

Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative Association, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives
serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

Northwestern REC

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Amy Wellington, Editor

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From the President & CEO



Let's connect

By Bill Buchanan, *president & CEO*

WHEN WE say that we live in a “connected” world, most of us think about technology, like our smartphones and other devices and gadgets. But when you’re a member of an electric co-op (that’s you!), there’s so much more to being part of our connected co-op community.

As a member of Northwestern REC, you help to power good in our local community through initiatives like Operation Round Up, food and toy drives, and others that help the most vulnerable in our community.

We depend on you because you power our success, and when Northwestern REC does well, the community thrives because we’re all connected.

We greatly value our connection to you, the members we serve. And we’d like to help you maximize the value you can get from Northwestern REC through a variety of programs, products and services that we offer our members. For example, we can help you save money on your energy bill through our free online energy audits and rebates on new Energy Star®-rated electric appliances. When you download our SmartHub app, you can monitor and manage your home energy use, pay your bill online, and access a menu of additional options for potential savings and more.

When you follow Northwestern REC on social media, you can stay up to date on power restoration efforts, tree-trimming planning, co-op director

elections, giveaways and more. You’ll also see photos of our line crews in action and our employees helping with community service projects — and who doesn’t enjoy seeing good things happening in our community!

When you sign up for text alerts and push notifications, you can receive advance notices on outage and restoration information, billing updates, and changes to Northwestern REC event details.

By connecting with us, you can get real-time updates from your co-op. That’s why we want to make sure we have your most current contact information on hand. If we can’t connect with you on these platforms or in person, you could miss out on potential savings or important information.

Northwestern REC relies on data for nearly every aspect of our operations, and up-to-date contact information from our members helps ensure that we can provide the highest level of service that you expect and deserve.

Updated contact information can even speed up the power restoration process during an outage. That’s because when you call to report an outage, our automated system recognizes your phone number and matches it with your account location. Accurate information helps our outage-management system predict the location and the possible cause of an outage, making it easier for Northwestern REC crews to correct the problem.

(continues on page 14b)

COVID-19 cancels the Rural Electric Youth Tour ... again.

By Amy Wellington, *manager of communications*

THE RURAL ELECTRIC Youth Tour is an amazing opportunity for high school juniors and seniors to visit the nation's capital every June with nearly 2,000 of their peers from across the United States. During the weeklong trip, students visit many of the historical landmarks, from the Martin Luther King Monument, to the 9/11 Memorial at the Pentagon, to the Holocaust Museum. They have a one-on-one with their local congressional representative, usually U.S. Rep. Mike Kelly (R-16th) for Northwestern's students. If an age-appropriate musical is scheduled, the students also attend a show at the Kennedy Center.

The week is packed so full of activity, there is hardly ever down time. Every one of Northwestern REC's former Youth Tour students have said Youth Tour was the trip of a lifetime.

Last May, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association made the difficult decision to cancel the 2020 Youth Tour due to the new coronavirus pandemic. Although this news was understandable, it was heartbreaking to

pass it on to the 12 exceptional young men and women who were chosen to represent Northwestern REC on the 2020 Youth Tour event.

To help ease their disappointment, Northwestern's board of directors approved awarding each student a \$500 scholarship. The amount is small compared to the wealth of experience they would have received on the tour itself, but hopefully it will help them achieve the future goals we so admired during their Youth Tour application process.

It takes nearly an entire year to plan and schedule each Youth Tour. Special permissions for certain events and/or museums need to be obtained in advance. Accommodations need to be reserved for thousands of students, chaperones, health professionals and bus drivers. The Youth Tour planning "to do" list is endless.

In November 2020, the board of directors for Pennsylvania Rural Electric Cooperative, our statewide organization that coordinates Youth Tour each year,

decided to cancel the event for 2021. With so many COVID-19 restrictions in place at the time, it was proving to be too difficult to plan a worthwhile trip this far in advance. PREA joined more than 20 other states to do the same.

The board and management staff at Northwestern REC completely support this decision.

"With social distancing restrictions as they are now, we were going to require six Anderson buses, rather than the usual three, to accommodate the 2021 Youth Tour for Pennsylvania and New Jersey students alone," explains Bill Buchanan, president and CEO of Northwestern REC.

"This trip is such an important way cooperatives hope to positively impact our members of tomorrow," he said "It makes sense to cancel the tour altogether, rather than provide a trip with so many limitations that the students come home disappointed or frustrated."

