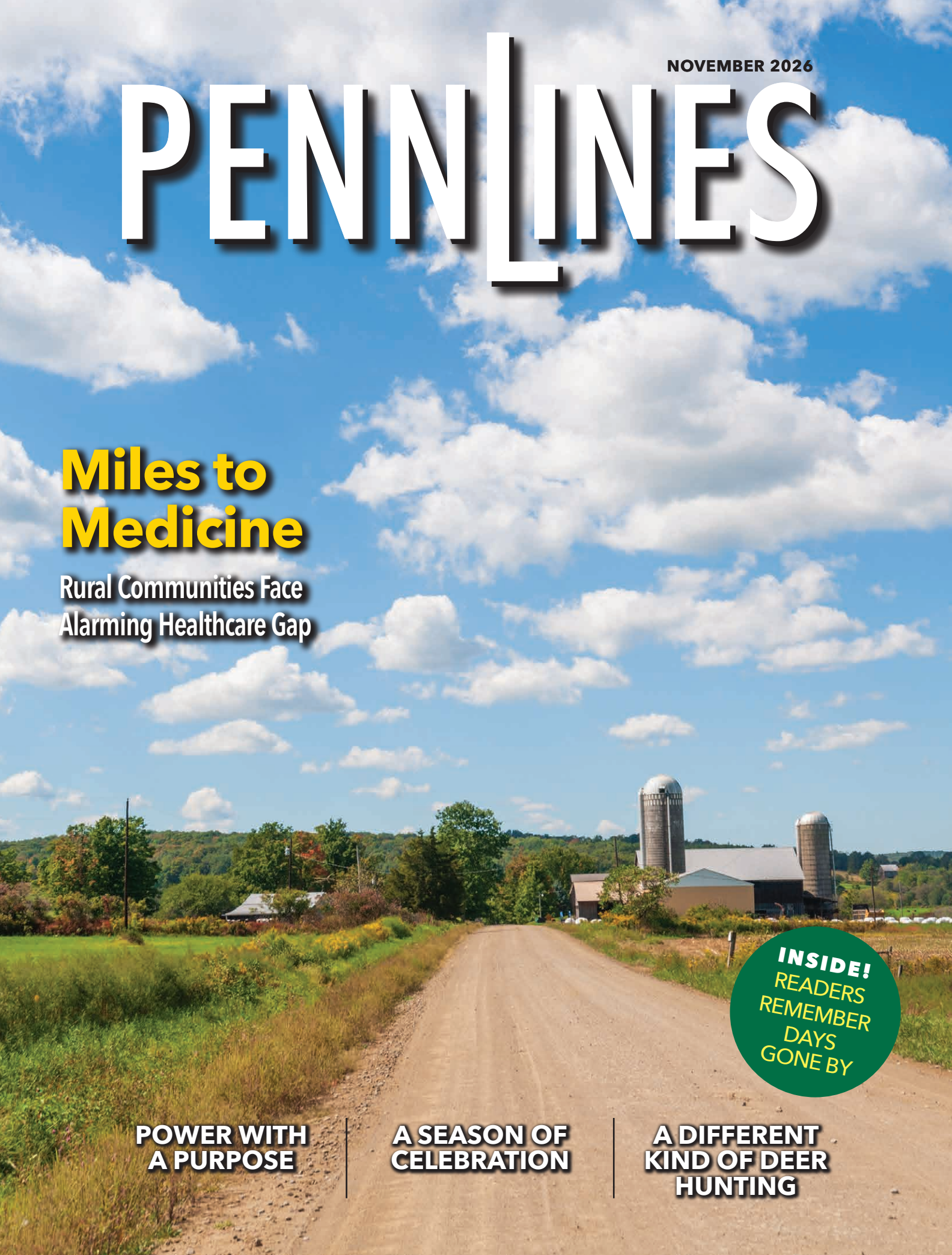
NOVEMBER 2026

PENNLINES

Miles to Medicine

Rural Communities Face Alarming Healthcare Gap



INSIDE! READERS REMEMBER DAYS GONE BY

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NOVEMBER

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Celebrating 60 Years

A Heartfelt Thank You in Honor of Thanksgiving



JILL ERCOLINO

THANKSGIVING HAS ALWAYS BEEN ONE of my favorite holidays. There's something comforting about gathering with the people you love, sharing a good meal and spending an afternoon enjoying each other's company.

This year, my sister will be hosting our family. As usual, everyone will arrive with a favorite dish to share — all kinds of pies, potato filling (my grandmother's recipe) and good, old broccoli casserole. There will be grandparents and kids of all ages, lots of conversation, probably a little chaos and more food than any of us can possibly eat.

There will be empty chairs, too, where two very special women once sat. We lost them in 2026. For me, their absence will be a reminder of how much the people in our lives mean to us and how fortunate we are for the time we have together.

That kind of gratitude isn't just limited to family. I've felt it all year as we've marked the 60th anniversary of *Penn Lines*, a milestone that's really about people — in particular, our readers who have welcomed this magazine into their homes for six decades.

Each month, we share stories about your rural communities and the people who make them special. While a lot has changed since that first issue in October 1966, the loyalty of our readers has remained constant.

One of my favorite parts of our anniversary coverage has been introducing readers to some of the remarkable people who have been with us for decades. Among them is 87-year-old Ila Jane Diehl, a member of New Enterprise Rural Electric Cooperative, who has read *Penn Lines* since the beginning.

She has never missed an issue.

I love that.

Think about how much life has unfolded over those 60 years. Children have grown up, families have welcomed new generations, and communities have evolved. Through it all, *Penn Lines* has remained a familiar presence in her mailbox and in so many others.

It wasn't by accident.

We spend a great deal of time thinking about what goes into each issue: the stories we tell … the photographs that capture a moment … the people and places that deserve recognition. It's gratifying to know that our work matters to those who receive it. And when readers take the time to write, call or share their own stories, it means even more.

Your support is something we never want to take for granted.

This Thanksgiving, like many of you, I'll be thinking about the people who have shaped my life, including those who are no longer here, and how fortunate I am to have a family who still gathers for the holidays.

And as we prepare to close out our anniversary year, I'll also be thinking about the readers who have been part of the *Penn Lines* family, some for as long as the magazine has existed.

From all of us on the magazine's staff, thank you for your loyalty and kind words. But most of all, thank you for making room for us in your lives — and on your kitchen table.

Happy Thanksgiving.

JILL ERCOLINO
EDITOR

PENNLINES

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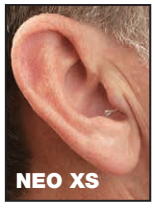
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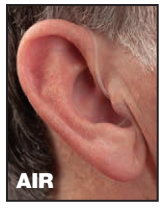


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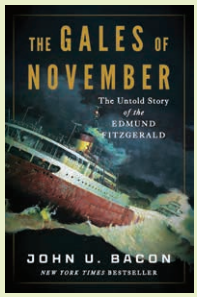
EDITOR'S DESK

THE GALES OF NOVEMBER

As a third-grader, I earned some undeserved notoriety thanks to a popular song that hit the airwaves that year: Gordon Lightfoot's "The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald." For the next 50 years, people would ask whether I was related to *that* Fitzgerald. I wasn't. And trust me, my Uncle Edmond had it worse.

On Nov. 10, 1975, the SS Edmund Fitzgerald disappeared in a fierce storm on Lake Superior. All 29 crew members were lost. The 729-foot freighter had left Superior, Wis., carrying more than 26,000 tons of iron ore bound for steel mills near Detroit.

Most of us, however, know the Fitzgerald through Lightfoot's song – a ballad that turned a maritime disaster into a story generations would remember. The record played endlessly in our home, and its lyrics haunted me as I tried to understand what had happened to the ship and its crew: *"They might have split up or they might have capsized / They may have broke deep and took water."*



Fifty years after the tragedy, writer John U. Bacon borrowed a line from the song for the title of his excellent book, *The Gales of November: The Untold Story of the Edmund Fitzgerald*. Bacon places the ship within the broader story of Great Lakes shipping in postwar America. He details how the Fitzgerald was part of a vast network of mines, railroads, ports, ships and steel mills that helped power the nation's industrial growth.

But Bacon also accomplishes what Lightfoot did so well in his ballad: He humanizes the story. Drawing on more than 100 interviews with relatives, friends and former crewmates, he examines not only the sinking of the ship, but he also delves into the lives of the people aboard and their families.

In doing so, Bacon reminds us that infrastructure is more than steel, machinery or miles traveled. Its true measure is found in the people who build it, operate it and depend upon it. It's an idea that resonates deeply with the story of electric cooperatives – an industry built by people willing to go the extra mile, and who understand what storms can do. It's something I try to keep in mind, especially when the gales of November come early.



PETER A. FITZGERALD
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

KEEPING CURRENT

NEWS • IDEAS • EVENTS



PENNLIVE.COM

BYE, BYE BUNKERS: The Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC) plans to eliminate more than 100 World War II bunkers in Lycoming and Union counties. The PGC says it will preserve 16, which will be open to the public at certain times during the year.

CLEANING UP

Game Commission to destroy most WWII bunkers in Lycoming, Union counties

Some of Pennsylvania's World War II bunkers will soon be no more.

The Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC) announced recently that it plans to destroy most of the historic bunkers in Lycoming and Union counties that were built to store TNT manufactured at a nearby highly classified facility.

While there were once 149 bunkers, the PGC's long-range plan is to preserve only 16, which will be open to the public during its annual game land tours in September and October. The rest will be destroyed and the land restored to wildlife habitat.

The PGC, which owns the land west of Route 15 in southern Lycoming County and northern Union County, says the oval-shaped bunkers have attracted partiers and vandals, leading to a significant amount of trash and graffiti at the sites.

A few years ago, it was revealed that in 1943 and 1944, four of the bunkers were secretly used to store 50 tons of uranium metal turnings from the Manhattan Project, which developed the atomic bomb.

BIRDS OF A FEATHER

Piping plover marks milestone in Erie County

For a bird barely bigger than a sparrow, the piping plover has staged an impressive Pennsylvania comeback. After disappearing from the state for more than 60 years, the endangered shorebird has now nested at Erie County's Presque Isle State Park for 10 consecutive years.

