love of music**

Not all members are “singers.” Many community choirs don’t hold auditions; participants are only required to have a love of music and performance and, hopefully, they can also carry a tune. If not, it’s taken in stride. The directors, many of whom are former and/or current music instructors, love to teach.

Strouse says he leaves each Clearfield Choral rehearsal with a sense of accomplishment. “They’re very good about teaching people musicality and how to sing,” he says of

Director Jacob Mandell and his mom Catherine, who has handed over her conducting duties, but still helps on occasion. “It’s very rewarding to watch the members who didn’t study music or maybe it’s the first time they’ve ever done something like this. They are nurtured and become very productive members of the choir. It is life-changing for them in a way.”

“As we have evolved, it’s helpful if the person has a sense of knowing what line they might be looking at in the music,” says East Berlin’s Johnston, who constantly challenges her vocalists. “I want them to grow. Sometimes, I’ll throw in a piece where they have to learn Latin or French; I try to make it vocally challenging as well, while keeping it audience friendly.”

A more formal organization, the Blair Concert Chorale does audition its members, according to Operations Manager Jane Gable. Formed in 1987, the group is a combination of the former Keystone Chorale and the Altoona Choral Society.

“This organization has been — in one form or another — a part of our community for a very long time. It’s kind of reinvented itself, but over the years, it has always been an audition choir, a rather serious musical choir,” she says.

And that, they are finding, is broadening the membership. Gable is delighted that recent college graduates are returning home and joining the group. “I’m very proud that we are seeing our average age decline ... that those young people who have been involved in college choirs have started to join; they want to come back and audition,” Gable says. “Our newest members are under 30.”

All the choruses, of course, encourage the younger

generation to join in song. Investing in that future and its community, the green-jacketed Wellsboro Men’s Chorus funds three scholarships at the local high school. The Lester Haner Memorial Scholarship goes to a graduate majoring in any area of music, the Ellsworth Robert Memorial Voice Scholarship to a graduate majoring in voice, and the Todd Antoine Memorial Scholarship to a graduating member of the school’s Men’s Chorus.

But just because they are “community” choruses doesn’t mean they stay there. The groups take their music around the state — and around the world.

For the second time, the Wellsboro Men’s Chorus opened South Williamsport’s Little League World Series with the national anthem this past August, and the East Berlin Community Singers traveled to Normandy, France, last year for the 80th anniversary of D-Day. Performances at the Liberation Memorial Ceremony and the D-Day Memorial Public Ceremony were followed by a trip to Paris and a final performance at the LaMadeleine Church.

The trip, of course, was an experience of a lifetime, but then, just getting the opportunity to sing is pretty special, too.

“I firmly believe that in a true community choir, you can take an ensemble and it has the ability to soar,” Clearfield’s Jacob Mandell says. “And I believe that choral singing is one of the most human, the most soulful and spiritual things we can do.

“When you work together with a group of people you don’t know, you’re bonded by that musical connection, and there’s an artistic level you achieve just by singing together,” he adds. “There’s a catharsis in that; there’s a feeling in that.”

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE WELLSBORO MEN’S CHORUS



**SINGING AND GIVING:** The Wellsboro Men’s Chorus encourages younger generations to pursue their passion for music by offering scholarships to local high school students.

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## Reflecting on Progress, Planning for the Future



**RYAN MELLER**

**AS WE CLOSE ANOTHER YEAR,** I want to express gratitude to you, the members of Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative (REC), for your continued trust and support. Our cooperative was built on the promise of people coming together to improve the quality of life in their communities, and that promise still guides everything we do today.

Each decision — whether it's about delivering reliable electricity, innovating for the future or advocating for smart-energy policies — comes back to one simple question: How will this benefit the members we serve?

This year has been marked by meaningful progress, both in strengthening our local system and in working at the national level to influence energy policies that directly affect reliability, affordability, and resilience. While federal regulations can feel distant, they shape our daily operations at home.

Over the past year, electric cooperatives across the country came together to oppose the EPA's power plant rule. As originally written, the rule would have forced a rapid shift away from always-available power generation resources, which would have threatened our accessibility to a diverse fuel supply that keeps electricity reliable.

Renewable energy sources are an essential and growing part of our energy future, but we also know that the demand for electricity is rising rapidly, and natural gas, coal, and nuclear energy remain essential for ensuring power is available around the clock.

As we collaborated with policymakers, we pressed for a more balanced approach to generating power — one that supports clean-energy innovation while still recognizing the role of traditional resources. Our efforts helped shape a more workable path forward, and that path better protects reliability and keeps costs in check for you, our members.

Another area of ongoing progress came through advocacy on federal permitting reform. For too long, outdated rules and lengthy delays stood in the way of building critical infrastructure, including new transmission lines and generation projects. Modernizing this process is essential if we are going to strengthen the electric grid and keep pace with growing demand.

This year, electric co-ops helped move the needle on permitting reform to make the process faster, more predictable and more efficient. Investments we make in infrastructure will reach communities sooner, improve reliability and prepare us for the future.

We're also seeing progress with bipartisan support of the Fixing Emergency Management for Americans Act of 2025, which speeds up the disaster recovery process for electric cooperatives and the communities they serve. Severe storms are a fact of life, and their impact on the electric system can be devastating.

As you may recall, last year our crews were in North Carolina assisting with disaster recovery after Hurricane Helene. Our lineworkers were proud to demonstrate the cooperative principle of cooperation among cooperatives. While we have relied on mutual aid only one time in our nearly 90-year history, it is important that Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) assistance is available quickly should we ever need it to recover from a disaster.

FEMA is a crucial partner for electric co-ops as they restore power after disaster strikes, but currently, the reimbursement process after a major storm is slow. If passed, the bill would make FEMA a stronger, more responsive agency to help improve rural resilience, protect taxpayer dollars and ensure essential services are restored as quickly as possible after a natural disaster.

*Continued on page 12D*

# The Cooperative Difference in a Time of Grid Stress

**RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES RUN ON** a straightforward promise: deliver power to members at the lowest possible cost. But right now, forces beyond our control are testing that commitment in ways we haven't seen before.

At heart, it's a math problem, but this equation doesn't have an easy solution. Electricity demand in our region is climbing faster than new supply can come on-line. Across the 13-state PJM Interconnection (PJM) region, which includes Pennsylvania and New Jersey, supply and demand for electricity have become unbalanced.

