

# Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives  
serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

## Claverack REC

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1-800-326-9799

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Website: <http://www.claverack.com>

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**Doug Nichols, Director, Operations**

**Shelley Young, Director, Financial Services**

**Brian Zeidner, Director, Member Services**

### Office Hours

Monday through Friday

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

Jeff Fetzer, Local Pages Editor

## From the President & CEO



## Ready to move on from a most challenging year

By Bobbi Kilmer

I WAS always taught as a child to never wish your time away. This was usually in response to wishing that summer vacation would start or wishing for the arrival of the Christmas holiday.

This year, I'm hearing a lot of people, including myself, wishing for the end of 2020 and anticipating the start of a new year that we all hope will be healthier and less stressful.

We are extremely grateful, despite the challenges the year brought forth, that we have had a safe and productive year.

Although COVID-19 cases seem to be increasing in our area in recent weeks, our employees are working hard to stay safe while doing their jobs. I so appreciate their efforts during this difficult period as we all struggle to balance our normal responsibilities plus the added challenges of having children attend school virtually, taking care of our elderly family members, cancellation of vacation plans and other important events, and the risk of illness within our families.

We know many of our members have struggled, too. Last month we worked with hundreds of members to avoid disconnection of their electric service. We were able to use our HOPE member assistance program to apply grants toward electric bills, and we were able to make referrals to other

community agencies to help our members get the help they need.

We have also been able to use our unclaimed property fund to provide grants to organizations that help our local residents. In September, we granted funds to the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank, the Weinburg Food Bank, the Interfaith organizations in Susquehanna and Wyoming counties, and Grace Connection, a Bradford County organization formed by local churches to help those in need.

While we know the COVID-19 pandemic won't disappear completely when we move the calendar ahead, I certainly hope we will see some improvements in the situation. We are making plans for our work projects in 2021, and we are excited to be moving ahead with a new advanced metering system, facility enhancements and system improvement projects.

Of course, these initiatives will be directed by your new chief executive. Your board of directors is making progress on its selection of the next president & CEO of Claverack REC. Stay tuned in the coming weeks for an announcement!

I hope your holiday season is safe and enjoyable — whether you are on the road or staying at home. We'll do our best to keep your homes merry and bright! 

### Holiday closings

Claverack's offices will be closed for the holidays on the following days:

Thursday, Dec. 24, and Friday, Dec. 25 — Christmas

Friday, Jan. 1 — New Year's

# Forest of Lights making holidays merry and bright

By Jeff Fetzer

A SUSQUEHANNA County golf club changed course in November by pulling the plug on golf activities for the year in order to tee up a dazzling drive-thru Christmas light display aimed at delivering holiday cheer.

Tall Pines Players Club in Friendsville is hosting its second annual Forest of Lights display on club grounds throughout December. The Forest of Lights features dozens of unique lighting displays and over 1,000 trees festooned with holiday lights that are stationed on both sides of a driving path along the first five holes of the golf course.

In its inaugural year, the Forest of Lights drew an estimated 40,000 attendees between Thanksgiving week and the end of the year, according to Tom Follert, who coordinates the display for Tall Pines.

“The response was really overwhelming,” Follert says. “People would come for dinner, and then they would go through the light show, and when they got done with that, they stopped in at Santa’s Workshop, where the kids could come in and see Santa, have some hot chocolate and do arts-and-crafts-type activities. The overall experience was really magical. We created this little slice of authentic Christmas.”

Unfortunately, Follert says, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Tall Pines is



**HIGH LIGHTS:** A drone captured this aerial photo of the mile-long drive-thru display loop during last year’s inaugural Forest of Lights at Tall Pines Players Club near Friendsville in Susquehanna County.

unable to host Santa’s Workshop this year. But Santa will still be making periodic appearances at this year’s light show, waving to visitors in their cars as they enter the Forest of Lights.

Follert says the club, which is served by Claverack, added about 15 new LED light displays to the mile-long loop this year, including several custom displays with a local flavor.

“We commissioned our lighting company to create a display to represent Salt Springs State Park,” Follert says. “It will be a waterfall that will flow into a stream and then into a pond.”

Another new addition will be a display highlighting the Elk Lake High School golf team, which plays its home matches at Tall Pines.

Chris O’Reilly, operations director for Tall Pines, says the custom light displays with local ties, including representations of the Susquehanna County Courthouse, St. Joseph’s Church and the Starucca Viaduct, were among the most popular attractions during last year’s Forest of Lights, and all will be included in the display again this year.

“It seemed like people talked about



**WRAPPED UP:** Tall Pines Forest of Lights coordinator Tom Follert, left, and golf course operations director Chris O’Reilly stand next to a section of trees near the clubhouse decorated with holiday lights. Golf course personnel wrapped more than 1,000 trees with LED light strands in September and October in preparation for this year’s light display.

the local displays more than anything else,” O’Reilly says.

When Claverack member Adam Diaz purchased Tall Pines Players Club in March 2019, the new owner quickly put in motion a plan to host a holiday light display on the club’s grounds.

“Adam was very forward thinking in the way he approached not just improving the grounds and facilities, but he immediately put in the path for the



**TUNNEL OF LIGHT:** A car enters a colorful archway as it proceeds along the Forest of Lights driving path. Event organizers report it takes about 20 minutes to half an hour for visitors to drive around the light display loop.

light show,” Follert says. “There was nothing like this to serve the Southern Tier of New York and the Binghamton area, and we’re so close to the border that he saw it as a great opportunity to provide something special to those areas, as well as our local community.”

