

Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives
serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

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Guest Column



Tips for a safe online experience

By Joe Bubacz, *Director of Information Technology*

GOING online is part of everyday life. Keeping in touch with loved ones, participating in social and cultural activities, online banking, shopping, investing, and keeping up on world events are just some of the reasons we sit down at the computer or grab our tablet or smartphone and surf the internet.

With this tremendous access comes tremendous potential for danger.

Cybercrime is growing quickly, so it's important to take steps to reduce your risk and ensure a safe and enjoyable online experience. Following are some tips aimed at helping you avoid being the victim of cybercrimes, hacking, viruses, and related problems when computing at home or with a mobile device:

Use strong passwords. Having a safe online experience starts with strong passwords. Never use your name, your child's name, your birth date or common words in your passwords. Instead, use a code with a mix of letters, numbers and symbols.

Do not share passwords. Do not share your password with anyone, online or over the phone. If you do need to provide access to your device in order to troubleshoot a problem, be sure to seek help only from a trusted source.

Think before you click. Always think before you act on an email. If you do not know the sender, if you're not expecting the email, if the email communicates a sense of urgency and requests you click on a link or icon, delete the email. Remember, any link in an email can be dangerous, even a link to "unsubscribe" can be malicious.

Be sure to examine any website thoroughly before clicking on a link or entering any personal or financial data. Look for https:// and a padlock symbol in the browser address bar. This means the site uses encryption and security to protect your information.

Take care in what you share. Be aware that what you share on the internet becomes permanent. Be cautious before you post that comment, photo, or any type of personal information. Also, be sure to log out of apps and websites when you are finished.

Stay up to date. Your computer, tablet, and phone will periodically receive updates for their Microsoft, Apple, or Android operating systems; be sure to complete these updates to obtain the most current versions and security patches. Maintain anti-virus applications on your devices and make sure to get them updated as well. Monitor your information closely, review bank statements, medical records, and other online records to verify the transactions listed are ones you initiated, and if you find something suspicious report it immediately.

Remember, cybersecurity is not one action, but a collection of steps that you can take to reduce your risk of becoming a cybercrime victim. For additional cybersecurity information, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security offers great advice and guidance with its "Stop. Think. Connect." program. You can learn more about this at <https://www.dhs.gov/stopthinkconnect>. Being alert and taking precautionary steps will help you enjoy your online experience. 

Living the sweet life

By Jeff Fetzer

“LIFE IS like a box of chocolates. You never know what you’re gonna get.”

Contrary to that famous “Forrest Gump” assertion, when you select confections to fill your heart-shaped box at a downtown Montrose candy shop this Valentine’s Day, you know exactly what you’re getting: fresh, gourmet chocolates made with high-quality ingredients by an old-school chocolatier.

The excellent taste of those Susquehanna County sweets and a desire for a challenge is what prompted Claverack consumer-member Michelle Depue of Bridgewater Township to purchase Chocolates by Leopold in 2009.

“I was a customer before I bought the business,” explains Michelle. “I love chocolate and have tasted chocolates all over the world, and I thought this was some of the best chocolate I ever tasted anywhere.”

Depue, a Montrose native who had lived out of the area for 20 years while working as a business and marketing consultant, explains that she traveled



BOX IT UP: Claverack member and Chocolates by Leopold customer service representative Glynis Morgan of Dimock pitches in to help box chocolate truffles during the hectic holiday season. The Christmas season is the busiest time of the year at the chocolate factory, located in the basement of the Montrose candy store.



HOW SWEET IT IS!: Business owner Michelle Depue displays a box of assorted chocolates inside her Montrose candy store, Chocolates by Leopold. Depue, who resides in a Bridgewater Township home served by Claverack REC, purchased the business in 2009. The former business consultant has utilized her marketing and business background to significantly expand the business, opening retail candy stores in Johnson City, N.Y., and Boalsburg, Pa., in 2015, growing its wholesale customer base, and increasing online sales through its website, www.chocolatesbyleopold.net.

internationally for her previous career. After returning to Susquehanna County, she decided she wanted to put her business management skills to work for herself in her hometown. So in November 2009, she purchased Chocolates by Leopold, a struggling chocolate factory and candy store located at 170 Church St., in Montrose.

Sweetening the deal was the fact that the business’ namesake, Leopold Schreiber, was eager to continue serving as the chocolate factory’s master confectioner and chocolatier.