**Supply is shrinking.** On one side of the equation: Policy shifts have accelerated the retirement of coal and natural gas plants, while promoting growth in intermittent sources like wind and solar. Many of the reliable, always-available plants that powered the region for decades are gone, and replacement resources are not being built fast enough. New projects are stuck in permitting or delayed by the same supply-chain disruptions that co-ops have struggled with for years.

**Demand is exploding.** On the other side: Electricity consumption is skyrocketing — and it's not just population growth or electric vehicles driving the surge. The real disruptor is artificial intelligence (AI). Across our PJM region, tech companies are racing to build massive, AI-driven data centers — facilities that consume as much electricity as entire cities. Industry forecasts show this demand accelerating over the next five years, with no sign of leveling off. This data center demand is constant and fundamentally changing how much power our region needs.

As a result, we're watching an alarming gap widen between how much electricity people need and how much the grid can actually deliver. The gap between these two forces is what's driving costs higher across the entire

PJM region, including costs for electric cooperatives like Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative (REC).

While cooperatives strive to provide power at the lowest cost possible, these market forces are pushing costs upward, making a rate adjustment unavoidable. But cooperative ownership gives us tools that other utilities don't have.

Northwestern REC gets most of its energy from Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc. (Allegheny), the wholesale power provider we own with 13 other rural electric co-ops in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Through Allegheny, we've invested in generation resources, including nuclear and hydroelectric plants, formalized long-term power-purchase agreements, and even secured millions in federal grant funding to boost our supply of affordable nuclear power.

This strategy insulates us — and you — from the worst of the market chaos. Through long-term planning, Allegheny continues to deliver some of the most stable, affordable generation rates in the PJM region to cooperatives, even as market prices spike elsewhere.

Cooperation amplifies our impact. Through Allegheny and the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association, our statewide advocate, we pool resources, such as joint purchasing, shared training and coordinated planning, to reduce costs. We also work directly with you to manage peak demand — those times when the system is stressed — which helps keep everyone's rates lower.

While your cooperative has taken strides to keep the rate we pay — and, in turn, pass along to you — low, our power suppliers are telling us to anticipate an increase. Next year, Northwestern REC will pay 13.5% more for the power distributed to you. As we recognize the hardship this will cause, we have worked hard to keep the cost we

pass along to our members as low as possible. In 2026, our residential consumer-members will see an increase of just 7.5% to their electric generation charge.

Safe, reliable, affordable electricity remains our core commitment. While we can't control regional supply shortages or soaring demand, we can control how we respond. That means making smart decisions to shield our members from the worst of these market pressures and the uncertainty ahead. Our focus will always remain on you, our members. That is the cooperative difference. 🌱

## Our Promise to You

As the demand for electricity continues to grow, our commitment to providing you with reliable power remains steadfast. Looking ahead, we are dedicated to:

- Advocating for energy policies that support our local communities.
- Leveraging innovative technologies to strengthen our grid.
- Listening to your feedback to enhance co-op programs and services.



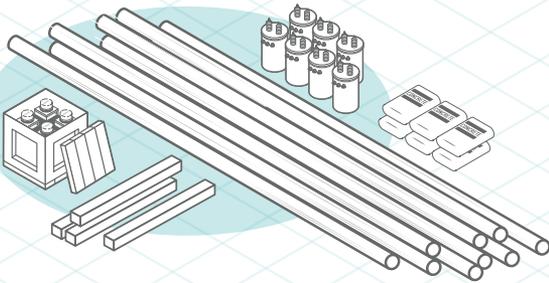
# Infrastructure Costs

The past five years have been a period of exploding costs for the electric utility industry, pushed by soaring demand, supply chain challenges, raw materials shortages, increased labor costs and tariffs. The impact has led to rapid increases in the cost of producing power, longer and more unpredictable project timelines, and the need for more financing, all of which have driven electric rates up for residences, businesses, and other end-users. Here's a look at what's contributing to the trend.

## Percent increase since 2020:

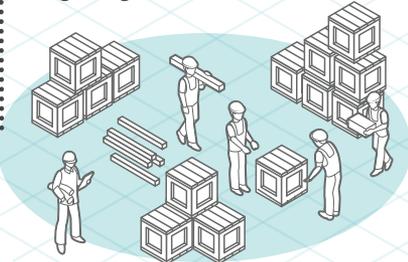
### ● Infrastructure

Utility poles (wood, steel, composite)	+25-40%
Crossarms & braces (steel/wood)	+20-35%
Conductor wire (aluminum/copper)	+30-50%
Transformers	+70-100%
Grain-oriented electrical steel	+80-100%
Oil/dielectric fluids	+25-40%
Copper wiring	+50%
Concrete	+25-35%
Smart meters	+20-35%
Pad-mounted switchgear	+25-40%
Circuit breakers/reclosers	+20-35%



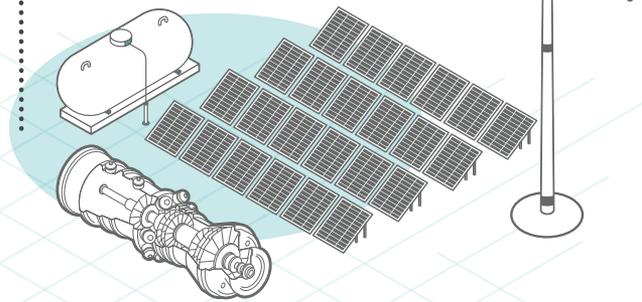
### ● Build-outs

Utility construction labor	+20-40%
Freight/logistics	+30-60%



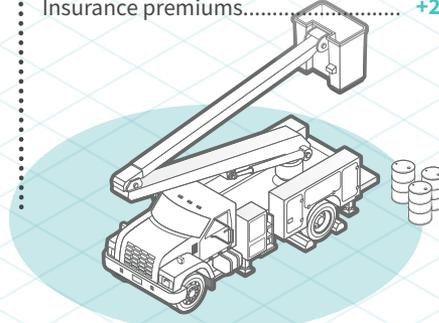
### ● Generation

Diesel gensets	+20-40%
Gas turbines	+20-30%
Solar PV systems	+25-35%
Wind turbines	+25-35%
Hydropower components	+20-30%
Battery storage	+25-40%
SCADA/EMS systems	+20-30%
Inverters	+20-30%
Relays & switchgear	+25-40%
Natural gas	+20-120%
Coal	+30-60%
Diesel/fuel oil	+40-70%



### ● Fleets

Light trucks	+25-40%
Bucket trucks, digger derricks	+20-50%
Fuel costs (especially diesel)	+20-30%
Maintenance	+15-25%
Insurance premiums	+20%



Sources: BLS; energynews.com; Reuters; Wood Mackenzie; NREL; IEA

# Northwestern REC: Giving Back and Enriching Our Community Since 1936

EMILY SONNTAG, MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST

**THE HOLIDAY SEASON IS A** wonderful time filled with generosity and compassion. It's an opportunity to reflect on our many blessings and extend a helping hand to those in need. While this season is undeniably special, Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) is proud to give back to our communities year-round.

