

Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives
serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

Claverack REC

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Vice Chairman

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Secretary/Treasurer

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Charles R. McNamara, Zone 8
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President & CEO

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Steve Allabaugh, Director, Engineering

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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



Some good news for Claverack members

By Bobbi Kilmer

LET'S TALK about some good news! If you take a look at your recent electric bill, you will see your share of Claverack's 2020 capital credits retirement.

In April, your board of directors authorized a \$1.7 million return of capital credits to existing and former members of the cooperative. This marks the 10th straight year that a capital credits retirement has been authorized, and since 2011, we have returned over \$12 million in capital credits to members and former members of the cooperative.

Current members who were actively receiving electric service from Claverack in 1987, 2008 and 2019 saw a capital credits retirement. Members who received service during the retirement years but who are no longer on our lines will receive a capital credits retirement check in the mail.

We are able to return capital credits to our members due to our positive financial results. At the end of each year, if we collect more in revenue than we need to operate, those excess margins are allocated to our members based on their purchases during the entire year. These allocations are recorded, and the allocations are paid to the member during the retirement process.

Because many of our members have been impacted by the COVID-19 crisis, our board and management team acted quickly, and we were able to process the retirement a month earlier than normal. Our hope is that the bill credit will provide some help to those who are struggling with their monthly bills.


We are taking other steps to help

our members during these challenging times. We have expanded the eligibility for our member assistance program, HOPE (Helping Others Purchase Electricity), to include families who have been impacted by the COVID-19 crisis because of job loss or other financial hardship. We have also increased program funding \$100,000.

Our employees are also working with many members on payment arrangements and levelized billing. If you are having a problem paying your bill, please contact our office.

We know there are many community organizations that are helping families in need. We have supported a variety of these organizations through donations made possible by our ability to use unclaimed property. Most recently, Claverack and our neighboring electric cooperative, Tri-County, each announced a \$5,000 donation to the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank. These donations will be matched by CoBank, one of our national lenders whose support of the cooperative program and rural America has been outstanding.

Finally, I'd like to encourage those who are able to consider participating in our voluntary Operation Round-Up program. Details about how you can help your neighbors in need appear inside this edition of *Penn Lines*.

Thanks to our many members who support programs like Operation Round-Up. We will get through these unprecedented times by helping one another. And a little sunshine won't hurt — I hope the summer weather is helping brighten your spirits! 

A pilot's project

Co-op launches aerial inspection program for rights of way

By Jeff Fetzer

CLAVERACK took its vegetation management program to a higher level in April when it began using a drone for aerial inspections of co-op rights of way.

The co-op's right-of-way program manager, Joshua Baublitz, has been tasked with getting the drone project off the ground. He has obtained the Federal Aviation Administration's Small Unmanned Aircraft System license, which allows him to pilot the drone for business purposes, and began performing test flights with the co-op's new drone in early April.

"For right-of-way management, drones make a lot of sense," he says. "Instead of walking the right of way, crossing a field or climbing a mountain-side, I can send the drone out, record what I am looking at and have it come back in a fraction of the time."

Baublitz says having the ability to cover more ground in less time will aid him as he coordinates and carries out the co-op's ramped-up right-of-way management approach, which was instituted after he was hired as Claverack's utility forester in 2018.

"It's not taking over the full aspect of auditing our contract right-of-way work and going out and checking everything, but it's an additional tool that we have that is very helpful," he says. "If I send the drone out and there's something that doesn't quite look right and needs further investigation, obviously, I would still go out and walk it, but for the majority of things, I can fly the drone and save a lot of time."

The drone is fitted with a camera and zoom lens that allows for both still photography and video. Baublitz can view the video being recorded while the drone is in flight on a display housed on the remote control unit that is used to pilot the aircraft.

The drone will primarily be used to view right-of-way corridors to aid in planning for future right-of-way management work, as well as to inspect

work that has been performed by contract right-of-way-crews.

"It will make me more efficient in my job, which means I can cover more miles of line a year than I can by walking, so it increases productivity," he says.

For instance, he notes he recently used the drone to inspect a 4,000-foot section of right-of-way in the Meshoppen area that had recently been trimmed by contract crews. The flight took about 5 minutes. If he had to walk that same line section, it would have taken more than half an hour.

He can also use the drone to quickly collect data from transformers or conduct pole-top inspections that otherwise would have to be performed by lineworkers, either by climbing a pole or through use of a bucket.

"It could also be used in storm restoration, to find problems on the line and things of that nature," he says. "The possibilities are only limited by our budget and our imagination."