“Leo is all about the chocolate and how things taste, and I am focused on how things look,” Depue says, explaining that Schreiber works to provide customers with artisan confections, and she concentrates her efforts on branding and marketing the company’s products and creating a great customer experience for in-store shoppers.

Perfect pairing

The pairing of Depue’s business acumen and marketing prowess and Schreiber’s master confectioner skills has enabled the business to thrive.

With limited retail growth potential

in a small town like Montrose, Depue focused on creating custom products for business customers, online sales and establishing a wholesale market. In eight years, the number of wholesale customers has grown from four local accounts to about 80 customers from Long Island to State College. In September 2015, Depue opened Chocolates by Leopold retail candy stores in Johnson City, N.Y., and Boalsburg, Pa., to provide additional outlets for the candies crafted in the basement of the downtown Montrose location.

During the busiest times of the year — Christmas, Valentine’s Day and Easter — the business employs about 25 workers, many of them high school and college students getting an introduction to the detail-oriented tasks of working for a candymaker.

“Chocolate is an amazing amount of work,” says Depue. “I was really surprised by how consuming it is. There has to be a lot of attention to detail, and you have to be very, very careful with the product.”

She notes that even something as simple as placing assorted chocolates in boxes requires special attention.

“If you’re holding a piece of chocolate with a glove and you hold it a tad too long, you’re going to see the cloth weave from the heat of your fingers stamped right into it,” she says. “Nobody is going to buy that.”

While Depue says her focus on presenting the company’s offerings in the most appealing way possible is important, it pales in comparison to the taste of the end product.

“How things look is important, but in the end, it’s all about Leo’s chocolates, not the box,” she says. “And Leo is really passionate about the chocolate side.”

That passion for his work is what keeps the 69-year-old Leopold Schreiber coming to the Montrose chocolate factory to blend chocolates and craft confections.

“You have to have a love of what you are doing,” he says. “That’s what makes the difference. And what I’m doing is making people happy!”

Kid in a candy store

Leopold’s introduction to the confection industry came at an early age. He was just 12 years old when he got a job cleaning the candy-making equipment at Nagel’s Candy Barn, a mom-and-pop candy factory about a block from his home in West New York, N.J.

“As I got older, they started teaching me to make candies, especially at the holidays,” says Schreiber. “That’s how it all started.”



SWEETHEART: Bernadette Harris of New Milford loads a heart-shaped box full of gourmet chocolates in advance of Valentine’s Day. Harris has worked behind the sales counter at the Montrose Chocolates by Leonard candy store the past three years. The store, located at 170 Church Street, is open seven days a week.



THE CANDYMAN: Master confectioner and chocolatier Leopold Schreiber of Montrose crafts pretzel bark by drizzling milk chocolate onto pretzel bits. Trained by old-school European confectioners while growing up across the Hudson River from Manhattan, the 69-year-old Schreiber has been making sweets since he was a teen in the 1960s.

After Schreiber graduated from high school in the mid-1960s, he went to work full time for Nagel’s, which had been in the confection business since 1921, and began honing his candy-making skills.

“We used to have these old-time confectioners come into the factory in the off-season, and I would get to work with them,” says Schreiber. “A lot of the recipes I use today for our butter crunch, our jellies, our orange and raspberry creams, were the original recipes I had learned as a kid.”

In 1973, Nagel’s relocated to a large factory in Randolph, N.J., and Schreiber was tapped to serve as manager and head candymaker at the new facility, which produced up to 2,000 pounds of chocolate product a day. He remained in that position for nearly two decades before deciding to strike out on his own.

In 1997, Schreiber opened a chocolate factory and candy store, Olde Fashioned Candies, in downtown Binghamton, N.Y. When Schreiber lost his lease for the Binghamton store in 2005, he relocated the business to its present location at 170 Church St. in Montrose.

Now semi-retired, Schreiber works

in the chocolate factory three days a week. For the past 11 years, he has been tutoring self-described “chocolate fanatic” Tom Follert of Montrose in the chocolate-making trade.

Follert, who began assisting Leopold in the candymaking business as an unpaid volunteer in 2006, today serves as the company’s production manager and has joined the ranks of chocolatiers.

While production has increased significantly during his 11-years with the company, Follert says there are no plans for Chocolates by Leopold to become a mass producer of confections.

“We have a book of the best recipes from the old European chocolate makers, as well as some of the new recipes we’ve developed,” he says. “Our recipes are small batch, so they are always fresh. The things you purchase from us didn’t come off the line long ago.”

