

FEBRUARY 2025

PENNLINES

Crazy Contests

From Gut-Busting Burgers to Wood-Chopping Frenzies: Competitions Go to Extremes

THE LITTLE-KNOWN WAY TO START SEEDS

FIREPLACE EFFICIENCY: MAXIMIZE WARMTH AND MINIMIZE WASTE

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John Lopez, a cook at Bad Boyz Bistro in Bedford, cooks up "The Terminator," a loaded four-patty cheesburger that's part of a 10-pound food challenge. Diners have an hour to clean their plate.

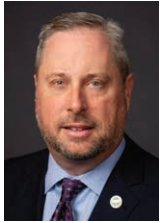


ON THE COVER
Competitors race to saw through a log at the Pennsylvania Lumberjack Championships and Outdoor Show in Schellsburg, Bedford County.

PHOTO BY
DARYL CONNOR
THOMPSON

Business as Usual

Change Doesn't Change Your Cooperative's Member-Focused Approach



STEVE BRAME

THE NEW YEAR ALWAYS BRINGS thoughts of change.

Old habits die hard, and because I spent much of my career wandering the halls of the state Capitol, I'm especially tuned into the changes taking place in Harrisburg and Washington. We've got a new administration in the White House now, and lots of new state and federal lawmakers learning the ropes, too.

Of course, when transitions happen, a flurry of activity and speculation usually follows. At your rural electric cooperative, though, it's simply business as usual.

For more than 80 years, your cooperative's No. 1 priority has been to provide you, its members, with safe, reliable and affordable electricity — along with the very best service. And no matter what's going on in the rest of the world, that won't change.

At every cooperative, community comes first — it always has, and it always will — because the same people you go to church with, see at local sporting events and bump into at the grocery store are the same people who oversee your co-op. Many are members, just like you, and that community connection — generations deep — is the bedrock of their success.

So, when you call or stop by the office, you'll encounter a local person who's more than happy to answer your questions and offer tips on lowering your electric bill. Thanks to their close connection to the co-op, each and every director and employee is also dedicated to keeping your rates as low as possible and outages to a minimum.

Throughout the year, cooperative leaders also make sure the people who pass the laws and write the regulations are familiar with electric cooperatives and the business model they're built on. The start of a new administration and legislative session is a critical time for this kind of engagement.

Right now, your electric cooperative, in collaboration with our statewide organization and government affairs team, is focused on meeting with legislators — those new and not-so-new to office — to discuss the pivotal role cooperatives play in rural communities. This engagement in grassroots advocacy — one of the hallmarks of electric cooperatives — will continue throughout the year as we meet with legislators in Harrisburg and in Washington.

Many cooperatives also host one-on-one meetings with policymakers, giving them tours of their facilities and a behind-the-scenes view of the community-focused work they do. Cooperatives encourage consumers to get involved in these grassroots efforts, too, by joining our political action committee, America's Electric Cooperatives PAC, and answering calls to legislative action through Voices for Cooperative Power.

These meetings and initiatives help cultivate relationships and foster understanding. They also ensure policymakers at all levels are aware of the unique challenges cooperatives are facing at a time when the energy industry is experiencing dramatic changes.

So, as we transition into 2025 and the change it brings, you can rely on your cooperative to do what it's always done: be your trusted energy partner. That means advocating, innovating and working to ensure your community and the rest of rural Pennsylvania are reliably powered — and empowered — because that's the cooperative way. Or, as I like to say: It's simply business as usual. 📧

STEVE BRAME
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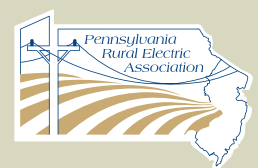
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Fish Oil Failure Shines Grim Light on America's Memory Crisis

America's Top Memory M.D. Reveals Why Fish Oil Doesn't Protect You from Senior Moments – and the #1 Alternative

More than 16 million Americans suffer from age-associated cognitive impairment, and according to nationwide research, these numbers are only rising.

Thankfully, anti-aging specialist and best-selling author Dr. Al Sears says there's an easy way to banish senior moments and brain fog for good.

It's a safe, natural compound called DHA – one of the building blocks of your brain. It helps children grow their brains significantly bigger during development. And in adults, it protects brain cells from dying as they get older.

For years, most people thought fish oil was the best available source of DHA...

But industrial fish farming practices have depleted the nutritional content of nearly every fish oil you can buy.

Today, roughly 20 million Americans are wasting their money on fish oils that hardly do anything at all.

And since they think they are addressing the problem, fish oil's failure has led to America's memory crisis continuing to grow practically unchecked.

Fortunately, Dr. Sears says, "there's still hope for seniors. Getting more DHA can make a life-changing difference for your mental clarity, focus, and memory."

Dr. Sears, a highly-acclaimed, board-certified doctor— who has published more than 500 studies and written four bestselling books — says we should be able to get enough DHA in our diets... but we don't anymore.

"For thousands of years, fish were a great natural source of DHA. But due to industrial fish farming practices, the fish we eat and the fish oils you see at the store are no longer as nutrient-dense as they once were," he explains.