The comeback was hardly a "shore" thing. Presque Isle provides Pennsylvania's only breeding habitat for the Great Lakes piping plover, whose sand-colored eggs

can nearly vanish against the beach. As recreation increased and nesting areas became harder to protect, the birds abandoned the park in the mid-1950s.

A federal recovery plan released in 2003 helped set the stage for their return. Three plovers were spotted at Presque Isle in 2005, and a partnership led by the Pennsylvania Game Commission later brought together federal and state agencies and conservation organizations to restore habitat, monitor nests, and safeguard chicks.

The population remains small and fragile, but the decade-long nesting streak offers an encouraging sign, officials say.

WELCOME TO THE COMMONWEALTH

Chobani to open operation in Lehigh Valley as part of largest Pa. ag investment ever

The largest single private investment in Pennsylvania agriculture is coming to the Lehigh Valley.

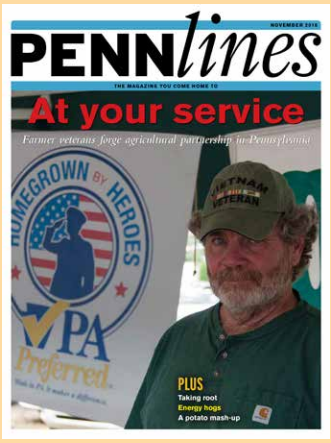
State officials announced in September that Greek yogurt-maker Chobani will establish its first dairy product manufacturing operation in Upper Macungie Township. The business is expected to create approximately 900 jobs over the next five years.

When operating at full capacity, the facility will source more than 3 billion pounds of milk a year, equivalent to about 30% of the milk produced in Pennsylvania today. Production at the 1.5 million-square-foot facility is expected to begin next year.

Officials said the Commonwealth will provide $50 million in loans and grants to support infrastructure and site improvements at the plant as well as broader regional economic development projects. The Commonwealth will also make $127 million in loans and grants available to eligible Pennsylvania dairy farmers to meet the new demand for milk products.



TIMELINES



NOVEMBER 2016

A decade ago, *Penn Lines* showcased the Homegrown by Heroes-PA Preferred Program, which encompassed 13 veteran-owned farms throughout the Commonwealth. The initiative took shape after veterans approached the state Department of Agriculture to create an initiative that would recognize service members involved in farming. The article highlighted Terrace Mountain Alpacas in Huntingdon County, still owned by Valley Rural Electric Cooperative member Bob Baker, a Vietnam veteran. "We got into [raising alpacas] because we knew, going into retirement, it would give us something to do and keep us active," he said in the 2016 article.

NOVEMBER



REMEMBRANCE DAY

On the evening of Nov. 14, a luminary will be placed on each grave of the 3,512 Civil War soldiers buried at Gettysburg National Cemetery, 97 Taneytown Road. The free, public ceremony will commemorate the cemetery's November 1863 dedication. For more, visit gettysburgfoundation.org.

CREATE A TREE

The Evergreen Studio in Tunkhannock, Wyoming County, will host a ceramic Christmas tree workshop at 5 p.m. Nov. 21. The cost is $85 per person, and all attendees will receive supplies to create their own designs. Registration is required. For more, visit facebook.com/theevergreen-studiotunkhannock.



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DECK THE HALLS

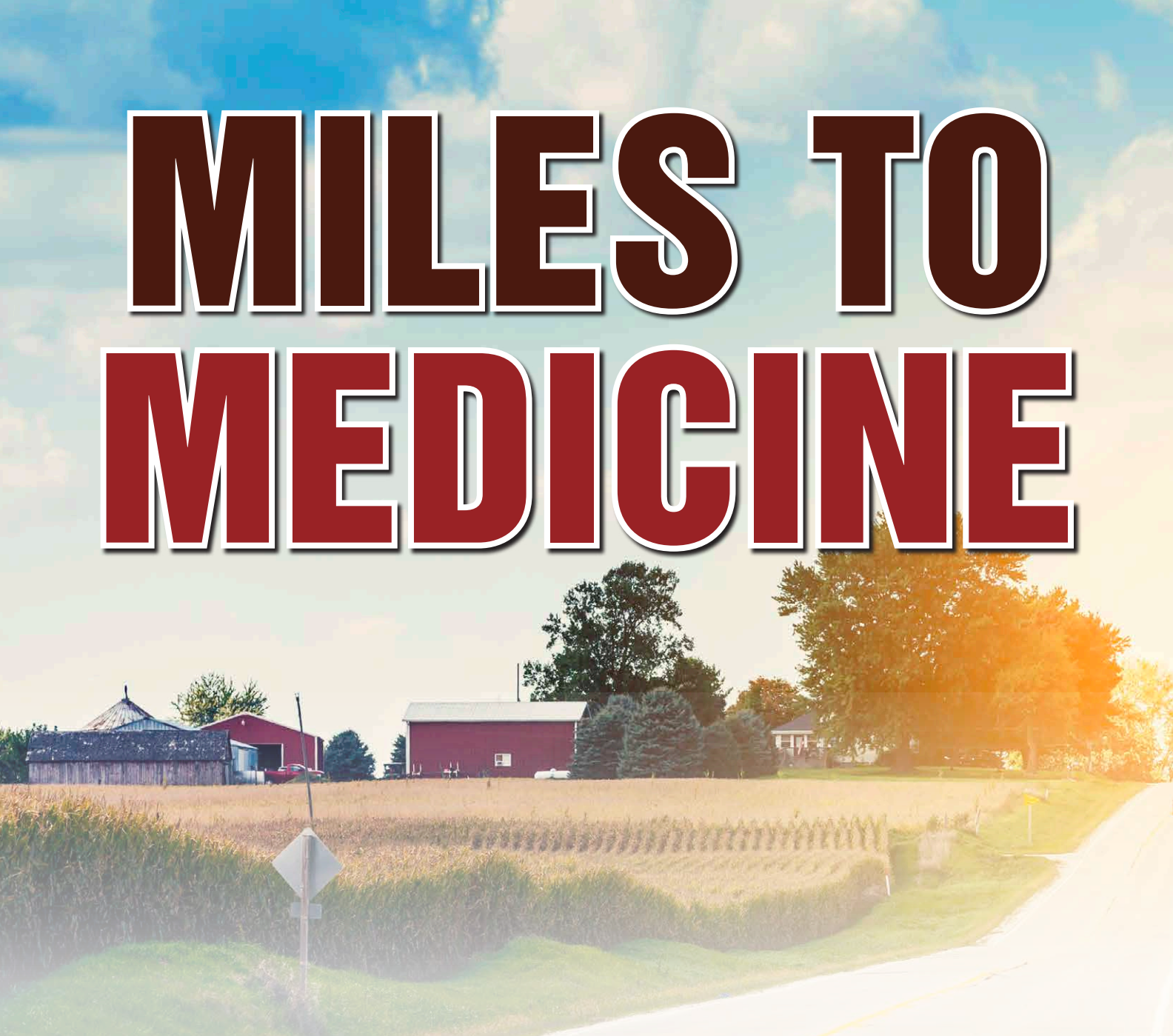
Live reindeer, holiday shopping and a teddy bear clinic will all be part of the annual Festival of Trees at 1 Sassafras Pier in Erie Nov. 27 to 29. The free event will also feature more than 80 professionally decorated trees in the Gallery of Trees. Learn more at supportahn.org

CHRISTMAS IN THE WILDS

Eat breakfast with Santa in Emporium, Cameron County, as Christmas in the Wilds kicks off in Town Square. The free event, Dec. 4 and 5, will feature a parade, tree lighting and even a story with an elf. For more, visit facebook.com/CameronCountyChamber.



MILES TO MEDICINE



Debbie* thought she was having a heart attack.

It was the end of August, and as a retired medical professional, she knows a thing or two about health crises. Debbie lives in rural Crawford County in a retirement village staffed with a competent crew of nurses ready to provide care.

Still, confronted with this emergency, her daughter, Cindy*, couldn't calm the "What ifs?"

What if her mother's condition worsened and snowballed into something that required more immediate and specific care? Would she be in a position to receive that attention before it was too late?

Cindy isn't alone. As hospitals close and specialists and other healthcare professionals become scarce across Pennsylvania's rural regions, thousands of residents — many of them aging — share the same concerns. Often, they face long drives for routine and urgent care, and when they arrive, the facilities are overcrowded and the wait is long.

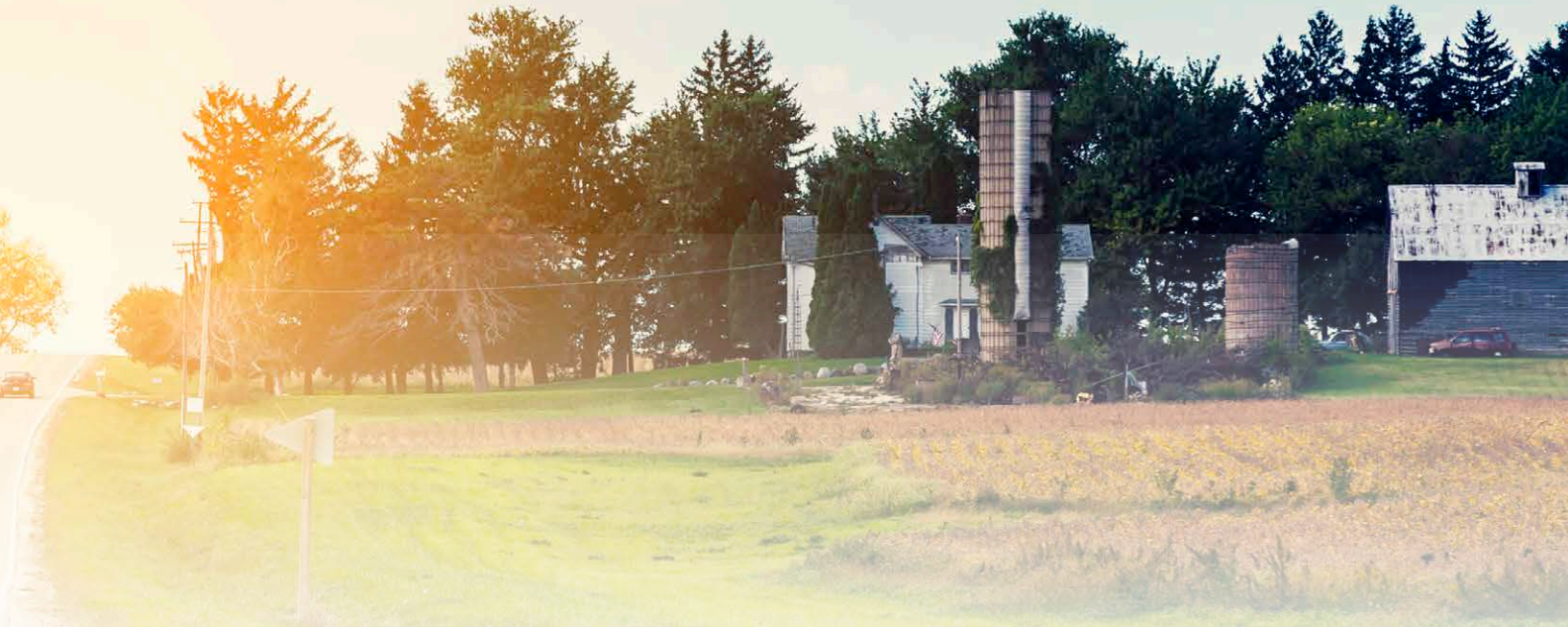
"I'm always concerned with where we live and what's immediately available," Cindy says the afternoon after her mother's visit to the emergency room in nearby Meadville. "She's stable now and even though she was nervous she was having a heart attack, that was not the case.