Our mission is clear: to provide reliable, affordable energy while keeping our focus on the people we serve — our members. We believe in making a positive difference, which is why we organize food drives, host fundraising events, support local, small businesses and contribute to academic programs that enhance the community we cherish.

Your involvement is invaluable in helping us achieve this mission. Our Operation Roundup program showcases the spirit of our members, who generously choose to “round up” their electric bills to help their neighbors. These contributions enable us to assist families in need and support local charities and services.

Investing in the leaders of tomorrow is another way we give back. Through scholarships and the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour Program, we empower students

**HOW CAPITAL CREDITS WORK**

Electric co-ops are not-for-profit and operate at cost. Capital credits are a financial benefit of co-op membership.

1. Members pay their electric bills, and we track their business with us each month.
2. The co-op pays operating expenses throughout the year and allocates any leftover operating revenue as capital credits.
3. When financial conditions permit, the co-op board votes to retire (pay) capital credits to the members.
4. We send members their share of capital credits as a bill credit or check.

to build a bright future. By supporting our youth, we enrich the fabric of our community and ensure the cooperative difference continues to thrive.

Another way we give back is through capital credits. Because Northwestern REC operates on a cost basis, any excess revenue generated is returned to our dedicated members, not outside investors or shareholders.

You may be curious about how this works and what it means for you as a member.

Northwestern REC members use the electricity we provide and then pay their monthly bills. We monitor this use over time, and once we cover all operating expenses for the year, any surplus revenue is allocated as capital credits.

When the conditions are right, our board of directors votes to return these credits to you. Whether you receive a check, see a credit applied to your energy bill or elect to donate your share to the Member-to-Member Fund, these credits are one way we thank you for being a valued member.

Capital credits are just one of the many advantages of co-op membership. Our unwavering commitment to giving back to our members — rather than to outside entities or investors — sets us apart from traditional investor-owned utilities.

Our members are at the heart of every decision we make, and we genuinely appreciate your role in our co-op. You are much more than a customer; you are a valued consumer-member. This holiday season, take pride in being part of a community-focused co-op that prioritizes people over profits.

From all of us at Northwestern REC, we wish you a joyous and fulfilling holiday season filled with warmth and light.

## FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO

*Continued from page 12A*

Achievements like these are not just wins in Washington — they are wins for Northwestern REC members like you.

In addition to advocacy efforts, we are proactively addressing our communities' needs for the future by investing in new technologies and programs that improve member services. Through advanced monitoring systems and new technologies that improve daily operations, we are better equipped to identify power delivery issues or challenges before they occur.

As we look ahead to a new year, I see both challenges and opportunities on the horizon. The energy industry is undergoing significant change, driven by the rising need for more electricity, new tools and technologies, and federal energy policies.

The path forward requires innovative thinking and member-focused solutions. I'm confident that with the dedication of Northwestern REC employees and the continued support of our members, we are well positioned to adapt and meet challenges head-on.

Through it all, our promise to you remains steadfast: reliable power for today — and tomorrow.

Cooperatively yours,

**RYAN MELLER**  
PRESIDENT & CEO

# WINTER WEATHER

## CAN BRING POWER LINES DOWN



### DID YOU KNOW:

### STAY WHERE YOU ARE

You've just been in an accident involving a downed power line. Your first instinct might be to get out and run, but that could cost you your life. In most cases, the safest place to be is inside your car or truck. Wait there until electric utility workers deenergize the power. If your car is on fire or you see smoke, escape as safely as possible by making a clean, solid jump out and hop away with both feet together as far as you can. Warn others not to approach the scene.



- That downed power lines are extremely dangerous and even deadly?
- The current could spread throughout the ground and anything touching the ground?
- Stray voltage spreads like ripples on a pond?
- If you step from one “ripple” (voltage) to another you could be electrocuted?
- Downed lines could be hiding under standing water, ice or debris?

Learn more at:

 Safe  
Electricity.org®

## Local Lore

### Warren Electric Cooperative

#### *An Apple a Day in Warren County, Pa.*

Sure, we all know that Johnny Appleseed — or the character’s real-life inspiration, John Chapman — played a crucial role in the development of apple tree nurseries throughout the country. But did you know while on his seed-spreading journey, he made a stop in Warren County?

It’s true. In the late 1700s, Chapman called Brokenstraw Creek home, and it’s reportedly where he planted his first nursery. While Chapman’s presence in Warren County had been debated as folklore for years, in 1953, county Commissioner George Seavy discovered a ledger used during the time Chapman was purported to live in the area, now home to Warren Electric Cooperative.

According to Seavy, Chapman’s name was recorded six times, between

Feb. 14, 1797, and May 3, 1799, and documents indicate he paid for his purchases with apple tree seedlings.

Judge Lansing Wetmore, who in 1853 chronicled Chapman’s time in Warren County, said the folk hero kept a nondescript appearance during his stay in northwestern Pennsylvania. He carried only a knapsack for apple seeds, a rifle and a tomahawk. Wetmore also noted Chapman was always shoeless, painting the picture of the legend who would go on to be most commonly known as Johnny Appleseed.

After his time in Warren County, Chapman continued his path west, spending the majority of his later years in Ohio and Indiana, where he died in 1845 after reportedly owning 1,200 acres of planted land. Chapman’s journey into the Midwest marked a pivotal time in the expansion of apple trees throughout North America — and who knows: Maybe he enjoyed an apple a day during his stay in Warren County, Pa. 🍏



**A LEGEND GROWS:** John Chapman, the inspiration for Johnny Appleseed, spent some time in Warren County during his younger days. In the late 1700s, he called Brokenstraw Creek home before moving into Ohio and Indiana.