There are limitations to the drone's use, he adds. Baublitz is not permitted to fly the drone at night without a waiver, nor can he fly it near airports or over people. He is only permitted to fly the drone below 400 feet above ground level. He says the drone will typically be flown at heights of less than 100 feet above ground level.

"I also have to be able to see the drone while I am operating it," he says.



INCOMING: Joshua Baublitz, right-of-way program manager for Claverack, pilots the co-op's new drone under an electric right of way. Baublitz will be utilizing the drone to efficiently inspect the cooperative's right-of-way corridor and audit work conducted by the co-op's tree-clearing and spray contractors.

"I can't fly it outside of my field of vision without a waiver, and I can't fly it in foggy conditions."

After two weeks of test flights, Baublitz says he was very impressed with the co-op's new right-of-way management tool. He says it handles windy conditions well, and has a collision-avoidance safety feature that prevents the drone from getting too close to objects such as trees, people or vehicles.

Right-of-way management has always been a critical component of Claverack's mission to provide its members

with reliable electric service. Trees growing on and along utility rights of way have historically been the top cause of power outages for Pennsylvania's electric consumers.

When the emerald ash borer arrived in the northern part of the state about five years ago and began decimating the abundant local ash tree population, Claverack took aggressive steps in an effort to manage the problem and help reduce future outages.

The co-op began upping its right-of-way management budget and, in 2018, created the position of utility forester

that Baublitz now holds in order to have an in-house professional forester to coordinate and oversee right-of-way management activities.

Under Baublitz' direction, Claverack has significantly increased the miles of co-op right of way that are maintained annually through its tree-clearing and herbicide spray program.

Baublitz, a remote-control aircraft hobbyist for about seven years, says he expects that use of the co-op's new drone will be a cost-effective tool that will help him meet his right-of-way management goals. 🌞

Co-op continuing with plans for annual meeting move to county fair

IN EARLY MARCH, Claverack announced it would be holding its 2020 annual meeting on Wednesday, Sept. 2, at the Wyoming County Fairgrounds in Meshoppen in conjunction with the Wyoming County Fair.

The move to the new meeting venue was intended to engage additional co-op members while also lending support to the local agricultural community and the fair itself.

The co-op's board and management team remain hopeful that the annual meeting will take place as scheduled. However, uncertainty surrounding future public gatherings due to the COVID-19 coronavirus has required that the co-op begin developing contingency plans for the meeting, should the fair be canceled or it is otherwise determined that we cannot safely host a large public gathering at that time.

With the annual meeting day three months away and the path of the coronavirus unknown, we are also continuing to make plans to conduct the meeting in conjunction with the fair.

While the co-op is still ironing out some of the details for the event, following is a rundown of our plans for the day.

Claverack employees will be stationed at our tent located in the midway beginning at 10 a.m. Employees will be available to answer member questions and conduct registration for the annual meeting. The tent will have seating available for members who wish to take a rest or grab a bite to eat in the shade throughout the day.

The business meeting will take place at 3 p.m. under the tent. The meeting will feature the announcement of director election results and brief reports by Claverack President & CEO Bobbi Kilmer and board Chairman Chuck Bullock. At the conclusion of the meeting, attendees will be eligible for a chance to win a \$1,000 electric bill credit.

Each Claverack member who registers on Wednesday will receive a \$10 credit on their electric bill and \$25 in food coupons, which can be used to purchase food from any food vendor on the fairgrounds throughout the duration of the fair. Members can register from 10 a.m. until the fair gates close Wednesday evening.

The annual meeting coincides with the Wyoming County Fair's Senior Citizens Day, so those 65 and over will be admitted to the fairgrounds that day at no cost. Members under the age of 65 who pay for fair admittance will be eligible for an additional bill credit of up to \$20.

We will keep members informed of any changes to our annual meeting plans through *Penn Lines*, the Claverack website and social media. Stay tuned. 🌞

Operation Round-Up

MEMBERS HELPING MEMBERS

Financial hardships created by the COVID-19 pandemic have caused many cooperative families to struggle keeping up with their energy bills.

You can help some of your neighbors in need by participating in Claverack's Operation Round-Up program.

This voluntary program allows you to assist members of the cooperative experiencing difficulties paying their electric bills. Participating in the program is inexpensive – less than \$1 a month – and allows you to help make a difference in a neighbor's life.

CONTRIBUTING IS EASY

The concept is simple. Claverack rounds up your monthly electric bill to the next dollar amount. The difference between the round-up amount and your actual bill amount goes into our member assistance fund.

For example, if your electric bill is \$100.32, then you would pay \$101. The extra 68 cents goes into our member assistance fund for needy families of the cooperative. The average yearly donation is \$6.

CAN YOU SPARE MORE THAN CHANGE?

