

# Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

## Claverack REC

570-265-2167

1-800-326-9799

Email: mail@claverack.com

Website: http://www.claverack.com

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### Office Hours

Monday through Friday

7:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Jeff Fetzer, CCC, Local Pages Editor

## From the President & CEO



# Thankful for community support

By Bobbi Kilmer

THE HOLIDAYS are a time of year that many of us eagerly anticipate. The season is marked by special foods, seasonal decorations and lots of festivities. In our communities, we look forward to events such as parades, light festivals and community celebrations commemorating the holidays.

We cherish carrying on old family traditions and enjoy creating new ones. Personally, I look forward to more time spent at home with family and friends.

However, given the hustle and bustle of the season, the holidays can also offer an opportunity to slow down and reflect. For all of us at Claverack, we are grateful for you, the members of the co-op.

You see, one of our founding principles as a co-op is "Concern for Community." While our main focus is providing safe, reliable and affordable energy, we want to give back. We want to help our community thrive.

## Reflection

In looking back at this past year, I'm grateful that we were able to make a positive impact in the community. Through programs such as HOPE, funded through unclaimed property, and Operation Round-Up, funded by your contributions, we were able to help many families in the community pay their energy bills.

We are also grateful to have had the ability to help numerous non-profit organizations throughout our service territory. We have made donations to over 50 organizations this year, using funds from unclaimed property to help further their efforts in service of our communities.

There are many other ways we try to help the community throughout the year. Whether we're visiting local schools to educate students about electrical safety, providing information about our appliance and heat pump rebate programs, or helping you find ways to save energy at home, we want you to know we're here to help.

## Looking ahead

Looking ahead to 2020, we hope you will share your opinions with us. We recognize that our members have a valuable perspective, and that's why we continually seek your input.

Whether through community events, our social media channels or the annual meeting, we want to hear from you. We are led by you — the consumer-members of the co-op — and we depend on your feedback.

As we prepare for next year, we look forward to the opportunity to serve you and the greater community. On behalf of the Claverack family, we hope your holidays are indeed merry and bright! 🌟

**Holiday closings**  
Claverack's offices will be closed for the holidays on the following days:  
Tuesday, Dec. 24, and Wednesday, Dec. 25 – Christmas  
Wednesday, Jan. 1 – New Year's

# Preserving a farm-based way of life

By Jeff Fetzer

BY THE time Dick Place graduated from Elk Lake High School in the early 1960s, the Claverack member was already running his family's Susquehanna County dairy farm.

Preserving that agriculture-based way of life over the next five decades, in the face of a dairy industry in decline and several family health setbacks, required some thinking beyond the cow barn.

The Place family moved to the farm on State Route 3003 near Laceyville when Dick was 4 years old. Family circumstances required to Dick to take over the farm operation as a teenager, fresh out of high school.

In June 1966, about six months after Dick married his high school sweetheart, the former Charlotte Bennett, he purchased the farm outright from his family.

Over the next 40 years, dairying would, for the most part, sustain the Places and their two sons, Jessie and Lyle.

Charlotte, who attended Bloomsburg State College after graduating from Wyalusing Valley High School, studied to become a teacher but never entered



HERE'S LOOKING AT YOU: A group of red deer stags mills about the Laceyville property of Claverack consumer-members Dick and Charlotte Place. The Places have maintained a herd of red deer on their farm since the 1980s. Over the years, the Places have derived income from the deer in a variety of ways, including antler sales, meat sales and by offering hunts on their 300-acre wild game preserve.

the profession. Instead, she assisted her husband with running the farm and raising a family.

"She helped me milk cows seven days a week for 20 years," Dick says.

Charlotte ran all of the farm machinery, mowed hay, clipped cows and did just about everything on the farm, she says, except spread manure.

"We always enjoyed our farm life — the outdoors, the nature," Charlotte says. "You're your own boss. You're out in the fresh air. We were living what we felt was a good life."

But when she entered her 40s, Charlotte decided it was time for a change. With a long-time interest in finance and real estate, she obtained a real estate license and began selling homes.

At about the same time, the couple began exploring means of bringing additional revenue to the farm. That led

them down the deer path.