**Main Office:** Youngsville, Pa.  
**Consumer-members served:** 8,697  
**Website:** warrenec.coop

## 'Turtles are Wonderful'

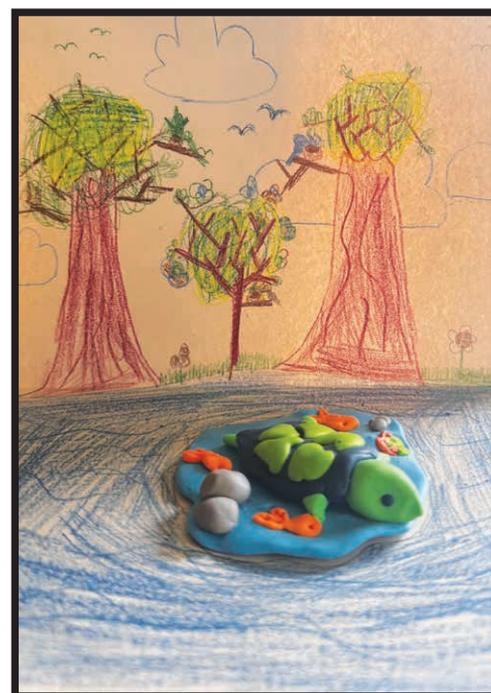
This month’s artwork comes from 7-year-old Valerie Hagee, daughter of Stephanie and Derek Little, members of Gettysburg-based Adams Electric Cooperative. Turtles were clearly on Valerie’s mind when she created this piece of art. “Some turtles live on land,” she says. “Some turtles live in water. We all love their beautiful shells that keep them safe. Turtles are wonderful and pretty.” Thank you, Valerie, for sharing your artwork with us!

*Valerie Hagee, age 7; Adams Electric Cooperative*

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

Each month, we’ll feature the artwork of our young readers (or our readers’ youngsters), inspired by something they’ve read in *Penn Lines*. Paints, pencils, crayons, clay, sand – any physical medium is OK! You may send digital photos of the creation to [CommunityCorner@prea.com](mailto: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.



# FEMA Reforms Would Benefit Rural Communities

**MICHAEL T. CRAWFORD**, SENIOR TECHNICAL EDITOR

**FLOODS, FIRES, HURRICANES,** tornadoes, blizzards — Mother Nature and her whims can be absolutely devastating and costly, especially in rural communities.

In the last 15 years, natural disasters have caused significant damage in nearly every part of the country. And when it comes time to recover, minutes matter and every penny counts.

Rural electric cooperatives are among those on the front lines after every disaster, with staff working quickly to get the lights back on. When the damage is worse than normal, topping millions of dollars, co-ops will coordinate with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), which provides expertise and funding to help devastated areas begin the recovery process.

The system works — but not quite as well as it could. The bipartisan Fixing Emergency Management for Americans Act, developed with significant input from cooperatives and their advocates, could change that.

Backed by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), the bill represents one of the most significant updates to federal disaster management law in decades. The measure is designed to modernize FEMA's disaster assistance programs and change how aid is delivered to communities.

"It's important that [FEMA has] been there to help cooperatives rebuild their systems, but it could work better," NRECA CEO Jim Matheson says. "[Lawmakers] sought comment from various stakeholders, including electric cooperatives, so we had a lot of opportunity to sit down

and work with these folks to help craft this bill in a way that really addresses a lot of the issues we care about."

The Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association (PREA), the statewide advocate for the 14 rural electric cooperatives in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, has also been meeting with policymakers to emphasize the importance of making FEMA funding more accessible.

"Even though we have not had a large-scale disaster in our areas recently, we're only one Superstorm Sandy away from needing this process to be better," says Steve Brame, president & CEO of PREA and Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc., which provides wholesale power to the 14 Pennsylvania and New Jersey cooperatives. "It's important that FEMA operates as efficiently as possible so our member cooperatives and hundreds of others across the country don't get bogged down with red tape and long waits for recovery funding. Consumer-members shouldn't have to foot those bills."

The measure would remove FEMA from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and return it to its former status as an independent agency that reports directly to the president.

The proposal would also allow co-ops to build stronger, more resilient systems in the aftermath of disasters rather than being forced to build everything back exactly as it was. In addition, the bill would expedite reimbursements for emergency recovery work, streamline approval and execution of longer-term, permanent restoration, and reimburse co-ops for interest on private loans used in the immediate aftermath of a storm.

CLAVERRACK RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE



**DISASTER RECOVERY:** Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative lineworkers Dave Gardner, Scott Rockwell and Tanner Keeney help a rural North Carolina electric cooperative rebuild its damaged lines following Hurricane Helene in October 2024. The Federal Emergency Management Agency provided support to affected areas to build stronger, more resilient systems in the wake of the storm.

"We need to fix this situation," Matheson says, "because we shouldn't have to worry about FEMA when our No. 1 priority is restoring service."

The bill is before the U.S. House and, if approved, will be sent to the Senate.

For more information about the Fixing Emergency Management for Americans Act or to express your support, visit [voicesforcooperative-power.com/femareform](https://voicesforcooperative-power.com/femareform).

**ALLEGHENY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.**, based in Harrisburg, Pa., is the wholesale power provider for 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.

# Passing the Reins of Christmas Traditions

ABIGAIL ZIEGER

**WHEN OUR OLDEST CHILD** was just a baby, we bundled him up in his warmest jacket, hat, and gloves and strapped him in a baby backpack to go find our very first Christmas tree as a family. We went on quite the expedition, hiking through a cut-your-own-tree farm for much longer than necessary. We walked up and down row after row of trees, deliberating over which one was just the right height and shape for the living room. I was determined to find the perfect tree.

After what felt like hours, we finally decided on a fluffy pine, sawed it down and had it wrapped to take home. Once it was unrolled and in the stand, I decorated it meticulously, hanging our excess of “Baby’s First Christmas” ornaments with glee. It took forever, but I was delighted with the result: glowing lights, pretty ornaments and a quiet, cozy atmosphere.

Fast forward 15 years, and our holiday traditions have taken on a life of their own. Now we have four kids, and they pick out the tree. Each year, a different child gets a turn to choose the type of tree we buy: spruce, pine or fir. We still stand around and debate which tree is just right. Is it too tall? Dropping too many needles? But, eventually, we cut one down, toss it unwrapped into the back of the truck and take it home.