"Seeking treatment at a small, independent hospital … they just don't have the resources available that a larger health system, like Allegheny Health Network, Cleveland Clinic or University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, does. They do the best they can with the resources they have, but I think the entire healthcare system right now is overwhelmed.

"It's been a wild 48 hours."

Rural Communities Face Alarming Healthcare Gap

COLIN P. McGUIRE
Senior Editor/Writer



Will it get better?

This wasn't the first time the mother-daughter duo experienced the pitfalls of requiring urgent care in their area, a region served by Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative (REC). A few years ago, Cindy took Debbie to the hospital when she had problems after surgery. They checked in around 7 that night, and Debbie wasn't treated until after 2 the next morning.

Cindy understands the reasons for the backlog: A friend who works in the emergency room told her that since the COVID-19 pandemic brought the country to its knees six years ago, healthcare providers feel like they have been working nonstop. With people leaving the industry with regularity and an aging population throughout Crawford, Erie and Warren counties, she knows there's a mountain of factors contributing to the scarcity of services.

And yet, she continues to wonder when, how or if it will ever get better.

"Mine isn't just one personal experience," Cindy explains. "You can talk to anyone, and they'll tell you they've had challenging circumstances, too. This is a topic of conversation in a lot of places. I've talked to people who live in these smaller population pockets and they all kind of tell the same story.

"There's a primary feeling," she adds, "and that feeling is frustration."

The Center for Rural Pennsylvania, an advocate for Pennsylvania's nearly 3.4 million rural residents, has studied rural healthcare issues extensively. In one recent

**Editor's note: Debbie's and Cindy's names have been changed to protect their identities.*

report, done in partnership with Penn State University, researchers confirmed what patients like Cindy, her mother and others have been experiencing: that rural hospitals continue to face significant workforce, service and access challenges.

"This research provides the General Assembly with important Pennsylvania-specific evidence about the challenges these hospitals face," Sen. Gene Yaw (R-Lycoming), chairman of the center's board, says. "As we consider the future of rural healthcare, maintaining access to essential services for rural residents must remain at the center of the conversation."

That need is becoming more urgent as hospitals continue to close across Pennsylvania.

The Pennsylvania Municipal League reports that more than two dozen hospitals have shut down since 2016, a trend that's expected to accelerate. In another study, the Hospital and Healthsystem Association of Pennsylvania (HAP) warns that a dozen or more facilities could close in the coming years without state intervention.

Lawmakers are taking action. Recently, state Sen. Lisa Baker (R-Luzerne), who represents constituents in cooperative territories, introduced legislation that would let eligible facilities convert to Rural Emergency Hospital status. The designation would preserve emergency and outpatient care while providing financially vulnerable hospitals with an alternative to closing.

While the legislation is a step in the right direction, rural hospitals will need more solutions like it to overcome the challenges they face.



Paying the price

Penn Highlands Healthcare, which has facilities in Clearfield, Huntingdon and Jefferson counties — all served by rural electric cooperatives — reported recently that more than a third of the Commonwealth's hospitals are operating on impossibly thin financial margins, the result of recent cuts in Medicare and Medicaid reimbursements. Traditionally, providers have used this funding to offset their overhead for such things as staff, equipment and facilities.

But, according to HAP, Medicare and Medicaid have been underfunding Pennsylvania hospitals by $3.6 billion annually, and Medicaid reimbursement rates in the Commonwealth are 11 percentage points lower than the national average. As a result, most hospitals are being paid below the cost of the care they deliver.

In 2025, federal Medicaid changes also reduced eligibility for people across the country. In Pennsylvania, the Department of Human Services (DHS) estimates that more than 310,000 Pennsylvanians will lose access to these benefits, Press Secretary Brandon Cwalina says.

"Because hospitals are legally required to provide care regardless of a patient's ability to pay," he says, "stripping Medicaid coverage from Pennsylvanians will cause rates of uncompensated care to skyrocket, threaten the closure of at least 25 rural hospitals that rely heavily on Medicaid revenue, and further strain Pennsylvania's already over-whelmed health system."

To combat the problem, the state has secured $193 million in federal funding to support its Rural Health Transformation Plan. The five-year effort is focused on improving access to essential health services in communities most impacted by federal Medicaid spending cuts.

Oh, baby

Meanwhile, some rural hospitals, like Warren General in Warren County, are being forced to eliminate services. In January, citing a sudden change in physician availability and difficulty in recruiting doctors, the hospital shut down its labor and delivery services.

Now, expectant mothers in the county, which is served primarily by Warren Electric Cooperative, have two choices when delivering: travel to UPMC Hamot in Erie, which is about 70 miles from Warren General, or head out of state to UPMC Chautauqua in New York, which is about 20 miles away.

Warren County is part of what the Center for Rural Pennsylvania has dubbed a "maternity care desert," which encompasses seven other bordering counties — Cameron, Clarion, Clinton, Elk, Forest, McKean, and Potter — and is home to an estimated 35,000 women of childbearing



PHOTO COURTESY OF MHEDS

EXPANDING CARE: Maggie Jarmolowicz, left, and Alivia Haibach are part of the leadership team at the Multi-Cultural Health Evaluation Delivery System (MHEDS) in Erie County. The organization, which provides healthcare for people regardless of their ability to pay, is on track to receive a grant that will allow them to operate a mobile unit in Crawford, Erie and Warren counties. With rural Pennsylvania facing a widening healthcare gap, the idea is to bring services to the people, not the other way around.

age. The issue, however, goes much deeper. According to the center, 23 of Pennsylvania's 67 counties do not have a hospital that provides labor and delivery services.

"It's a major issue in rural Pennsylvania," Cwalina says. "In counties like Elk, Potter and Warren, OBGYN shortages have left nearly half of rural women more than 30 minutes from the nearest birthing hospital.

"All Pennsylvanians deserve access to quality healthcare — no matter where they live."

If you ask Patti Jackson-Gehris how to fix Pennsylvania's rural healthcare problems, she'll give you four ideas almost immediately.

She would know. As the regional president for UPMC North Central Pa., she oversees facilities in Muncy, Williamsport and Wellsboro, regions served by Sullivan County REC and Tri-County REC. Having more than 30 years of experience of healthcare leadership under her belt, she boiled the most pressing points down to food insecurity, workforce, funding and technology.

"Food is health and wellness," she says. "If people don't have access to a stable, healthy amount of food, it causes so many issues and diseases. We also continue to need exceptional nurses, but it's really hard to attract that type of talent to these types of communities.

"Then there's legislation out there that causes significant concerns with reimbursements and costs," she continues. "One in five people with Medicaid will lose that coverage in Pennsylvania. Uncompensated care in hospitals is rising, and if we have fewer Medicaid people to take care of, state funding is at risk. Plus, we want to leverage technology and look at innovative ways it can reduce the cost of delivering care to people in rural areas."

While Jackson-Gehris is optimistic about the healthcare system's ability to take care of rural communities, she was adamant about the need for facilities to be proactive and embrace change.

"Staying the same is not an option," she says. "We're going to have to look different three, five, 10 years from now. We must find ways to change and redesign the way we deliver care. Healthcare and hospitals are critical to our state and communities, and we understand the great responsibility of that. We will do the hard work to make

PHOTO COURTESY OF UPMC



Patti Jackson-Gehris

sure we can provide the care that's needed, but it will have to look different."

In Erie County, a healthcare organization founded in 1972 is taking on that challenge.

Mobilizing healthcare

Maggie Jarmolowicz gets a lot of questions, but one tops them all: "Do I have to go into the city for that?"

As chief medical officer of the Multi-Cultural Health Evaluation Delivery System (MHEDS), Jarmolowicz is witnessing Pennsylvania's healthcare challenges firsthand along with their impact on rural residents. Operating three locations in Erie, MHEDS provides programs, including primary care, preventive, and behavioral health services, to patients regardless of their ability to pay.

"Erie is a very unique community," she says. "It goes from country to city to country again. For people who have to go into the city for healthcare, it completely re-routes their day-to-day activities. If a harvest doesn't match up with a medical appointment, people will say, 'This won't work for us,' and go without getting the care they need."

To combat the problem, the center applied for — and is on track to be awarded — a grant for a mobile medical unit that will serve Crawford, Erie and Warren counties. The idea is to bring healthcare to the people, not the other way around. Staff will help rural residents manage chronic diseases with regular screenings, early intervention and health coaching.

"We're going to have to look different three, five, 10 years from now. We must find ways to change and redesign the way we deliver care."

– Patti Jackson-Gehris

If everything goes according to plan, the mobile unit will be up and running by next summer and open to anyone in those counties who needs its services.