"We wanted to come up with a way to help pay for the real estate taxes on some unusable land on our property," Dick recalls, noting that their property had a sizable parcel that could not be farmed or used for pasture because it was littered with stones and contained a number of rock ledges.

A niece and nephew who were visiting the Places from Texas suggested raising fallow deer, a medium-sized deer species native to Europe that was becoming popular on game preserves and deer farms in the Lone Star State.

They began researching fallow deer farming and traveled to a Texas game preserve to learn more about the exotic animal. They liked what they heard: fallow deer can be a low-maintenance, profitable alternative to traditional livestock. They can thrive on pasture ground that would not support cattle. They reproduce well in captivity. They aren't susceptible to many diseases. The bucks grow large, palmated antlers valued by hunters. And the veni-



CATTLE FARM: After 43 years of dairy farming, Claverack members Charlotte and Dick Place sold their milkers in 2005 and turned to raising beef cattle. Today, they keep about 130 Aberdeen Angus beefers on their 500-acre farm in Susquehanna County's Auburn Township.

son is prized by epicures.

Beginning in the 1980s, the Places raised fallow deer at their Susquehanna County farm, selling their exotic livestock all over the country as breeding stock and to hunting preserves.

“You could sell the fallow deer bucks as fast as you could raise them,” Dick recalls.

He says that the deer, which have incredibly strong legs and tend to bounce when excited, could be challenging to load for transport. When Dick received a call from a potential buyer who wanted to purchase the Places’ entire herd of about 100 fallow deer in the 1990s, he jumped at the opportunity.

At the same time as the Places were expanding their fallow deer herd, they also added a much larger exotic species, red deer, to the mix. Native to Europe and Asia, red deer stags can exceed 500 pounds, grow magnificent antlers and yield mild-tasting, extremely tender, low-fat meat.

The Places acquired their first three red deer from a farmer in New York in the late 1980s. They put the deer, two females, called hinds, and one yearling male, or stag, in the same pasture area that contained the fallow deer.

“I just kept going down and looking at these red deer,” recalls Charlotte. “We were so amazed by them. We named the stag Singing Sam.”

She explains the name came from the roaring sound a red deer stag makes during the breeding season.

Unfortunately for the Places, the two hinds weren’t well-suited for breeding purposes because they were too wild, and Singing Sam’s antlers failed to develop into an impressive rack.



**ANTLERS FOR ALL:** Claverack members Charlotte and Dick Place, both avid hunters, display the shed antlers of one of the red deer raised on their farm from the trophy room of their farmhouse. Red deer antlers, which can be used to make chandeliers and knife handles, can bring a handsome price.

Still, they were intrigued by the potential for raising the majestic red deer on their property. A year later, the Places discovered a red deer breeder in New Brunswick who maintained a line of stags genetically predisposed to massive antler growth. They decided to go all-in on red deer, purchasing all of that breeder’s weaned calves over the next two years, with the goal of entering the antler business.

In subsequent years, the Places’ derived income from their red deer by harvesting and selling the antlers of their stags, Dick notes. The antlers were removed while still in velvet, the stage of antler development when the antlers are soft and still growing.

Red deer velvet is touted for its medicinal purposes and is particularly popular with adherents of natural and alternative medicines and within certain Asian communities.

“For a good many years, we raised

red deer just for the antlers,” Charlotte says.

“Then one year I decided I wasn’t going to do that any more. I didn’t like doing it, and there are a lot of other ways to make money from deer.”

So Charlotte developed a network of red deer buyers, and the couple began selling their deer to game preserves around the country, where they were used as breeding stock or for exotic game hunts. In 2001, Dick decided he wanted to offer hunts on his own farm. So he installed 8-foot fencing around 300 acres of his 500-acre property, and opened a preserve where hunters could pursue exotic red deer, as well as white-tailed deer.

“We put up the fence right after 9-11,” Charlotte says, noting that she was initially opposed to the idea. “It was by a leap of faith that we went ahead

and did that.”

When Dick suffered a heart attack in 2005 and was forced to sell his dairy cows, income from the couple’s Placewood Parke Game Preserve helped them transition to their next adventure: grass-fed beef cattle.