Schreiber says the recipes all utilize high-quality ingredients including chocolates that are low in sugar.

“We use the best ingredients we can possibly get for our candies,” he says. “Our creams are cast in corn starch, the old-fashioned way, which sets us apart from a lot of places because it’s very

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Your prescription for pharmacy savings

One of the most valuable features of your Co-op Connections Card is the prescription discount offer. The card is your ticket to savings of up to 60 percent at participating pharmacies, including CVS, Rite Aid, K-Mart, Wal-Mart, Wegmans, Walgreens, Tops and Target – as well as many independent pharmacies.

In 2017, Claverack members saved nearly \$8,500 in prescription costs by showing their Co-op Connections Cards at participating pharmacies. Members saved an average of 47 percent off the retail price of their prescription purchases by simply showing their Co-op Connections Card in 2017.

You can discover all of the participating pharmacies in the region by linking to the Co-op Connections website from our homepage, www.claverack.com, or by calling 1-800-800-7616.

If you do not have a Co-op Connections Card, please contact the Claverack member services department at 1-800-326-9799.

PAiD program saves time, stamps and late-fee worries

IF YOU are looking for ways to simplify your life, Claverack's Payment Automatically Drafted (PAiD) program may be for you.

By signing up for Claverack's automatic bill payment program, you can avoid the hassle of searching for stamps, licking envelopes and worrying about whether your payment arrives on time.

When you participate in the PAiD program, the payment for your electric bill is automatically drafted from your checking or savings account or charged to a credit or debit card each month.

Even if you are out of town, your bill will be paid on time. You'll never have to worry about paying a late fee again.

Here's what happens after you sign up:

- ▶ The first automated payment will be made the second billing period after we receive your completed form. The first month will be a trial run to verify account numbers. No money will be moved.
- ▶ You will continue to receive a monthly bill statement.
- ▶ Your bill statement will alert you to the date that your payment will be automatically withdrawn.

With Claverack's PAiD program, paying your electric bill is simple. There are no sign-up charges or transaction fees. And you can cancel PAiD at any time by notifying us in writing.

To sign up for PAiD, please complete the online application that can be found on our website, www.claverack.com, by clicking on "Payment Options" under the Your Bill drop-down menu at the top of the homepage. For more information, please call 1-800-326-9799.

Deadline to apply for Youth Tour nears

High school juniors interested in competing for a chance to win an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, D.C., this summer have until Friday, Feb. 16, to submit an application.

The 2018 Rural Electric Youth Tour, a weeklong sightseeing excursion to the nation's capital that mixes fun and education, will take place June 10-15.

Coordinated annually by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association since 1964, Youth Tour is expected to draw more than 1,800 students to Washington, D.C., this summer. While there, students have the opportunity to explore the capital's historic sites, visit the Smithsonian, make friends with Youth Tour students from throughout the United States, meet with federal legislators, and learn about electric cooperatives and the cooperative movement.

Youth Tour is open to all high school juniors whose parents or legal guardians are members of Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative. Complete contest rules and online application form can be accessed by visiting the Claverack website, www.claverack.com, and clicking on the Youth Tour icon on the left side of the homepage.

For more information about the Youth Tour and 2018 agenda, call Claverack's Wysox office at 570-265-2167 or 1-800-326-9799 or visit your high school guidance counselor.



Living the sweet life

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labor intensive.”

Not all of the candies Leopold creates come from old-time recipes, however. The chocolatier notes one of the reasons he left employment with the Nagel's chocolate factory was because



MASTER CONFECTIONER: In addition to using fourth-generation German chocolate recipes to produce candy favorites like butter crunch, cherry cordials and mint delight, chocolatier Leopold Schreiber also designs and creates custom chocolate pieces, like this to-scale windmill made for a corporate customer's special event.

there was so much focus on production that he didn't have time to experiment and create his own candy recipes.

Over the years, some of Leopold's creations have included wine truffles, stout beer caramels, espresso truffles, and peanut butter and jelly candies.

“We have the old popular standards, but we are always looking to innovate,” Schreiber says. “It's been a lifelong passion for me. At my age, I'm still doing what I love to do, and hope to be doing it for quite a few years yet.”

While “you never know what you're gonna get” from the box of chocolates called life, Depue says she is optimistic Leopold will continue making confections at his namesake business until he's into his 80s.

“There is constant research coming out touting the health benefits of chocolates,” she says.

And nobody loves chocolates like Leopold Schreiber. ☀