"Rural residents face a higher risk of heart disease, cancer and strokes than those living in urban areas," says Jarmolowicz, a member of Northwestern REC. "And they have to travel twice the distance to take care of any medical needs they might have. So this is not only an emergency issue for people, but it also deals with longevity and quality of life."

The project came together after MHEDS learned one of its nurse practitioners would be willing to staff the unit, CEO Alivia Haibach says. And, now, what she once labeled a "field-of-dreams" project is on track to become a reality in 2027.

"I want to get to people who can't get to us," Haibach says. "Transportation issues in Erie County cause a problem with chronic disease rates — you can map it. The further you are from a doctor, the worse your health problems are. In rural Warren County and rural Crawford County, there are places where you can't even get stable internet for telehealth visits.

"Maggie and I know," she adds. "Her dad was a dairy farmer, and my dad was a grape farmer. He wasn't taking a day off from grape farming unless his leg was falling off. But if we can bring the doctor to [people like] him, we know we can get [their] medical issues taken care of."



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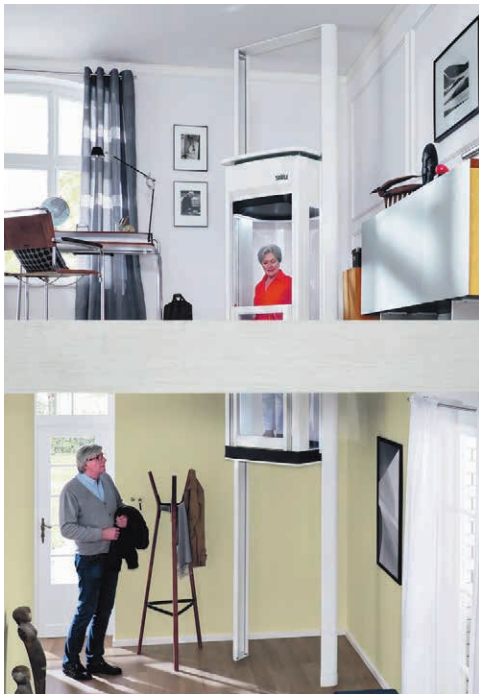
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Power With a Purpose

MICHAEL T. CRAWFORD, SENIOR TECHNICAL EDITOR

ELECTRIC UTILITIES SET RATES BY evaluating many factors. From energy use to maintenance costs, investor-owned utilities (IOUs) and member-owned cooperatives weigh these factors in an almost identical fashion, but with one key difference — who matters most.

IOUs set rates to generate a legally authorized return for investors. And lately, lawmakers have been questioning whether those returns are too high.

"The phrase of the day is 'return on equity,' which is essentially the profit investor-owned utilities are allowed to earn for their shareholders on the infrastructure they build," explains Matt Leonard, manager of government and regulatory affairs for the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association (PREA) and Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc. (Allegheny). "Return on equity is not — and never has been — part of how cooperatives set rates. A good return on investment for a cooperative is one that leads to consumer-members saving money."

In Pennsylvania and New Jersey, there are 14 rural electric cooperatives, and all are owned by the members they serve. That means the people who set the rates pay the rates, too, so making electricity as safe, reliable, and affordable as possible is a top priority for your cooperative's board of directors. And if a cooperative collects more revenue than it needs, the board returns the money to its members in the form of capital credits.

Eighty years ago, these cooperatives created Allegheny to provide them with affordable, wholesale power. Since then, Allegheny has invested in generation resources to better manage energy costs for your cooperative. Today, Allegheny has a 10% share of the Susquehanna Steam Electric Station in Luzerne County, owns the Raystown Hydroelectric Plant in Huntingdon County and has long-term power purchase agreements with the New York Power Authority. Allegheny secures the rest of its members' energy needs — about 40% in 2025 — on the open market through a competitive bidding process.



MEMBER-OWNED GENERATION: The Renewable Energy Assistance Program supports consumer-member investments in small generation systems, such as wind turbines, anaerobic digesters and solar units. It's part of Allegheny Electric Cooperative's "all-of-the-above" energy strategy to meet members' needs.

"We are constantly evaluating our needs, monitoring weather forecasts and electric use trends to anticipate how much energy our members will need," says Dan Vargo, PREA/Allegheny senior power supply coordinator. "We spend months weighing price and risk, making sure each purchase is going to have the most positive outcome possible for consumer-members."

Because each cooperative is unique, Allegheny also supports consumer-member investments in small generation systems, such as anaerobic digesters, wind turbines and solar units. Through the Renewable Energy Assistance Program (REAP), Allegheny provides grants to cooperatives to help cover costs associated with the installation of these systems. These consumer-member-owned systems provide excess energy to Allegheny.

"Allegheny and its member cooperatives recognize the value of an 'all-of-the-above' energy strategy to meet our members' needs," says Todd Sallade, PREA/Allegheny vice president – power supply & engineering. "REAP reflects the tradition of cooperation among cooperatives with cost-effective solutions to energy challenges."

REAP is just one tool to help cooperatives and their members manage energy costs, Sallade adds. Allegheny's Coordinated Load Management System (CLMS), for example, was developed to help consumer-members reduce their energy use during periods of high demand, such as extremely hot days, when power costs are the highest. This shared effort keeps electricity costs in check by taking pressure off the whole system.

"CLMS operators in Harrisburg shift the energy use to off-peak hours without consumer-members having to think about it," Sallade explains. "The more volunteers, the bigger the impact."

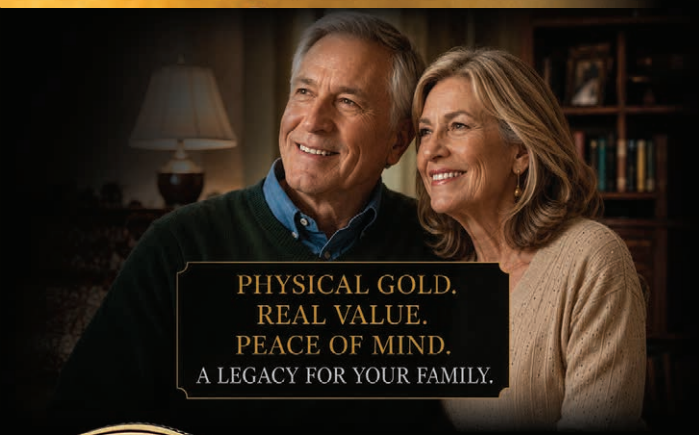
Visit alleghenyelectriccoop.com to learn more about CLMS and REAP.

***

ALLEGHENY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC., based in Harrisburg, Pa., is the wholesale power provider for the 14 rural electric cooperatives in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. The cooperative has a proud history of investing in sustainable energy solutions to benefit the communities it serves while providing reliable energy at an affordable price.

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Local Lore

Valley Rural Electric Cooperative

What's in a Name?

"Standing Stone" or "Huntingdon?"

As legend has it, the Borough of Huntingdon, which is located in Valley Rural Electric Cooperative's service territory, didn't always go by that name. The story dates back to the 1750s, when early settlers came across a stone, described as being 14 feet high. This led to its proclamation as the Town of Standing Stone in honor of the rock that sat in the center of the community.

This was all well and good until William Smith, the provost of the University of Pennsylvania, came along in 1767 and gave the town a new name: Huntingdon.

Still, the old name stuck. As late as 1776, a military map designated the area as "Standing Stone, Huntingdon." Even these days, visitors will encounter Standing Stone Coffee Company and Standing Stone Elementary School.

But the name's staying power does not necessarily make the story behind it historical fact. Just ask the Huntingdon County Historical Society.

"The name of Standing Stone for the spot where the Town of Huntingdon stands originated at a now-unknown date," a disclaimer on the society's website reads. "In the 1740s, two famous travelers observed and made note of a stone pillar or marker. Its dimensions were 14 feet high and 6 inches square. No other feature — no carvings nor inscription — was observed. It was soon noticed that the marker — the original Standing Stone — had vanished.

"At that point," the statement adds, "the folklore and the legends began filling in the blanks. In the opinion of Huntingdon County Historical Society's researchers, nothing about the stone can be claimed as historical."

Historical or not, it sure does make for a fun story.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE BOROUGH OF HUNTINGDON

STANDING TALL: In the mid-1700s, early settlers traveled into the area we now know as the Borough of Huntingdon and gave the area the name "Standing Stone." The Standing Stone monument, shown above at its 1996 dedication, honors the town's past.



Main Office: Huntingdon, Pa.
Consumer-members served: 22,616
Website: valleyrec.com



CALLING ALL KIDS, ages 5 to 17:
Show off your artistic skills!

Each month, we'll feature the artwork of our young readers (or our readers' youngsters), inspired by something they've read in *Penn Lines* or seen on their travels. Paints, pencils, crayons, clay, sand – any physical medium is OK! You may send digital photos of the creation to CommunityCorner@prea.com, but please: no digital artwork.

Please include the artist's name, age and electric cooperative, plus a 25- to 50-word description of the art.



Autumn Art

This month's artwork comes from Maggie Wickwire, 6, who is the granddaughter of Brenda McPherson of Wysox, a member of Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative. Created in Maggie's kindergarten class, the image is made out of construction paper and paint. To mark the change in season, Maggie said, "The red birds are sleeping in the trees at winter time." Thank you, Maggie, for sharing your artwork with us!

Maggie Wickwire, age 6,
Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative

Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative

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C&T Enterprises, Inc. is a jointly owned subsidiary of Claverack (Wysox, Pa) and Tri-County (Mansfield, Pa) Rural Electric Cooperatives. C&T provides shared management and support services for the two parent electric cooperatives, the cooperatives' telecom affiliates of Revolution Broadband and Tri-Co Connections, and C&T's subsidiary utilities of Wellsboro Electric Co. (Wellsboro, Pa), Citizens' Electric Co. (Lewisburg, Pa), and Valley Energy (Sayre, Pa), a natural gas distribution company.

Guest Column

Thankful for Hospitality



BRIAN ZEIDNER

THE HOLIDAY SEASON MAKES ME reflect on the blessings in my life, and sometimes people will ask me about my most memorable Thanksgiving. It was in 1987.