Two years later, Charlotte began developing health issues, later discovered to have been caused by Lyme disease, that restricted not only her activities on the farm, but which also halted her plans to open a real estate office in the family’s farmhouse.

“When I got Lyme disease, that sort of changed my life around,” she says. “It wasn’t diagnosed for two or three years, and by that time I couldn’t walk, couldn’t go up stairs.”

Charlotte continues to have recurring issues from the tick-borne disease that limit her mobility today.

After giving up her real estate prac-  
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## Farm-based way of life

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tice, Charlotte focused her energies on the Places' development of their beef cattle herd.

"I really got into the beef," she says. "I love the genetics. It's fascinating. I like learning about the history of the older bulls and the foundation they put into the herds."

The Places raise Aberdeen Angus cattle and maintain a herd of about 130. Charlotte oversees the breeding program, which primarily utilizes bulls on the premises.

"All of our beefers are grass-fed," Dick says. "We don't feed grain. Our hay and our pastures are natural. We don't fertilize with anything other than chicken manure or cow manure."

The farm sells beef by the quarter, half or whole, and the bulk of the Places' customers are individuals within a 100-mile radius.

They also sell red deer for meat. But the Places, both in their 70s, are slowly phasing out of the exotic game business. The red deer herd is down to about 20 stags and 25 hinds, and they did not allow any of their red deer to breed last year.

Dick says red deer can become quite aggressive, especially during the rut, and he worries about the possibility of a family member getting injured by one of them.

Neither Dick nor Charlotte regret the decision to diversify their former dairy operation in order to preserve their way of life.

"You can't make a living in traditional agriculture any more," Dick says. "I don't see how people survive — the corn market, the dairy market, the beef market....But it's a lifestyle. How do you have a farm like this and walk away?"

Charlotte adds that a love for the rural way of life and a willingness to adapt has kept the Places in place at their Susquehanna County farm for more than 50 years.

"We do it because we love it," she says. "We enjoy the animals. We enjoy the challenge of breeding a herd of beef where every single one is going to be the most enjoyable eating experience you've ever had. We enjoy the genetics."

For more information about Placewood Parke's beef and game farm, call 570-869-1311 or email [Cplace@epix.net](mailto:Cplace@epix.net). ☀

## Season's Greetings from all of us at Claverack

### PRESIDENT AND CEO:

Bobbi Kilmer

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

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## Rebates available when you buy Energy Star appliances

WHEN you purchase an Energy Star-rated appliance, you are conserving energy and saving money on your electric bill.

To encourage members to practice energy conservation and responsible energy use, Claverack is offering rebates of \$50 to \$100 to consumer-members who purchase qualifying Energy Star refrigerators, washers and dryers.

Energy Star certification means products meet energy-efficiency guidelines set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Energy Star-rated products are expected to help consumers reduce their energy bills, conserve energy and help protect the environment.

With Claverack's Energy Star rebate program, members not only benefit from energy savings generated from the product itself, they get the added

benefit of a direct rebate from the co-op for their purchase. For Energy Star-rated refrigerators, the rebate amount is \$100; for washers or dryers, members will receive a \$50 rebate.

To apply for the rebate through the Claverack Energy Star Rebate Program, members must:

- ▶ Purchase an Energy Star-rated refrigerator, washer or dryer in the current calendar year.
- ▶ Complete a rebate form. The form is available by clicking on the "Rebate" button on the Claverack homepage, [claverack.com](http://claverack.com), or by calling the office at 1-800-326-9799.
- ▶ Include a receipt or invoice showing the date and purchase price of the Energy Star items.
- ▶ Include a copy of the Energy Star



label from the appliance.

- ▶ Mail all documentation to: Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative, Attn: Appliance Rebate Program, 32750 Route 6, Wysox, PA 18854.

Once all documentation is received, a bill credit will be applied to your account. Rebates are available on a first-come, first-served basis. There is a limit of one rebate per appliance type per member account, and appliances must be installed within Claverack's service territory.

Please note that funding for rebates is limited and the rebate program is subject to change or be cancelled without notice.

For more information, contact the Claverack member services department at 1-800-326-9799. ☀