On a busy weekend evening last year, as many as 1,000 vehicles would funnel through the Forest of Lights, according to Follert. With COVID-19 expected to put a damper on typical holiday gatherings and festivities, the event coordinator is optimistic for even higher attendance this Christmas season.

“We are hopeful that, because people are feeling a little cooped up, we will see more turnout,” Follert says. “We don’t really know what to expect because COVID is such a wild card. But our setup is COVID friendly. Everyone will be socially distanced in their own cars.”

While the first-year light show attracted the majority of its visitors from the southern tier of New York and Northeastern Pennsylvania, Follert says visitors from as far away as Canada and Buffalo, N.Y., made the trek to Friendsville to view the 2019 display. A fair number of area residents made repeat trips to the golf course to see the light show, O’Reilly adds.

“A lot of grandparents would bring

one set of grandkids, and then they’d bring another set of grandkids the next time,” he says. “One of our golfers came five times last year. He said each visit was as exciting as the first because he got to entertain a different set of grandkids.”

Follert, who had worked as a chocolatier at Chocolates by Leopold in Montrose before he was hired to coordinate the inaugural Forest of Lights in the summer of 2019, said designing and laying out the light display has been a challenging but rewarding endeavor.

“We have a blast with it,” he says. “The Christmas spirit is more than alive — it is rekindled for many,” he says. “I can’t speak highly enough about our workers out in the cold and directing traffic each night, the people who were in the workshop last year — they loved it as much as anybody. Everybody wanted to be here.”

O’Reilly says he especially enjoyed taking in the sights and sounds of the Forest of Lights from the back deck of the clubhouse as families wended their way around the illuminated car loop each evening.

“I would go out on the deck a couple of times each night to make sure the traffic was moving and everything was running smoothly,” he recalls.

“Throughout the whole course, you



**SEASONAL HELP:** Santa and his helper, Jodi Clary, owner of Lily Pad Florist in Montrose, pose in Santa’s Workshop held in conjunction with the 2019 Tall Pines Forest of Lights. Due to COVID-19, Santa’s Workshop was canceled for this year’s event, but Santa is expected to make periodic visits to the golf course throughout the month to greet visitors.

could hear how excited the kids were just driving through the light show. They were yelling and laughing and singing. It made all the hard work worth it.”

The display will be open to the public Wednesday through Sunday from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. through Dec. 30. The Forest of Lights will be closed Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Additional event days may be added as the holiday season progresses, and Follert recommends following the Tall Pines Facebook page for notification of schedule changes, as well as appearances by Santa Claus.

Between the light display and the Tall Pines restaurant, about 40 to 50 employees will be working through the holiday season. He notes the restaurant, which is open at reduced capacity because of coronavirus restrictions, is

*(continues on page 12d)*



**LIGHTED PATH:** Against the backdrop of a beautiful December sunset, vehicles cruise along the display route during the 2019 Tall Pines Forest of Lights. Event organizers estimate more than 500,000 LED lightbulbs are required to illuminate the golf course for the event. The Tall Pines Players Club and most of the light show is powered by Claverack.

**Forest of Lights**

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likely to be booked solid with reservations through the end of the year by the time this article is published.

To accommodate those who wish to grab a bite to eat but are unable to secure a table in the clubhouse restaurant, Tall Pines will be offering a limited drive-thru menu this year. Visitors will be able to place orders before taking the 20- to 30-minute trip through the Forest of Lights and pick up their order as they leave.

For more information about the Forest of Lights, you can visit the Tall Pines Players Club website at tallpinesplayersclub.com or their Facebook page, or call 570-553-4653. 🌟

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

**PRESIDENT & CEO:**

Bobbi Kilmer

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS:**

Charles Bullock, Danice Fairchild, Dr. Robert Faux, Robert Fearnley, Angela Joines, Gary Hennip, Charles McNamara, Timothy Tewksbury, Anthony Ventello

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**Energy assistance program offers help with heating bills**

**IF YOU NEED** assistance paying your heating bills or have a heating emergency, help may be available through the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

LIHEAP helps families living on low incomes pay their heating bills in the form of a cash grant. Households in immediate danger of being without heat can also qualify for crisis grants.

A cash grant is a one-time payment sent directly to the utility company or fuel provider and credited on your bill. These grants range from \$200 to \$1,000 based on household size, income and fuel type. These grants do not have to be repaid.

Crisis grants are available to help those who have emergency situations in which they are in danger of being without heat. Those situations include: having broken heating equipment or leaking fuel lines; lack of fuel; having utility service terminated; or being in

danger of not having fuel or having service terminated. Crisis grants are sent directly to the vendor or utility.

If you have a heating emergency, or for more information about LIHEAP, call your county assistance office or the toll-free LIHEAP hotline at 1-866-857-7095.

You can apply for energy assistance directly through COMPASS, the state's online health and human services benefits application site, by visiting [compass.state.pa.us](http://compass.state.pa.us).

Below are the LIHEAP income requirements for the 2020-21 heating season.

Household Size	Maximum Income (before taxes)
1	\$19,140
2	\$25,860
3	\$32,580
4	\$39,300
5	\$46,020
6	\$52,740
<b>Add \$6,720 for each additional member of the household</b>	

**Co-op gift certificates make great stocking stuffers**

Still looking for holiday gift ideas? Gift certificates from your electric co-op make an ideal holiday stocking stuffer.

Give the gift of electricity to that hard-to-buy-for relative or to the family down the road struggling to make ends meet. A Claverack gift certificate could brighten the holidays for someone in your life.

Simply fill out this form and return it to Claverack with your check for the amount of the gift.

Recipient's Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Claverack Account Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Amount of Gift: \_\_\_\_\_  
 From: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
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 Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Mail the certificate to: \_\_\_\_\_