Once we wrangle the tree into the house, my husband gets the stand ready while I pull the ornaments out of the basement. We make hot chocolate and blare Bing Crosby and Frank Sinatra holiday tunes. Once the tree is upright, I unwrap the lights and open the ornament boxes. Then we step back and let the kids go to it.

They are so enthusiastic, I barely need to decorate anymore. They all have their own ideas of where things should go and what they should look like. We love watching them make the tree their very own. Some branches are heavy laden; others are nearly bare. When they’re finally done, one child gets their turn to put the star on top. I snap a

photo so we can remember whose turn it will be next year.

Our kids have taken ownership of other traditions as well. Every year, we make sugar cookie cutouts. I may make the dough, but the kids do the rolling, cutting and decorating. (If only they would do the dishes, too!) They buy presents for each other from the thrift store and wrap them. Though the packages may not look professional, they are wrapped with love and pride. They decorate their own rooms with strings of lights and miniature trees.

One of my favorite traditions that has emerged is an annual reading of “Who’s That Knocking on Christmas Eve?” by Jan Brett. In this beautifully illustrated story, a boy

from Oslo and his ice bear fight off a horde of hungry trolls who are attempting to steal a delicious spread of sausages, pudding, and cakes. Years ago, the kids wanted to make a dinner like the one described in the book, so I gave it a go; now it’s our regular Christmas Eve meal.

There will always be strong traditions from both sides of our family that we continue to carry into our children’s lives: a reading of the Christmas story, singing favorite carols, Christmas morning cinnamon rolls and genuine Italian lasagna at Grandma’s house in the evening. But little things that were

once non-negotiable — the tree must go in this corner, not that one — have become less imperative.

It has been wonderful to see how our kids have adopted some of our own traditions, adapted others and created entirely new traditions that now are part of our family. I’ve loved progressively relinquishing control of how the holiday looks and letting them take the reins. What started as an effort to make a picture-perfect holiday has become something much better: a celebration shaped by all of us. 🍷



**ABIGAIL ZIEGER** is a music teacher and singer by trade, but also enjoys capturing life experiences through writing. When not singing, teaching, or typing, she can be found working in her kitchen, helping her kids with school, or consuming copious amounts of coffee. A member of Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative, Abigail lives with her husband and four children in northeast Pennsylvania.

# Water Heater Woes

**MIRANDA BOUTELLE**

**Q:** How can I tell if my water heater needs to be repaired or replaced?

**A:** We've all gotten used to having reliable hot water in our homes. Nobody wants to get caught off guard with a cold shower or failed water heater. I lean toward the "if it isn't broken, don't fix it" school of thought, but a failed water heater can cause damage to your home and property. Emergency replacement of a water heater can add unnecessary costs, not to mention inconvenience. Plumbing companies, for example, usually charge more for evening or weekend replacements or repairs.

The typical lifespan of a storage water heater is 10 to 15 years, according to the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). If your water heater is older than that, make plans to replace it. If you don't have records of when it was installed, look for the water heater's serial number on its sticker or metal plate. Look up the serial number online or call the manufacturer to find its age.

Here are some signs your storage water heater might be approaching the end of its life:

Sediment or water on the floor or at the bottom of the water heater could mean its days are numbered. Sediment can be a sign of corrosion, which leads to a leak or failure.

Rusty or discolored water from



MIRANDA BOUTELLE, PIONEER UTILITY RESOURCES

**TIME FOR AN UPGRADE:** Be aware of your water heater's age and performance to avoid emergency replacement and damage to your home.

your faucets can be a sign the tank is rusting inside. If water is not getting as hot as it used to, that could mean you have a failing electric element or a gas burner that's not functioning properly.

Properly functioning water heaters typically don't make much noise. If you're hearing unusual sounds from your water heater, schedule a checkup with a plumber. A professional plumber may be able to replace failing components, but if you are having issues with the tank itself, it's likely time for a new unit.

If you're in the market for a new water heater, a heat pump

water heater might be a good fit for your home. These systems are up to three times more energy efficient than conventional electric-powered tank water heaters, according to the DOE. A federal tax credit is available until Dec. 31; you can claim 30% of the project cost, up to a maximum of \$2,000, for the installation of an Energy Star® heat pump water heater.

Even if your water heater is in great shape, you can save at home by lowering your hot water use. Some easy ways to do this are washing laundry in cold water and installing high-performance aerators on faucets and showerheads to reduce the amount of hot water you use. You can also save money by participating in your local cooperative's load management program to prevent the water heater from operating during peak energy use hours, typically in the mornings and evenings.

It also helps reduce your cooperative's energy purchase costs, which save you and your neighbors money on your electric bills.

Knowing the signs of water heater failure can help you avoid damage to your home and offer opportunities to explore more efficient equipment to lower electric use. 🏠

**MIRANDA BOUTELLE** is the chief operating officer at Efficiency Services Group in Oregon, a cooperatively owned energy efficiency company. She has more than 20 years of experience helping people save energy at home, and she writes on energy efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives.

# Cook with a Giving Heart

ANNE M. KIRCHNER

**FOOD AND LOVE ARE INSEPARABLE.** This holiday season, let your heart spread joy through the act of cooking. Savor the process as you choose the perfect recipe. What ingredients reflect your love for cooking? What food sends the message of gratitude and kindness?

Marcona almonds, imported from Spain, are appreciated for their sweet and buttery taste. When paired together, orange and ricotta offer a soothing burst of flavor. Caramel with a hint of salt portrays sweet and sassy. When you take time to cook for others, the holiday spirit comes alive. Twinkling lights will shine brighter, festive songs will ring louder and your heart will be fuller. 🎄

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

PHOTOS BY ANNE M. KIRCHNER



## CHOCOLATE MARCONA CLUSTERS

- 8 ounces bittersweet chocolate
- 2 cups Marcona almonds
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon raw sugar

Coarsely chop the chocolate and place in a microwave-safe bowl. Melt the chocolate in the microwave in 30-second increments. Stir after each increment until the chocolate is smooth and completely melted. Stir in the almonds, coating them well. Drop a spoonful of the chocolate-covered almonds onto a parchment-lined baking sheet. Sprinkle with salt and sugar. Place the clusters in the refrigerator until the chocolate completely sets. *Makes 12 to 15 clusters.*



## ORANGE RICOTTA COOKIES

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- ½ cup butter, softened
- ¼ cup ricotta
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 egg
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 tablespoon orange zest