I had just joined the U.S. Air Force and was headed to Texas for basic training at Lackland Air Force Base. That Thanksgiving, I was in a high-stress environment, far from home and missing my family, but the hospitality of complete strangers made that holiday a special experience.

The base had an Adopt-an-Airman Program for Thanksgiving Day. Local families could host trainees in their homes for the holiday. The family who selected me welcomed me warmly, provided a delicious meal, and encouraged me to call my parents and talk as long as I wanted — at their expense. In those days, long-distance rates applied, and a lengthy phone call home was an expensive treat. Unlike other calls home, there was no line of airmen waiting to call home themselves, urging me to hurry up.

The meal was especially memorable. In basic training, you ate quickly, did not talk and left the dining facility before you became the target of some infraction. An unhurried meal with a caring family and meaningful conversation was something to be treasured, as were the pie, relaxation, and football games that followed.

I was touched by their kindness and generosity toward a stranger who was far from home and facing a lonely holiday. I will never forget how they made me feel: welcome, valued and appreciated. Drill instructors do not do that.

During my more than 21 years working for Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative, I have often felt the same way because of the hospitality of our members. My co-workers and I have frequently been the recipients of special experiences during our travels.

Many years ago, Rich and Catherine on Barclay Mountain appreciated our appliance advice and rewarded us with homemade cookies. Angelo from Montrose shared his special coffee blend. Ed from Laceyville gifted us honey from his hives, and Tony from Tunkhannock shared a jar of pickled peppers along with his recipe.

Gail from Meshoppen served tea and educated me on the history of cooperative leadership. She later helped me sort and label our photo archives. Bob from Mehoopany allowed us to use his 1955 truck at our 75th annual meeting. And Francis from Towanda encouraged me to take on an old motorcycle restoration project.



THE KINDNESS OF MEMBERS: A Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative member once allowed the co-op to display his 1955 truck at its 75th annual meeting.

These are just a few examples of the members who have touched my life with their kindness and generosity. There are many others, and I am grateful for every one of them. Hospitality seems to be an inherently rural quality and, in my opinion, electric cooperative members exemplify it.

When the leaves change and the cold winds begin to blow in late November, I reflect on that Thanksgiving experience from long ago.

I am warmed by memories of the hospitality of strangers and the lasting friendships that developed because someone cared about me.

BRIAN ZEIDNER
DIRECTOR OF MEMBER SERVICES

Balcony Solar:
A New Technology with Important Considerations

BRIAN ZEIDNER, DIRECTOR OF MEMBER SERVICES

YOU MAY HAVE RECENTLY HEARD the term "balcony solar" in the news. Also known as "plug-in" or "plug-and-play" solar, these are small solar energy systems designed to offset a portion of a home's electricity use. Unlike traditional rooftop solar installations, balcony systems are typically portable. Panels can be mounted on a balcony railing, porch, patio, fence, shed, garage, a small rack or other sunny locations around the home.

Balcony systems are gaining attention because they provide renters, apartment dwellers and homeowners with limited roof space with a way to participate in renewable energy generation.

A typical system includes one or more solar panels, a small inverter, mounting hardware, and a cord that plugs into a household outlet. The appeal is easy to understand. These systems are marketed as simple, lower-cost devices that may help reduce the amount of electricity a home draws from the grid during sunny periods. Because they are often advertised as "plug-and-play," some consumers view them as just another household appliance.

But are they risk-free?

However, members should understand that plug-and-play does not mean risk-free. These products generate electricity and feed it into a home's wiring. Most household electrical circuits have been designed with the expectation that power will flow in one direction: from the breaker panel to outlets, lights and appliances. A plug-in solar energy system introduces power from the opposite direction.

If other equipment is operating on the same circuit, parts of that circuit could become overloaded if the breaker does not respond as expected. Overloaded wiring can overheat and may create a fire or shock hazard. Industry experts continue to assess how electrical codes, product standards and safety requirements should evolve to safely accommodate this emerging technology.

It is also important to understand that balcony systems are grid-connected devices. Although they plug into a wall outlet, they remain connected to the larger electric system through your home's wiring. Unlike traditional solar installations, these systems do not go through Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative's (REC) formal interconnection process and are not subject to the same established requirements and safety protocols.

Also, members should not assume there is a significant metering or billing benefit from simply plugging in one of these devices. In most cases, the electricity produced is intended to offset electricity consumed within the home at that moment.

At Claverack REC, we recognize that renewable energy technologies continue to evolve, creating new opportunities for consumers. We do not discourage members from exploring renewable energy options. In fact, we believe informed members make the best decisions for their homes and families.

Our goal is to serve as your trusted energy adviser. That means helping members understand not only the benefits of new technologies, but also the responsibilities and potential hazards that may accompany them.

Do your research

Electricity is dependable and useful when systems are properly designed, installed and maintained. However, improper installations, uncertified equipment or modifications to a home's electrical system can create serious safety concerns. Before purchasing a balcony solar energy product, take time to research the equipment,

BEFORE YOU BUY BALCONY SOLAR
SAFETY TIPS FOR MEMBERS

- Do not assume plug-in solar products are appropriate for every home.
- Review available product safety certifications before making a purchase.
- Have a qualified electrician evaluate the outlet and circuit where the system is connected.
- Avoid plugging a balcony solar system into a circuit that already serves large electrical loads.
- Understand that plug-in solar systems are not the same as traditional interconnected solar installations.
- Do not assume you will receive metering credits or significant billing benefits.
- Contact Claverack REC or visit our Renewable Energy Resource Center at claverack.com/renewables-center to learn more about renewable energy options, interconnection requirements, and electrical safety.

review available safety certifications and consult a qualified electrician.

We also encourage you to contact our engineering department at 800-326-9799 to understand potential interconnection concerns, including the risk of backfeeding electricity onto the grid and the serious safety hazards that may result.

If you have questions about how renewable energy equipment may interact with Claverack REC's electric system, please contact us. Claverack REC remains committed to providing reliable information to help our members make safe, informed energy decisions today and in the future.

***

Note: This article was developed using information from the Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI) report, "Assessing the Technical Landscape for Rolling Out Balcony Solar in the U.S.," along with Claverack REC's operational and safety guidance.



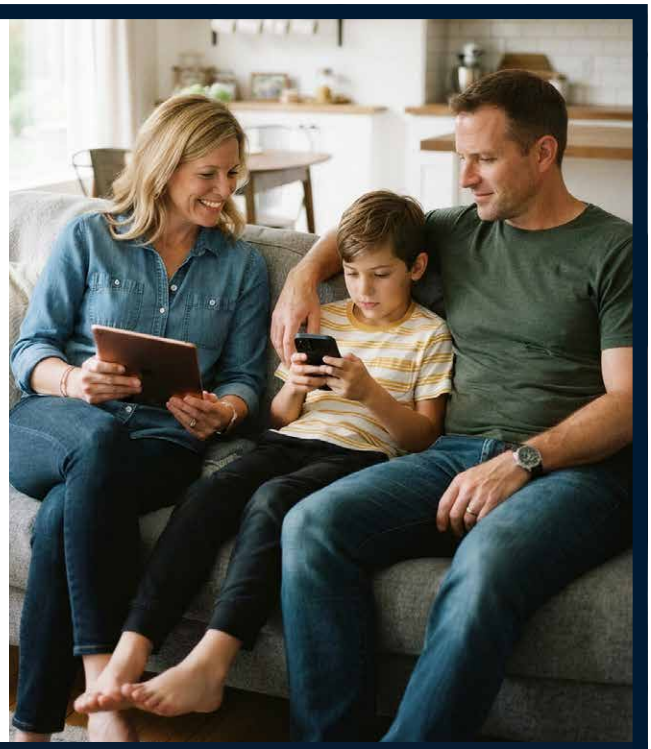
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LIHEAP Program Helps Families Pay Heating Bills

THE LOW INCOME HOME ENERGY Assistance Program (LIHEAP) helps eligible Pennsylvania households pay their home heating bills. Households facing a heating emergency, such as a fuel shortage, utility shut-off or broken heating equipment, may qualify for a LIHEAP crisis grant, ranging from $25 to $1,000.

Eligible households may also receive a cash grant. This one-time payment, ranging from $200 to $1,000, is sent directly to your utility company or fuel provider and credited to your account. Grant amounts are based on household size, income and fuel type.

You may qualify for a LIHEAP grant if your household income falls within the eligibility guidelines shown in the chart at right. The 2026-2027 LIHEAP program is scheduled to open Nov. 2.

To apply, visit compass.dhs.pa.gov or contact your local county assistance office (CAO). A directory of CAOs is available through the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services at dhs.pa.gov.

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

GOING AWAY FOR THE WINTER?

Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) and Revolution Broadband offer members who will be away from home for an extended period, including "snowbirds" who migrate to warmer climates for the winter, two convenient and timely ways to receive their electric bills while they are gone.

Online billing

Claverack REC's SmartHub program allows members to receive and pay electric bills online or through the SmartHub mobile app for smartphones and tablets.

With SmartHub, members receive an email notification when a new bill is generated. They can then pay their bill electronically using a checking account, MasterCard, Visa or debit card. SmartHub participants also have access to their account information 24 hours a day, seven days a week. For an overview of all the available features and setup instructions, visit claverack.com/smarthub-101.

Seasonal Address Program

Claverack REC's Seasonal Address Program allows members to receive their electric bills at an alternate mailing address. Signing up is easy.

Call our billing department and provide your alternate address and the dates you expect to be away. During this period, we will mail correspondence directly to the seasonal address, eliminating the need for the postal service to forward it.

For more information about the Seasonal Address Program or SmartHub, contact Claverack REC at 800-326-9799.

PENNSYLVANIA LIHEAP INCOME GUIDELINES

2026-2027 PROGRAM YEAR

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Household Size	Maximum Annual Income
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4	$49,500
5	$58,020
6	$66,540
7	$75,060
8	$83,580
9	$92,100
10	$100,620

For each additional household member, add $8,520.

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Crisis Grants
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Grant amounts vary based on household size, income, and fuel type.

APPLY

The 2026-2027 LIHEAP Season is scheduled to open Nov. 2, 2026.

Apply online at:

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compass.dhs.pa.gov

or contact your local county assistance office.