The next Rural Electric Youth Tour is scheduled for June 2022 (dates to be determined). Student nominations will be accepted online at NorthwesternREC.com, beginning in November 2021. 🌞

Your 2020 Rural Electric Youth Tour students

- Abigail Hancox, Northwestern High School, Albion
- April Barringer, Fort LeBoeuf High School, Waterford
- Arianna Kightlinger, Meadville Area Senior High, Meadville
- Brooke Jackowski, Maplewood High School, Guys Mills
- Dylan Throop, General McLane High School, Edinboro
- Ella Vorisek, Conneaut Area Senior High, Linesville
- Gabriel Williams, General McLane High School, Edinboro
- Joesalinn Vittorio, General McLane High School, Edinboro
- Kelis Joliet, Maplewood High School, Guys Mills
- Landis Crawford, Home School, Saegertown
- Paige Gill, Cambridge Springs High School, Cambridge Springs
- Spencer Kenny, Cochranon High School, Cochranon

These students deserve tremendous amounts of kudos. Their junior and senior years turned virtual basically overnight, and special once-in-a-lifetime events were either canceled or severely restricted, yet they have proven resilient. They seem to roll with the punches and still maintain the extraordinary ambition to pursue their educational and career goals. Our hats are off to you.

Although these students were not able to participate in the Rural Electric Youth Tour due to the coronavirus pandemic, they are eligible to apply for any scholarships intended for former Youth Tour attendees. This includes the Jody Loudenslager Scholarship offered through the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association, and the Glenn English Scholarship offered through the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. More information about these scholarships can be found at NorthwesternREC.com. Best of luck in your future endeavors.

From the President & CEO

(continued from page 14a)

We hope you will connect with us whenever and wherever you can — whether that means attending our annual meeting, providing feedback on a recent visit or call with our employees, or simply downloading our app.

Northwestern REC exists to serve our members, and when we're better connected to you and our local community, we're better prepared to answer the call.

To update your contact information or to learn more about co-op products and services that can help you save, visit NorthwesternREC.com, call 800-352-0014, or chat with us online.

We look forward to connecting with you!

Cooperatively yours,
 Bill Buchanan
 President & CEO

Nov. 15, 2020, windstorm and outage

MID-AFTERNOON on Sunday, Nov. 15, 2020, winds ripped through Northwestern REC's territory, knocking power out to almost 10,000 members. Unlike most windstorms in the area, these powerful gusts continued for many hours. Trees were completely uprooted or snapped in two. Power lines and utility poles were reported down in nearly all of Northwestern REC's 10 districts. This was a major event.

All available crews were immediately dispatched and worked around the clock to restore power to all members. Weather conditions were awful. In some cases, crews would finish repairing a downed line, just to have it ripped down moments later by wind-blown tree limbs in a different section.

Northwestern REC is aggressive when it comes to maintaining clear rights-of-way. Every year, the co-op clears 500 miles of rights-of-way and rotates between substations every four to eight years, depending on the type of work being done. But this storm blew trees, limbs and other debris hundreds of feet. Clear rights-of-way were no match for this storm.

Despite the crew's best efforts, there were several members without power for nearly 40 hours. Other Pennsylvania co-operatives had also been hit hard by this storm and were not able to assist Northwestern's restoration efforts. This storm caused 95 line outages, two substation outages and at least 14 broken poles.

These long outages are not common for Northwestern REC, but with severe weather events like this one, they can and do happen. In addition to the recommendations found on the adjacent graphic (Staying Safe During an Outage), the co-op highly recommends having a backup safety plan. During lengthy outages, especially in cold weather or for members with medical concerns, plan for a secondary location to stay temporarily. This could be with family, with friends or a local warming station.

"We can't stress the importance of this backup plan enough," says Chuck Hickernell, Northwestern's safety manager. "Crews and other staff work endless hours during outages. We target the hardest or largest hit areas first, then work our way down to individual outages. Please consider investing in a generator or have a backup safe place to go."

Members with medical concerns and equipment should also contact the cooperative's member services department at 800-352-0014. Once your doctor submits the necessary forms, your account will be marked as a medical priority. This notification will pop up for dispatchers and line crews when your power is out.

Most of all, rest assured that during a lengthy power outage, crews are out there somewhere. In the middle of the night, during the weekend or a holiday, or in severe weather conditions, if there is a power outage, our crews are working. Remember to report your outage by calling 800-352-0014, option 1, or by using the SmartHub app. 🌞

STAYING SAFE DURING AN OUTAGE

We work hard to provide the most reliable service possible. Rest assured, if the power is out, we are on it!