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Combine the flour, baking soda and salt in a small bowl; set aside. Using a hand or stand mixer, blend the butter and ricotta until creamy. Gradually add the sugar, beating until well blended. Add the egg, vanilla and orange zest. Slowly add the dry ingredients until well blended. Using a small cookie scoop, drop the cookie dough onto a parchment-lined baking sheet. Bake for 10 to 12 minutes. *Makes 2 to 3 dozen cookies.*



## CARAMEL POPPED CORN

- 4 quarts popped corn
- 1 cup brown sugar
- ¼ cup corn syrup
- ½ cup butter
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon vanilla

Place the popped corn in a brown paper bag; set aside. Combine the brown sugar, corn syrup, butter and salt in a saucepan. Cook on medium heat, stirring until all ingredients are melted. Add the baking soda and vanilla and continue stirring. Pour the caramel sauce over the bagged popped corn. Roll the top of the bag to seal and microwave for 1 minute. Shake the bag vigorously. Repeat until the caramel sauce coats the popped corn well. Lay the coated popped corn on a cookie sheet to cool. *Makes 8 to 10 servings.*

# Watch Out for 'Zombie' Trees

GEORGE WEIGEL

**HALLOWEEN MIGHT BE OVER**, but this is a good time anyway to watch out for what the U.S. Forest Service calls “zombie trees.”

These trees might look alive, but they are dead or dying on the inside — usually from bugs or disease.

Such weakened trees could drop big limbs or fall at any time, so the Forest Service says it's important to scout for trouble signs and call a professional before a zombie tree causes harm.

Possible zombie signs include dying branches, increased woodpecker activity, fungi growing on the trunk and exposed internal wood decay, the Forest Service says.

Late fall and winter are good times to scout trees because the leaves are off, and it's easier to see wood wounds, cracks, and structural deficiencies.

Three of the most important things to check:

**1.) Are any tree limbs getting too close to overhead power lines?** Branches striking electric lines cause most power outages during storms.

Trees with branches growing directly over lines are the most obvious threats, but even trees growing near lines can cause trouble. Wind can blow branches and lines into each other or the weight of ice and snow can cause lines to sag onto nearby branches.

If you see tree-and-line conflicts in the making, hire a trained company to prune branches or remove the tree altogether.

**2.) Do you see any cracked or hanging branches?** Winter wind often blows dead or brittle branches out of trees, but the biggest threat is when a broken big limb is still

hanging. These can fall at any time — worst of all when a car or person is underneath.

Remove “hangers” ASAP, especially if they're in a spot near traffic.

**3.) Do you see signs that the whole tree is in danger of falling?**

Winter is one of the two most likely times for trees to fail. Snow and ice can create enough weight load to bring a dead or failing tree down and/or split apart a tree with a V-shaped, dual trunk. (The other risky time is early spring when the ground is wet from snow melt and spring rains.)

Even if your trees pass those three safety checks, a winter inspection is useful because it will help determine what pruning is needed, if any.

Pruning controls the size of a tree and removes excess foliage and rubbing branches that can contribute to disease and lead to failures.

Dead and cracked branches should come off as quickly as possible at any time of year. But winter is an ideal time to prune fruit trees and shade trees (especially oaks). Even flowering, ornamental trees can be pruned then, if you don't mind giving up some of next spring's flowers. Otherwise, prune spring-flowering trees right after they finish blooming.

A tree's winter-time bare branch structure also makes it easier to prune for weight distribution. Those cuts make sure the tree isn't too heavy on one side or the other.

While you're out there, look down as well as up. How's the mulch? Three or 4 inches is plenty around trees, and mulch should be kept a few inches back from the trunk.

One last check: drainage. Most tree species don't tolerate wet soil for long. Young struggling trees can

GEORGE WEIGEL



**ZOMBIE TREE:** This hollowed-out old mulberry isn't quite dead, but it's not structurally sound either.

be replanted in higher ground, while swales can be dug to guide drainage around an older tree's root zone. 🌱

**GEORGE WEIGEL** is a retired horticulturist, author of two books about gardening in Pennsylvania, and garden columnist for *The Patriot-News/PennLive.com* in Harrisburg. His website is [georgeweigel.net](http://georgeweigel.net).

# CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING

## ISSUE MONTH AD DEADLINE

February	December 15
March	January 14
April	February 13

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

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

## CLASSIFIED AD SUBMISSION/RATES:

### ELECTRIC CO-OP MEMBERS:

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

### NON-MEMBERS:

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

### SPECIAL HEADINGS:

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

### PAYMENT:

Please make **CHECK/MONEY ORDER payable to: PREA/Penn Lines**. Insertion of classified ad serves as proof of publication; no proofs supplied.

### SEND COMPLETED AD COPY AND PAYMENT TO:

*Penn Lines Classifieds*  
P.O. Box 1266  
Harrisburg, PA 17108-1266

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

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

### FREE HEADINGS:

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

## AA ROOFING

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

## AROUND THE HOUSE

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

B&L TREE SERVICE. Topping, removals, pruning, stump grinding, land clearing. Licensed and insured. Please give us a call or text 814-494-1578.

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

## BUILDING SUPPLIES

STEEL ROOFING AND SIDING. Over 30 years in business. Several profiles cut to length. 29- and 26-gauge best quality residential roofing – 40-year warranty. Also, seconds, heavy gauges, accessories, etc. Installation available. Located in northwestern Pennsylvania. 814-398-4052.

FACTORY SECONDS of insulation, 4 x 8 sheets, foil back. R-value 6.5 per inch. Great for pole buildings, garages, etc. Many thicknesses available. Also blue board insulation sheets. 814-442-6032.

## COAL FURNACE

COAL BOILER & FURNACE PARTS: grates, curved fire brick, and kidneys in stock. For Luxaire®, Penn Ohio®, Hunter® and Oneida® furnaces. Curwensville Heating & Plumbing. 814-236-1711.

## COINS & BULLION

KEYSTONE COIN & BULLION is buying and selling gold, silver, U.S. coins and currency. Collections, estates, gold and silver jewelry, sterling silver flatware, etc. We pay in CASH. Call us today! Christine or Matt at 814-631-6914. Visit us online or follow us on Facebook! [www.keystonecoinbullion.com](http://www.keystonecoinbullion.com).

## CONSULTING FORESTRY SERVICES

RAYSTOWN FORESTRY CONSULTING. Timber sales, appraisals, wildlife habitat management. Dedicated to sustainable harvests for present and future generations to enjoy. 45 years experience. 814-448-0040 or 814-448-2405.