Feeling chilled?
HEAT your SPACE safely



Before you dust off your space heater and plug it in, consider that most home heating fire deaths (86%) involve space heaters, according to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). In fact, heating equipment is the second-leading cause of U.S. home fires (cooking is the leading cause).

More than half of the heating-related home fires start when flammable items are too close to the heat source, according to the NFPA. Those items include upholstered furniture, clothing, a mattress or bedding.

Nearly half of all home heating fires occur in December, January and February.



Here are some space heater safety tips:

- Only use them as the manufacturer recommends
- Do not leave them unattended
- Give them space: remove any flammable items within 3 feet
- Plug them directly into outlets; don't use an extension cord
- Consider using a dedicated circuit to avoid overload
- Keep children and pets away from space heaters at all times
- Turn them off before you leave the room or go to sleep

Learn more at: SafeElectricity.org®

Be Comfortable with Easy-to-Install In-Floor Heating

JAMES DULLEY

DEAR JIM: We set our thermostat lower to save, but my feet are always cold. Is in-floor electric radiant more efficient than resistance electric heating, and can it be used under carpeting? — *Rachel H.*

DEAR RACHEL: Using electric resistance heating is generally an expensive method for heating a house. A whole-house electric resistance furnace is basically several large toaster elements with a blower and ducts attached to it. Electric in-floor heating, which can be used for concrete slab, tile, hardwood, laminate and even carpeted floors, is less expensive to operate because it significantly improves your comfort at a lower room temperature. It's also relatively inexpensive to install, making it ideal for a room addition.

Instead of heating the room's air, a warm floor radiates heat upward, and when your feet are warm, your entire body feels warm. With improved comfort from in-floor heating, you should be able to lower the thermostat setting considerably and not feel chilly. In-floor heating also reduces the amount of hot air that collects near the ceiling compared to a forced-air furnace. Additionally, each room can have a separate computerized thermostat set to different temperatures, using heat only when necessary.

HEATIZON



HEATING UP: Concrete slab, tile, hardwood, laminate and even carpeted floors can benefit from electric in-floor heating. You can also pick and choose where to install it, helping you keep warm without having to crank up the thermostat for the whole house.

For concrete slab or tile floors, electric heating cable is usually laid in a serpentine pattern with long cable guides nailed along the outer edges of the floor. Selecting how many slots to skip between cables determines the total cable length and heat output. It also simplifies even spacing.

For use with carpeting, thin mats or sheets with electric cable embedded in them are placed on the floor before the carpeting is laid. The manufacturer can calculate the amount your rooms need and it is available for 120- or 240-volt systems. Some of the systems, for smaller areas, are designed for do-it-yourself installation.

For hardwood and laminate flooring, thin heating cables embedded in a strong fiberglass mesh are particularly effective. Check with the hardwood flooring manufacturer about the maximum allowable temperature to avoid excessive drying of the wood. Also, consider installing a special programmable thermostat with a laminate and engineered wood setting to protect the materials. Other designs use a safe, low-voltage heating mesh. This mesh is only about 1/8-inch thick and is stapled directly to the subflooring.

In-floor heating systems do not have to extend across the entire house or even an entire room, providing the flexibility to expand as your budget allows. You can even place small, custom mats or sheets in front of a mirror in a dressing area or in a work area. A 10-foot-by-30-inch heating mat costs about $200. A matching programmable thermostat costs about $140.

With only in-floor heating, however, you'll need to consider how to keep your pipes warm in the winter. Fortunately, the same materials for in-floor heating can be used on your pipes. Self-regulating cables can be attached along water pipes and automatically adjust the heat output depending upon the temperature.

HAVE A QUESTION FOR JIM? Send inquiries to James Dulley, *Penn Lines*, 6906 Royalgreen Drive, Cincinnati, OH 45244 or visit dulley.com.

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Days Gone By

Readers Share Their 60-Year-Old Memories

MICHAEL T. CRAWFORD
Senior Technical Editor

PHOTO COURTESY OF PAM SAMANKA



SIMPLER TIMES: Sixty years ago, Pam Samanka, a member of United Electric Cooperative, was 6 and recalls spending her days gazing at the sky from her swing.

TAMI BAREFOOT AND PAM SAMANKA remember chasing lightning bugs. It was 1966, and though 100 miles apart, the girls enjoyed similar childhoods.

"I was a 4-year-old feral child living my wild life up Rocklick Hollow in New Paris," recalls Barefoot, a member of Bedford Rural Electric Cooperative (REC). "My great-grandma used to tell me our house was one of the first ones to get electricity back in the day."

With the 60th anniversary of *Penn Lines* in full swing, we asked readers to reflect on where they were six decades ago — the same year *Penn Lines* launched — and what they were doing. From the tales shared with us, we found that our readers have a lot in common.

Samanka, a member of Dubois-based United Electric Cooperative, recalls carefree days on a swing set, not unlike the memories of Carol Sossong, who at 12 spent summer afternoons reading on a porch swing.

"The sounds of the Beatles, Monkees and Beach Boys filled the air from my transistor radio," says Sossong, a member of REA Energy Cooperative, based in Indiana, Pa. "At night, my family gathered around the black-and-white TV and watched 'The Ed Sullivan Show' and 'Bonanza.'"

PHOTO COURTESY OF JOE SCHILLINGER



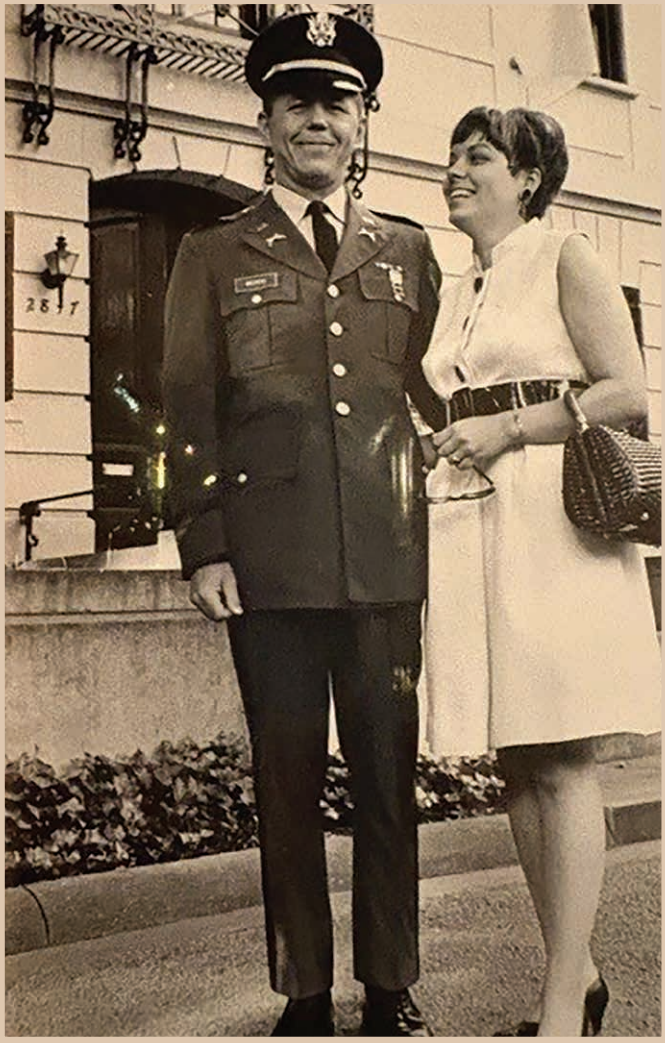


PHOTO COURTESY OF KATHY MEGYERI

LONG WAY TO GO: Above – REA Energy Cooperative member Joe Schillinger, then 13, leans against his father's 1964 Chevelle in Citronelle, Ala., on the way to Monterrey, Mexico. Also shown, from left, are: Schillinger's brother, Bobby; a family friend, Bernard; and his father, Bob.

At right – Adams Electric Cooperative members Leslie and Kathy Megyeri, then 25 and 23, respectively, celebrate Leslie earning his commission as a U.S. Army second lieutenant.

From teens to 20s

Roughly 172 miles away, Jeanne Warner, a member of Mansfield-based Tri-County REC, was also on the verge of teenhood.

"In 1966, I was turning 12 and beginning seventh grade," Warner says. "That meant leaving my little country school in Mainesburg and heading to the high school in Mansfield. My small world was about to get much bigger."

In Armagh, Joe Schillinger, another REA Energy member, was helping to load up the car for a weeks-long family road trip to Monterrey, Mexico.

"At home, we lived in a cottage village … a small town with one stop light," Schillinger says. "In Monterrey, everything was palatial, immaculate."

Then 13, he remembers nearly every road invariably

leading to the downtowns of city after city — Birmingham, Ala., New Orleans, La. and Victoria, Texas.

During the three-week journey, Schillinger also passed through Maryland, where United Electric member Larry Coble, then 24, was stationed at Fort Meade. His soon-to-be wife — Barbara, then 21 — was earning her bachelor's degree in elementary education at Millersville University. Meanwhile, another soldier-teacher couple was not far away.

Kathy Megyeri, a member of Gettysburg-based Adams Electric Cooperative, was a first-year teacher in Maryland while her then-fiancé, Leslie, had just enlisted in the U.S. Army. Like many young couples, Kathy, then 23, and Leslie, then 25, were working to save up for their dream: a plot of land to build a cabin. At the same time, Kenneth and Phyllis Carr, members of Cambridge Springs-based Northwestern REC, were building a home of their own.

"We hired a contractor to build our home, but to cut costs, he would leave a list of chores that could be done," says Phyllis, who at the time was expecting her second child.

A world beyond home

A new addition to a household can be a life-changer and Nancy Kline, a Northwestern REC member, had just welcomed one of her own: an exchange student from Italy, Elena Bonicelli.

"She knew very little about country life, especially farm life," Kline says. "She spoke little English, and we knew no Italian. During that year, Elena and I discovered the importance of learning about people from other cultures within our own countries and beyond. Sixty years later, we remain true friends and sisters."

An ocean away, Tri-County REC member Ralph Morgan Lewis was learning the same lesson while studying abroad at Philipps-Universität in Marburg, Germany (West Germany, at the time).