If you'd like to help your fellow members even more during this unprecedented time of financial uncertainty, we have created additional options for you to contribute more than the traditional round-up amount.

Members can add an extra dollar amount to their monthly donation. Simply enter the even dollar amount that you would like to add to the Round-Up form that can be found on our website, claverack.com, or call our office and ask your member service representative to make the change for you. Your bill will reflect the total amount donated each month.

If you would prefer to make a one-time donation to Operation Round-Up, that option is also available. Enter the one-time amount in the associated field on our online Round-Up form, and we will add that to your account. With the next bill you receive, the amount of your donation will be added to the total amount due, and you will see it listed as "Roundup Amt."

BE A GOOD NEIGHBOR

If you would like to help others, Operation Round-Up is an easy way to do so.

Sign up today to start helping others by calling us at 1-800-326-9799, or sign up through the Claverack website by clicking on Operation Round-Up under the "Your Bill" drop-down menu at the top of the screen.



Seven high school students selected for 2020 Youth Tour

DUE TO the COVID-19 pandemic, the National Rural Electric Youth Tour scheduled to take place this month was canceled for the first time in the history of the event.

Claverack had selected seven high school juniors to participate in this year's Youth Tour, a weeklong tour of the nation's capital that, until this year, had been held annually for more than 50 years. We wish to acknowledge the students who were selected to participate and let you know a little bit about each of them.

Selected on the basis of an application, essay and extracurricular activities, the following high school students were chosen as Claverack's Youth Tour representatives:

Daniel Williams, son of Margaret Williams and Scott Williams, is a junior at Northeast Bradford High School. He is president of the National Honor Society, plays basketball and participates in track and field, and had served as class president his freshman and sophomore years. He enjoys sailing, sports, church activities and business. His major study interest is mathematics, and his career goal is to "use mathematics to help people."

Carina Beebe, daughter of Larry and Hope Beebe, is a student at Wyalusing Valley Jr.-Sr. High School. She is vice president of the junior class, participates in cross country and track and field, and has performed in her school's spring musicals for six years. She participates in chorus, early morning jazz, Leo Club, student council, Youth Leadership and is a member of the National Honor Society. Carina enjoys reading, singing and playing piano. Her major study interest is engineering, and her career goal is "to make a difference."

Bridget Bendock, daughter of Bryan and Patty Bendock, is a junior at Montrose Area High School. She is president of her school's Future Business Leaders of America chapter and is a member of student council, Key Club and

Spanish Club. Bridget is the reigning Harford Fair Queen. She serves on the Harford Fair Youth Board and has participated in 4-H, basketball, track and field and cross-country. She aspires to become a pediatric physician assistant following high school.

Logan Carter, son of Amber Moore and Jim Elchack, is a junior at Wyalusing Valley Jr.-Sr. High School. He participates in band, chorus and orchestra and has performed in the spring musical for six years. He is active in Braintrim Youth Group and works at The Wiser Choice Restaurant. His career goal is to work in health care as a registered nurse.

Holly Geyer, daughter of Lisa Geyer, is a student at Blue Ridge High School, where she serves as junior class secretary. She is a member of the National Honor Society, plays in the band and participates in track and field. She has also participated in Leo Club, SADD and the Northeast Wind Ensemble. She enjoys geocaching and skiing.

Justin Hiduk, son of Tom and Christy Hiduk of Wyalusing, is a home-school student. He has participated on the Wyalusing Valley Jr.-Sr. High School cross country, and track and field teams. He has participated

in 4-H, served as a junior day camp counselor at Stoney Point Camp and participates in his church youth group. He enjoys hunting, fishing, kayaking, nature photography and woodworking.

Lauryn Jones, daughter of Richard and Jennifer Jones, is a student at Northeast Bradford High School, where she serves as secretary for the junior class. She plays basketball and runs cross country, and performed in the school's musical. She is a member of the National Honor Society, student government association and has served as a Guthrie VolunTEEN. She enjoys thrift shopping, swimming, listening to music and relaxing in the sun. Her career goal is to become a physician assistant. 🌞



Bridget Bendock



Lauryn Jones



Daniel Williams



Logan Carter



Holly Geyer



Carina Beebe



Justin Hiduk

Keep in touch with us on Facebook

Looking to keep up with the latest news involving your local electric cooperative? Join us on Facebook.

By "liking" Claverack REC on Facebook, you will receive updates about major power outages, current events and activities involving the cooperative, as well as information about system projects, photos and other items of interest.

To find us on Facebook, simply click on the Facebook icon on our homepage at claverack.com. You can also view our most recent Facebook posts by checking out the Facebook feed on the right side of our homepage.

Office Closing
Claverack will be closed Friday, July 3, in observance of Independence Day