## DUMPSTER RENTAL

ROLL-OFF DUMPSTER RENTAL SERVICE available in Adams, Cumberland, Franklin, and Fulton counties, Pa., and beyond. Contact us for pricing and scheduling. 717-860-6274 or [heckconstruction33853@gmail.com](mailto:heckconstruction33853@gmail.com). Heck Construction, based in Orrstown, PA 17244.

## ELECTRIC/GENERATORS

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

## GIFTS & COLLECTIBLES

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

## HEALTH INSURANCE

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

## HEATING & COOLING - GEOTHERMAL

SAVE UP TO 70% IN HEATING, COOLING AND HOT WATER COSTS with a geothermal comfort system from WaterFurnace. Benefits include energy savings, comfort, quiet, safety, reliability, and long life. Find out if geothermal is right for you at [waterfurnace.com/](http://waterfurnace.com/) Concierge or call 1-800-GEO-SAVE.

## HEATING & COOLING

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

## MEATS

ANGUS FREEZER BEEF. \$3.25/LB. HANGING WEIGHT, plus processing. No antibiotics or hormones, grass-fed, grain-finished, excellent marbling. By the quarter, half or whole – discount for halves and multiple quarters. Allison Farmz, Alexandria, Pa. 814-669-4014.

CALLING ALL MEAT-EATERS! Get ready to fill your freezer with high-quality Black Angus beef. Quarter, half or whole. Our family farm raises all-natural, grass-fed, grain-finished cattle. [www.mcmullenbeef.com](http://www.mcmullenbeef.com). 814-674-2332.

## MISCELLANEOUS

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

## MISCELLANEOUS

PORTAGE & MAIN OUTDOOR BOILERS - O'WOODY'S LLC. Outdoor heating with wood or coal. This boiler will meet all your heating needs. Call or text Naomi or Darwin Woods. 814-599-4738 or 223-208-5860.

MILITARY WINCHES FOR SALE. THREE PTO WINCHES - one MU2, two LU4s. One new mile marker for HMMWV, complete kit. Call 814-254-6010.

FOR SALE: 13-FT. OVERHEAD LINE SHAFT. 1" shaft, six pulleys, large (28") to small, wood and steel. Three hanging brackets. From 1860s mill, barn-kept dry. Sullivan County, Pa. \$275. 570-924-3745.

## NURSERY & GARDEN

TREES AND SHRUBS for all your landscaping needs. Rare, unusual, amazing. Bloomfield Nursery, 167 Sproul Mountain Road, Roaring Spring, PA 16673. 814-224-4508.

## PLUMBING/WATER SYSTEMS

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

## POWDER COATING

ALMOST ANYTHING METAL can be powder coated: auto parts, lawn furniture, wheels, etc. Restores, protects, preserves. 1,200-degree manifold coating. Arthurs Powder Coating, 263 Sexton Road, Indiana, PA 15701. 724-349-3770.

## REAL ESTATE

VIRGINIA'S EASTERN SHORE. Fishermen and beach lover's paradise. Access Chesapeake Bay or Atlantic Ocean within minutes. Waterside Village 3/4-acre homesites Near Marina from \$21,900 with fenced and locked RV/camper storage available. Beach access nearby. Waterfront Sites available on bayside and seaside starting at \$115,000. Many free boat ramps within minutes. Low, low taxes. Kirkwoodontheshore.com. 757-678-7631.

LOOKING TO BUY OR SELL? Timberland Realty specializes in land, sporting properties, camps, cabins, farms, waterfront, exquisite second homes and timberland since 1987. Call our office at 716-962-9935 or agents by region - Western Pa.: Ron Westover, 724-422-5525. Central Pa.: John Rudy, 717-319-0082. Northern Pa.: Dave Anderson, 585-808-5696. Brian Bullard, Managing Broker, 716-499-5608. www.timberlandrealty.net.

NEAR COOK FOREST - 2 ACRES, \$59,000. Cambria County - 45.6 acres, mix of timber and brush, \$149,000. 18.2 acres, field, gas well, \$99,000. Somerset County - 83 acres with marketable timber, \$359,000. Near Glendale Lake - Newly built cabin with utilities on 2.48 acres, \$238,000. Clearfield County - 502 acres, timber, streams, \$1,399,000. www.timberlandrealty.net. Ron Westover: 724-422-5525, 716-962-9935.

## RECIPES & FOOD

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

## TIMESHARE CANCELLATION

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

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ARTHURS TRACTORS. Specializing in vintage Ford tractors, 30 years' experience, online parts catalog/prices, Indiana, PA 15701. Contact us at 877-254-FORD (3673) or www.arthurstractors.com.

## TRAVEL & TOURISM

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

BEACH VACATION - HILTON HEAD ISLAND CONDO. Two bedrooms, two baths. Overlooks golf course! Complex amenities - private beach access, pools, hot tub, clubhouse, tennis, pickleball. Schedule Spring and Summer vacations now! Call 814-431-5540.

## USED BOOK SALE

2026 HUSTONTOWN FIRE HALL USED BOOK SALE. 426 North Clear Ridge Road, Hustontown, Pa. January 8, 9, 10, 15, 16, 17, 22, 23, 24. Thursdays and Fridays 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturdays 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Find us on Facebook! 717-830-0811.

## VAN RENTAL

15-PASSENGER VANS TO MINI-VANS to car rentals. Call Rent-A-Wreck in Erie. Locally owned for the last 37 years. Rent-A-Wreck, 814-833-9941.

## WANTED TO BUY

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

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

COLLECTORS BUYING PRE-WAR AND POST-WAR Lionel® trains, accessories, Plasticville® buildings, Transformers®, etc. Buying pieces to entire collections. Call John, 814-937-9052 or Mick, 814-656-1634.

# PENNLINES

## Have something to sell?

### Place a *Penn Lines* classified ad today!

Reach more than 168,000 rural Pennsylvania households! Advertise in

*Penn Lines*.

For more information, please visit our website at [www.prea.com/penn-lines-magazine](http://www.prea.com/penn-lines-magazine) or call 717.233.5704

Preparing for Storm Season?