"I made friends with a fellow German major from Scotland, a few ladies from England and a lady from East Berlin," he says. "For Thanksgiving, a German family invited me to share with them the meaning of that holiday.

"It was a year that changed my life forever," Lewis adds. "People, traditions and customs are very important; getting along with others is important, too."

TRUE FRIENDSHIP: Sixty years ago, the Kline family opened its doors to a foreign exchange student. Shown, from left, are: Elena Bonicelli, the Italian teen who stayed with the Klines; another exchange student; Nancy Kline, a member of Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative; and Hazel and Maurice Kline, Nancy's parents. Nancy says she and Elena became lifelong friends.

PHOTO COURTESY OF NANCY KLINE



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A Season of Celebration

ANNE M. KIRCHNER

WHILE PLANNING MY FAMILY'S THANKSGIVING menu, I researched other November food holidays. I was surprised to learn each day of November has something to celebrate. The days often relate to promotional gimmicks from marketing groups and social media, but the options teased my culinary senses.

Nov. 1 is "National Balsamic Vinegar of Modena Day." To honor the occasion, I added a finishing touch of thick, dark balsamic vinegar to butternut squash ravioli with apples. "National Greek Yogurt Day" on Nov. 9 prompted me to stir up the perfect afternoon snack: yogurt fruit dip. On Nov. 15, I made a cinnamon bundt coffee cake to honor "National Bundt Day." I hope you'll join the celebrations!

ANNE M. KIRCHNER focuses her writing on human connections, travel and culinary arts, researching food origins, exploring cooking techniques, and creating new recipes.

PHOTOS BY ANNE M. KIRCHNER



BUTTERNUT SQUASH RAVIOLI WITH APPLES

- 10 ounces frozen butternut squash ravioli
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 4 tablespoons butter
- 3 sweet apples, cored and thinly sliced
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- 1 tablespoon Italian seasoning
- 2 cups spinach
- 2 tablespoons pumpkin seeds
- 2 tablespoons feta cheese, crumbled
- 2 tablespoons dark balsamic vinegar

Cook butternut squash ravioli according to package directions. Drain ravioli and toss with olive oil to prevent sticking; set aside. Melt butter in a sauté pan. Add apples, salt, vanilla extract, tomato paste and Italian seasoning. Allow apples to caramelize slightly. Add spinach and cook until wilted, about 1 minute. Add ravioli to apples and spinach; toss to coat. Serve ravioli in a pasta bowl garnished with pumpkin seeds, feta cheese and a drizzle of balsamic vinegar. *Makes 4 to 6 servings.*



YOGURT FRUIT DIP

- 1 cup plain Greek yogurt
- 2 tablespoons honey or maple syrup
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ½ teaspoon cardamom
- 1 tablespoon orange zest
- Fresh seasonal fruit
- Granola, optional

In a small bowl, whisk yogurt, honey or maple syrup, vanilla extract, cardamom, and orange zest until well combined. Serve dip with fresh seasonal fruit, such as apples, pears, grapes, strawberries or bananas. Dip can also be served as a breakfast entree, topped with fruit and granola. *Makes 6 to 8 servings.*



CINNAMON BUNDT COFFEE CAKE

- 1 cup pecans, chopped
- ¼ cup granulated sugar
- 2 teaspoons cinnamon
- 1 (15.25-ounce) box yellow cake mix
- 1 (3.4-ounce) box instant vanilla pudding
- ¼ cup canola oil
- ¾ cup water
- 4 eggs
- 3 teaspoons vanilla extract, divided
- 1 cup powdered sugar
- 2 tablespoons milk

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Coat bundt pan with cooking spray; set aside. In a small bowl, combine pecans, granulated sugar and cinnamon; set aside. In a mixer, combine cake mix, pudding, oil, water, eggs and 2 teaspoons vanilla extract. On medium-low speed, beat for 3 to 4 minutes. Pour half the cake batter into the bundt pan. Sprinkle pecan mixture on top. Pour remaining cake batter over pecans. Bake 45 to 50 minutes or until inserted toothpick comes out clean. Cool cake in pan for 5 to 10 minutes. Meanwhile, in a small bowl, whisk powdered sugar, milk and remaining 1 teaspoon of vanilla extract to make a glaze. Turn cake onto a platter and brush on glaze while cake is warm. *Makes 12 to 16 servings.*



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A Different Kind of Deer Hunting

STEVE PIATT

I GREW UP DOING MOST of my Pennsylvania deer hunting just outside of Sayre and Athens in Bradford County. If you got turned around, you just kept looking left until you saw the local Kmart or heard the loudspeaker from the car dealership.

Moving to the Adirondacks in 1997 introduced me to a whole new world of deer hunting. Suddenly, I was hunting whitetails in the High Peaks Wilderness Area, a massive, state-owned tract of more than 275,000 acres, with no Kmart around to serve as my compass. It happened to have, according to the New York Department of Environmental Conservation, the sparsest deer population in the state, a far cry from Pennsylvania's whitetail-rich farm country.

I resisted the change at first, planning instead to place a tree stand in a wood lot near our house. Our town highway superintendent, who later became a great friend and hunting partner, offered some sage advice.

"Choose your tree carefully," he warned. "You might grow old before you see a deer."

Eventually, I decided the best way to hunt deer in the Adirondacks was not waiting for them to come to me but to go find one myself.

And so I tried. I logged miles in the big woods, never getting lost for more than an hour. I usually returned home without even seeing a deer.

It was frustrating. It was exhausting. It was humbling.

It wasn't Pennsylvania.

I thought of that each fall I returned to the Commonwealth for Opening Day, where I saw plenty of deer from my tree stand, filled a couple tags and enjoyed the tradition.



STEVE PIATT

TRACKING SNOW: The first snowfall marks the true start of deer hunting season in the Adirondack Mountains of New York, where waiting in a tree stand can get awfully boring.

Then I headed back to the 'Dacks and continued my big-woods, deer hunting education.

Somewhere along the way, I began to enjoy the challenge. It was still frustrating, but instead of vowing to quit the game, I returned home each evening with an "I'll-get-'em-next-time" attitude.

I learned that Opening Day didn't mean as much there as it does in Pennsylvania. The real Adirondacks deer season begins when the first snow falls.

Tracking snow.

It's a game changer for a big-woods deer hunter, and it triggered a whole new learning experience as I attempted to sort out a buck's tracks from a doe's, then followed it throughout the day with a singular focus that often took me miles from the truck.

It was still frustrating. I rarely caught a glimpse of what I assumed was a buck based on the size of its tracks. At times, I lost the tracks as they mingled with others. Occasionally, I got lost myself, but never long enough to send Paula into a panic or need a forest ranger to rescue me.

But it was exhilarating to know a buck — maybe a big buck — was somewhere up ahead. That thought kept me going (and returning the next day to try again).

Then it happened.

Following a set of tracks that seemed to be the only game in town that morning, I noticed the deer had slowed to browse on some ferns popping up through the light snow cover. It must be preparing to bed down, I thought.

It was. And when I turned to my right and looked up the ridge, there stood a buck.

The drag back to the truck was made easier by the downhill route, as did the fact that my buck was just a little five-point.

But it was mine — my first in the Adirondacks.

STEVE PIATT is a veteran newspaper editor and outdoor writer who along with his wife, Paula, has hunted and fished across North America. He is most at home on the water and in the fields of the Keystone State. He lives in Bradford County.

Derby Girls, Musket Balls and an 8-Pound Tooth

MITCHELL KYD

REMEMBER ALL THE DO-NOTS YOU learned as a kid? Do not play with your food. Do not draw on your brother's face. Do not give the cat a bath in the toilet. Do not talk to strangers.

I decided long ago that last rule didn't apply to me. Chances are you not only talk to strangers now but are also required to talk to them daily. Now, the strangers are even stranger — dull, soulless products of artificial intelligence. That "improvement" makes me even happier to talk to live, human strangers. We are a fascinating bunch.

In May, one of my favorites among the morning faces at my nearby coffee drive-thru was zooming between windows, and I joked she needed roller skates to do her job. With a big smile, she told me she used to be a derby girl and competed in roller derbies. Respect.

I had covered that fast-paced, full-contact sport for another magazine and followed team skaters through international competition. Roller derby scoring periods are called "bouts," and the training includes practicing deliberately falling forward. The goal is to make the response to a fall automatic, reducing the snap, crunch and pop of broken bones.

In June, my writer's antennae quivered as I overheard the conversation between the local jeweler and his customer, Army veteran Jeremiah Hornbaker. Jerry's assignment then was to create 250 commemorative musket balls for Army recruits at Fort Hamilton, N.Y. As part of the nation's 250th anniversary, each new soldier received one at New York City Hall during oath of enlistment ceremonies July 9.

When Jerry and I talked later, I learned he is a historical consultant for the arts and founder of Artistry in Motion, Inc. Some weeks, his work takes him to Hollywood to oversee historical accuracy in film making and TV productions, which included the Civil War episode of "House of Cards." Other times, he bounces around the country to create period-accurate museum exhibits.

In August, several of us cat servants in the veterinarian's waiting room began swapping crazy cat stories. There, I met Sue, who shared photos of herself standing head-to-head with Toby, a 6,000-pound Asian elephant and resident at the Boston Zoo. The before-and-after pictures showed genuine connection between the two as zoo vet, Dr. Sue, finished removing Toby's broken, 8-pound tooth. I had never met anyone who even knew anyone who had touched an elephant's tooth before.

MITCHELL KYD



FRIENDSHIP AND GRATITUDE: Toby, a 6,000-pound Asian elephant and resident at the Boston Zoo, and Dr. Sue share a quiet moment after the painful removal of Toby's 8-pound tooth.

All these fascinating strangers are floating around in my small-town circles, seven miles from my home. I didn't need to fly away, take a cruise or creep in remotely on others' lives to meet them. Even the smallest circles overflow with opportunities to connect to the bigger picture.

Human connection was a topic in a TV interview earlier this year. Pastor-turned-teacher Mike Devereaux left his longtime ministry to serve high school students at Digital Pioneers Academy, a charter school in Washington, D.C.

"I think with the internet and social media, we just get a distorted view of reality," he said. "If all we ever did was talk to people as individuals or in small groups, like people have done for most of human history, we'd all have a collective sense that everything is going to be OK."