The length of time it takes to restore your power depends on several factors, including the:



Extent of the storm's destruction



Severity of utility equipment damage



Number and extent of outages



Accessibility to damaged equipment

STAY SAFE UNTIL POWER IS RESTORED

- Stay far away and keep others away from downed power lines, which could be live and deadly.
- If you come across a downed line, immediately call 9-1-1 to report it.
- Never enter a flooded room; the water could be energized.
- If you are standing in water, do not turn on/off power or flip a switch.



Prepare for a storm by gathering these items:



Bottles of water



Non-perishable food



Portable phone charger



Prescriptions



Battery-operated radio

Flashlights



Extra batteries



Pet supplies



Blankets



Warm clothing



First-aid kit



Hand sanitizer

THANK YOU for your patience during outages. When the lights go off, we are working safely and efficiently to restore power. The safety of our employees, as well as those we serve, is our TOP priority.

Safe
Electricity.org®

For the members of tomorrow

#concernforthecommunity

Announcing the 2020 Clearly Brighter Teacher Grant recipients

AT NORTHWESTERN REC, we recognize that the children of today are the members of tomorrow. The Clearly Brighter Teacher Grant Program was designed to reach these kids by helping their teachers better afford innovative and effective educational curriculum that is not covered by traditional school financing.

Between May and September, individual teachers can apply for grants up to \$250, while teams of teachers



(two or more) can apply for grants up to \$500. Each year, Northwestern REC awards up to a total of \$4,000 through this grant program.

Educators in public and private schools, pre-kindergarten through 12th grade, as well as home-school organizations within Northwestern REC's service territory, are eligible to participate. It is not required for teachers or schools to receive electric service

from Northwestern REC. Grants are awarded for projects in any discipline and are intended to help teachers bring special, hands-on projects to the classroom.

The 2021 grant application season will begin May 1.

All applications must be submitted online at Northwesternrec.com. No project is too small, so please apply.

Questions may be referred to Amy Wellington at 1-800-352-0014 or email awellington@northwesternrec.com.

2020 GRANT WINNERS

- Emily Morris, Quiet Country Home School, Titusville: manipulatives for hands-on learning – \$250
- Brian Lane, Bethesda Trinity Center, Erie: school supply starter kits – \$500
- DeAnna Sopher, Seton Catholic School, Meadville: flexible seating COVID-19 style – \$130
- Kayla Gross, Forever Family Home School, Cambridge Springs: music enhancement – \$250
- Megan Post, Union City High School, Union City: battle of the books 2021 – \$250
- Melanie Mishler, General McLane High School, Edinboro: graphic novels for classroom – \$250
- Dixie Shaffer, Cambridge Springs Elementary, Cambridge Springs: create a book – \$200
- Nancy Wright, Main Street Elementary, Titusville: Main Street community cares – \$400

Northwestern Elementary thanks you for its 2019 teacher grant



MICHAEL WHEELER, a music teacher at Northwestern Elementary in Albion, Pa., received a \$250 Clearly Brighter Teacher Grant in October 2019. His project proposal was to add as many musical instruments as possible to his classroom so all students could participate together.

On behalf of his school, Wheeler sent us the following message, "A huge thank you to you and the Northwestern Rural Electric Co-operative Association for the grant you awarded to Northwestern Elementary. Because of the thoughtfulness of your association, the students at Northwestern Elementary are able to enjoy many new instruments during weekly music class! We appreciate it very much!"

A few of his students are pictured at left with their new musical instruments.

2021 ENERGY EFFICIENCY CALENDAR



There are so many ways you can save energy! Saving energy helps reduce your family's monthly bills – and it helps our environment. Change your energy use habits by following the monthly tips below. Keep this calendar on your refrigerator to remind family members to be energy efficient throughout the year.

JANUARY

Turn off ceiling fans when you leave room.



FEBRUARY

Instead of turning up the heat, put on an extra layer of clothing or stay cozy under a blanket.

MARCH

Turn off lights when you leave a room.



APRIL

Ask an adult to help you plant a tree to help shade your home in the summer.

MAY

Decorate your backyard or porch with solar-powered lights.

JUNE

Take short showers instead of baths.



JULY

Dry heavy linens outside on a clothesline instead of using the dryer.

AUGUST

Ask an adult to help you schedule a reminder to change the A/C filter every 60-90 days.

SEPTEMBER

Turn off running water while brushing your teeth.



OCTOBER

Unplug energy vampires, like chargers, gaming consoles and cable/satellite boxes.

NOVEMBER

Remind family members to use cold water when washing clothes.



DECEMBER

Decorate your home with energy-saving LED holiday lights.