## DON'T FORGET TO READY YOUR CAR

According to the National Safety Council (NSC), every vehicle should have an emergency supply kit onboard. Kits should be checked twice a year and expired items should be replaced regularly. Emergency supply kits should include:

 Snowbrush  
Shovel  
Windshield washer fluid  
Cat litter for traction

 Warm clothing  
Blankets  
Drinking water  
Nonperishable foods

 Properly inflated spare tire  
Wheel wrench & tripod jack  
Jumper cables  
Fire extinguisher

 Reflective triangles  
Reflective vest  
Brightly colored cloth (to tie on side mirror)

 First-aid kit  
Flashlight and batteries  
Compass  
Car charger for cellphone

Safe Electricity.org

Source: NSC

# Have a Good Day? Not When Plumbing is Involved

JOHN KASUN

AS A SOCIETY, we have different forms of greeting and departure statements, depending on the situation. For example, if you run into your friend Joe on the street or while shopping you might say, “Hi, Joe.” “How are you, Joe?” “Long time, no see, Joe.” When you part ways, you might say, “Bye, Joe.” “Catch you later, Joe.” You get the idea.

However, I have noticed the parting phrase, “Have a good day,” has taken a firm grip on society lately. Now, that’s a nice gesture, but I recently realized that not only does it not fit all occasions, but it can also be irritating. Look at what happened to me one morning last week.

I slipped out of bed with what I thought was plenty of time to get ready for an appointment. I picked up the clothes I had laid out the previous evening and headed for the bathroom. I turned on the faucet as I reached for my toothbrush. Immediately, I realized something was wrong. I could not hear running water, and my first assumption was something was wrong with the well.

Suddenly, my feet felt wet; the bathroom rug was soaked. I quickly glanced under the sink and found my explanation: The cold water shut-off valve had a pinhole leak. Water was spraying against the wall and running down to the rug. I ran downstairs and shut off the main water supply valve for the house. Then, I made a mad dash to the local hardware store to get a replacement valve and a few other parts I might need.

The young man helping me was nice and efficient and got me everything I needed quickly. As I turned and walked to the checkout, he said, “Have a nice day.” I took one step before it hit me.

Turning, I said in a calm matter-of-fact tone, “I appreciate your intent, but as I stand here, my feet are wet, and I am in

wrinkled pants and a dirty shirt because I grabbed the only clothes nearby, which were in the laundry basket. I have not had a shower, my hair is not combed, I need a shave and have not brushed my teeth yet. I have to replace this valve before I can actually get ready for an important meeting. I am not having a good day so far, and chances are it is not going to get any better. But thanks for the thought.”

He was frozen with a puzzled look and a blank stare,

but I didn’t have the time to explain any further.

I placed my assortment of plumbing items on the counter, and a young lady totaled them up. I paid and turned to leave, but as I was walking away, I heard a pleasant voice behind me say, “We will see you later.”

I didn’t turn around because I understood she was simply being polite, but the last thing a guy walking out of the hardware store with his hands full of plumbing parts needs is someone telling him, “We will see you later.” From personal experience, the word “plumbing” directly relates to multiple trips to the hardware store. In no way am I suggesting doing

away with kind greetings, but if it involves plumbing products, “good luck” is more appropriate.

Speaking of appropriate greetings, the best of them all is fast approaching — Merry Christmas. Christmas is special in many ways. Most important, it celebrates the birth of the Savior and a day that offers joy, peace, and hope to the world. With that in mind, from our house to yours, the Kasuns wish to offer you all a very Merry Christmas. 🎅



**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.**

## See You Next Year!

OUR 2025 "RURAL REFLECTIONS" PHOTO contest has ended, and the winning photos in the categories of most artistic, best landscape, best human subject, best animal and editor's choice will be printed in next month's issue of *Penn Lines*. Winners will receive a \$75 prize; runners-up will receive a \$25 prize and appear in the February issue of *Penn Lines*.

As always, thank you for sending in so many fun, interesting and awe-inspiring photos throughout the year. We're looking forward to seeing what you're able to capture next year! 📷

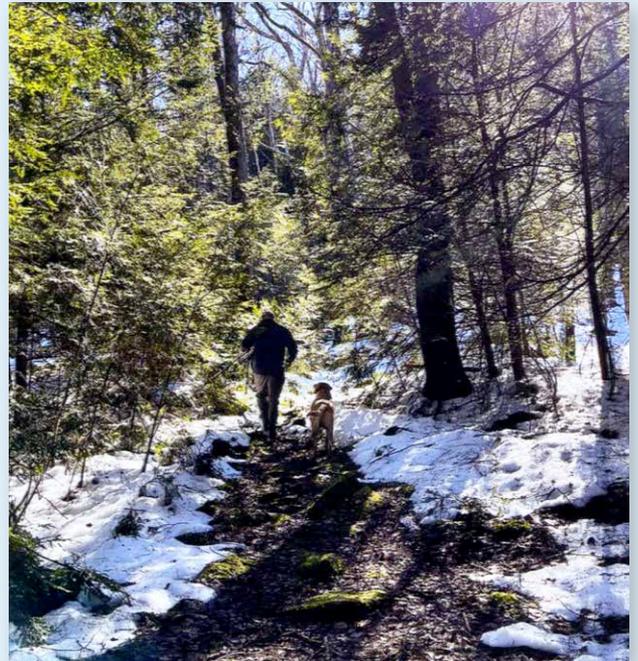


OLIVER MCKEITHAN • TRI-COUNTY REC



TOM FRANTZ • REA ENERGY

MOLLY HARRISON • BEDFORD REC



CLAUDIA JOHNSON WILLEY • ADAMS ELECTRIC

### New for 2026: We're now accepting digital images!

**STARTING IN JANUARY 2026**, Rural Reflections is going digital. What does that mean? Well, you can now enter digital images – those special ones you have on your phone or tablet – in the Rural Reflections contest via email at [photos@prea.com](mailto:photos@prea.com). We will accept up to five entries per person per year (amateur photographers only please). Include your name, address, phone number, and the name of the electric cooperative that serves your home, business or seasonal residence.

For those who prefer to send their photos by traditional mail, that's OK, too. Submit those 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.

**Note:** If you opt to use traditional mail, your photos will not be returned. If it's a photo you treasure, please send us a reprint, not the original.

**ADDRESS CHANGES:**

For change of address, please contact your local electric cooperative. For cooperative contact information, please visit [www.prea.com/member-cooperatives](http://www.prea.com/member-cooperatives)

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- 4 Caramel Apple Tartlets (4 oz.)
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