Amen, Mike. Thank you for that reminder. Talking to people is good for us.

YVONNE BUTTS-MITCHELL celebrates the joys and poignant moments of rural living under the pen name Mitchell Kyd. Her stories from the Path Valley Hotel were hatched by encounters with contractors, critters and creepy crawlies while rehabbing the family cabin after its 17-year stint as a giant closet.

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ANTIQUE AND CLASSIC motorcycles wanted. All makes and sizes. BSA, Norton, Triumph, Honda, Yamaha, Suzuki, Kawasaki, etc. krmiller1965@yahoo.com. 717-577-8206.

CASH FOR GOLD JEWELRY: Rings, wedding rings, bracelets, necklaces, chains, earrings, etc. Also buying sterling silver jewelry. I even buy broken jewelry! I will come to your location to buy. Call: 717-891-6493, leave message. York, Pa.

COLLECTORS BUYING PRE-WAR AND POST-WAR Lionel® trains, accessories, Plasticville® buildings, Transformers®, etc. Buying pieces to entire collections. Call Mick, 814-656-1634, or John, 814-937-9052.

VINTAGE TOYS: MARX, JAPANESE, tin airplanes, trucks, boats. 1950s and 1960s cap guns: Colt, Nichols Industries, Hubley, and Leslie-Henry. 44- and 45-caliber models. Mint condition. 814-937-9052.

Statement of Ownership, Management and Circulation required by 39 USC 3685

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Average Paid Distribution by other Classes of Mail through the USPS, 15 (September 15).

TOTAL PAID DISTRIBUTION: Average, 167,950 (September 167,915).

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Average In-County, 0 (September 0).
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Average Distribution Outside the Mail by carriers or other means, 114 (September 112).

TOTAL FREE OR NOMINAL RATE DISTRIBUTION: Average, 461 (September 466).

TOTAL DISTRIBUTION: Average, 168,411 (September 168,381).

COPIES NOT DISTRIBUTED: Average, 175 (September 177).

TOTAL: Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months, 168,586 (September 168,558).

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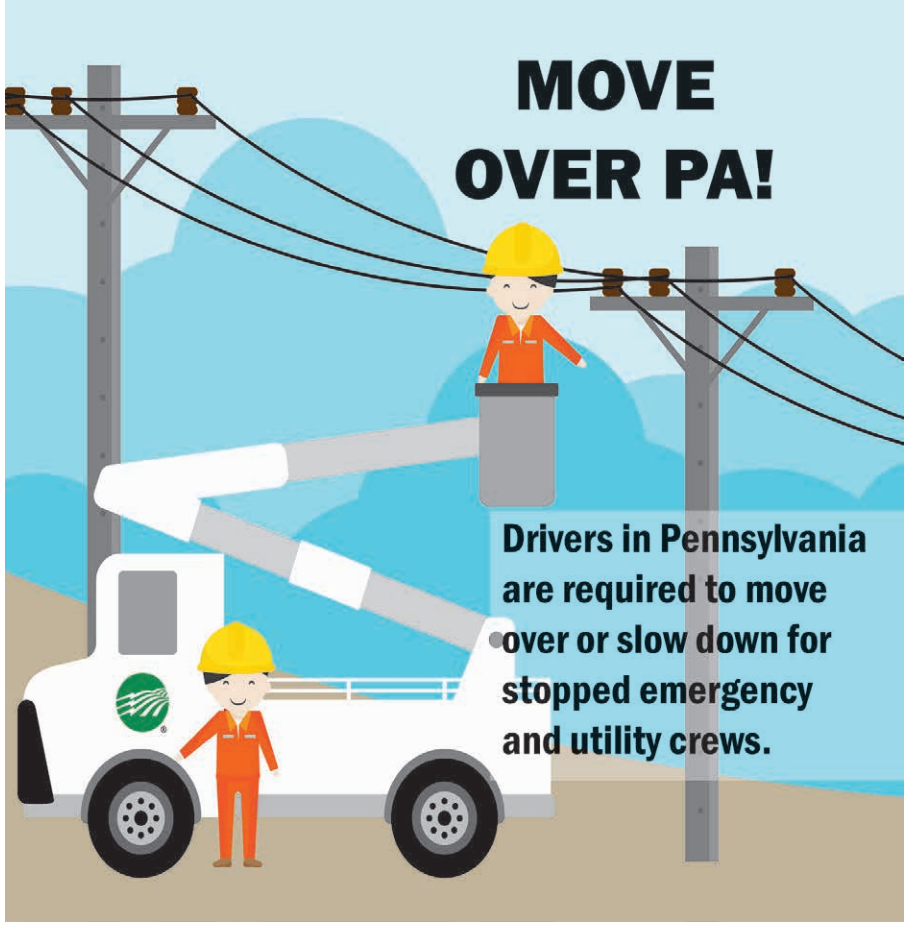
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Peter A. Fitzgerald

Publisher **DATE:** 9-16-2026

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Back to the Old Clothesline

JOHN KASUN

RETIREES OFTEN SAY THEY DON'T know how they found time to work. There seem to be fewer hours in the day as we age, and try as we might, we just can't get everything done.

I may have discovered some of the reasons. First, I have not seen the sun rise in quite some time. By the time I rise, my pre-retirement self would have been showered, dressed and halfway through a morning work meeting. Now retired, I am often just finishing breakfast in time for lunch, and it hardly makes sense to start anything this late in the day.

But the real time thief seems to be trips to the hardware store.

The other day, my wife wanted a new dryer vent installed. Knowing the importance of thinking ahead, I planned out the whole job. I bought all the necessary items, some extra hardware and two different lengths of flexible vent pipe to be sure one would fit perfectly.

Things began smoothly. The first three holes I needed to drill in the exterior brick of our home came easily, but the drill bit I was using decided to stop working on the last hole, sending me back to the hardware store.



Later, I had the outside exhaust plate mounted. All that remained was to hook up the flexible hose inside between the dryer and the vent. Then my wife saw the hose I had purchased. She felt the rough inside would gather lint, and she didn't like the shiny aluminum exterior. I explained to no avail that dryer vent hoses don't come in various shades of colors like pantyhose.

Years of marriage taught me the best way to "win" this argument was to let her pick out the hose she liked, so back to the store we went. Evidently, dryer vent hoses and pantyhose are more alike than I thought. My wife found a colorful expandable one that looked great. It cost three times more than my original selection, but if she was happy, I was happy.

I returned home with a new hose in hand. This part should only take a few minutes, I thought, and the job will be finished. Unfortunately, I discovered my new, bright, good-looking, expensive hose wasn't expandable enough. Now I needed a 4-inch piece of solid tin piping, which only comes in 2-foot increments, meaning I had to cut it.

The local hardware store was nice enough to cut it for me, but when I got home, I realized the pipe was the wrong diameter. Back to the hardware store for another piece of pipe. A job that should have taken an hour wound up taking the better part of the day.

I was in and out of the hardware store so many times, as I left the last time, the checkout girl smiled and said, "See you soon." I paused and replied, "If I come back for this dryer job one more time, it will be to buy a clothesline!"

JOHN KASUN, a lifelong Pennsylvanian with more than 30 years of writing experience, looks for the humor in everyday life and then tells a story from that perspective. He is a member of Huntingdon-based Valley Rural Electric Cooperative.

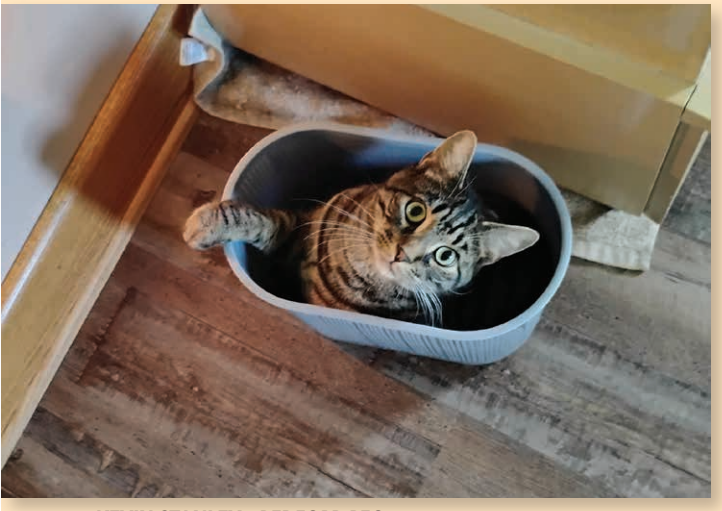
Thank You For Your Entries

NOVEMBER PROVIDES THE SETTING FOR so many possibilities: a crisp sunset on an autumn evening, a ball of light in a cloudy blue sky, a snow-covered lake and a safe space away from the unpredictable weather — perhaps in an empty trash can? As the final weeks of fall play out and the holiday season starts, it's as good a time as any to explore the many opportunities this month brings while we at *Penn Lines* are grateful for you and the photos you've sent us all year long.

Our 2026 contest is now closed, and the winning entries, chosen by an independent panel of judges, will be featured in the January and February issues of *Penn Lines*. But keep your best shots coming for next year's Rural Reflections contest. If your photo wins top honors, you could receive a $75 prize in one of our five contest categories: artistic, human, landscape, animal and editor's choice. See the 2027 contest submission information below.



BUDDY JOHNSON • TRI-COUNTY REC



KEVIN STANLEY • BEDFORD REC



DAVID ONSTEAD • SOMERSET REC



LARRY LAIRD • VALLEY REC

How to enter

TO SUBMIT ENTRIES, email your photos (no more than five digital images per person, per year) to photos@prea.com or send prints to *Penn Lines* Photos, P.O. Box 1266, Harrisburg, PA, 17108-1266. With your entries, be sure to include your name, address, daytime phone number and the name of the rural electric cooperative that serves your residence, business, or seasonal home.

Remember, our publication deadlines require that we work ahead, so send your seasonal photos to us early. *Please note:* Hard-copy, physical photos mailed to our office will not be returned. Therefore, if you mail a photo, please make sure it's not an original.

ADDRESS CHANGES:
For change of address, please contact your local electric cooperative. For cooperative contact information, please visit www.prea.com/member-cooperatives



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