DHA is backed by hundreds of studies for supporting razor-sharp focus, extraordinary mental clarity, and a lightning quick memory... especially in seniors.

So, if you're struggling with focus, mental clarity, or memory as you get older...

Dr. Sears recommends a different approach.

THE SECRET TO A LASTING MEMORY

Research has shown our paleo ancestors were able to grow bigger and smarter brains by eating foods rich in one ingredient — DHA.

"Our hippocampus thrives off DHA, and grows because of it," explains Dr. Sears. "Without DHA, our brains would shrink, and our memories would quickly fade."

A groundbreaking study from the University of Alberta confirmed this. Animals given a diet rich in DHA saw a 29% boost in their hippocampus — the part of the brain responsible for learning and memory. As a result, these animals became smarter.

Another study on more than 1,500 seniors found that those whose brains were deficient in DHA had significantly smaller brains — a characteristic of accelerated aging and a weakened memory.

PEOPLE'S BRAINS ARE SHRINKING AND THEY DON'T EVEN KNOW IT

Dr. Sears uncovered that sometime during the 1990s, fish farmers stopped giving their animals a natural, DHA-rich diet and began feeding them a diet that was 70% vegetarian.

"It became expensive for farmers to feed fish what they'd eat in the wild," explains Dr. Sears. "But in order to produce DHA, fish need to eat a natural, marine diet, like the one they'd eat in the wild."

"Since fish farmers are depriving these animals of their natural diet, DHA is almost nonexistent in the oils they produce."

"And since more than 80% of fish oil comes from farms, it's no wonder the country is experiencing a memory crisis. Most people's brains are shrinking and they don't even know it."

So, what can people do to improve their memory and brain



Why the 'brain fuel' ingredient in fish oil is slowly drying up.

function most effectively.

Dr. Sears says, "Find a quality DHA supplement that doesn't come from a farmed source. That will protect your brain cells and the functions they serve well into old age."

Dr. Sears and his team worked tirelessly for over two years developing a unique brain-boosting formula called **Omega Rejuvenol**.

It's made from the most powerful source of DHA in the ocean, squid and krill — two species that cannot be farmed.

According to Dr. Sears, these are the purest and most potent sources of DHA in the world, because they haven't been tampered with. "Omega Rejuvenol is sourced from the most sustainable fishery in Antarctica. You won't find this oil in any stores."

MORE IMPRESSIVE RESULTS

Already, the formula has sold more than 850,000 bottles. And for a good reason, too. Satisfied customers can't stop raving about the memory-boosting benefits of quality-sourced DHA oil.

"The first time I took it, I was amazed. The brain fog I struggled with for years was gone within 24 hours. The next day, I woke up with the energy and mental clarity of a new man," says Owen R.

"I remember what it was like before I started taking **Omega Rejuvenol**... the lack of focus... the dull moods... the slippery memory... but now my mind is as clear as it's ever been," says Estelle H.

"My mood and focus are at an all-time high. I've always had trouble concentrating, and now I think I know why," raves Bernice J. "The difference that **Omega Rejuvenol** makes couldn't be more noticeable."

And 70-year-old Mark K. says, "My focus and memory are back to age-30 levels."

These are just a handful of the thousands of reviews Dr. Sears receives regularly thanks to his breakthrough memory formula, **Omega Rejuvenol**.

WHERE TO FIND OMEGA REJUVENOL

To secure bottles of this brain-booster, buyers should contact the Sears Health Hotline at **1-800-694-8798**. "It takes time to manufacture these bottles," says Dr. Sears. "The Hotline allows us to ship the product directly to customers who need it most."

Dr. Sears feels so strongly about this product he is offering a 100% money-back guarantee on every order. "Send back any used or unused bottles within 90 days and I'll rush you a refund," says Dr. Sears.

The Hotline is taking orders for the next 48 hours. After that, the phone number may be shut down to allow for inventory restocking.

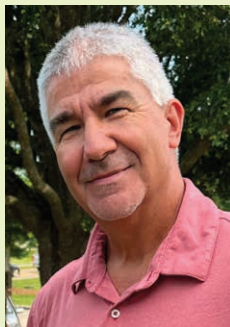
Call **1-800-694-8798** to secure your limited supply of **Omega Rejuvenol**. Readers of this publication immediately qualify for a steep discount, but supplies are limited. To take advantage of this great offer use Promo Code **PLOM225** when you call.

DEAR BILLY

An unfinished task sits on my phone's "to-do" list: Call Billy. After hearing from his wife, Wendy, that Billy passed away suddenly just before Christmas, I know it's a task I'll never complete. But I leave it there, just the same.

Billy Ralph Gibson Jr. was only 61 when he died, leaving behind Wendy and their two children, Casey and Austin. It was a shocking loss for his family and friends – and a difficult reminder that tomorrow is never promised.

Knowing Billy, I'm sure he was busy getting ready for the holidays, taking care of the people on his list. With Billy, people always came first. It's what made him a co-op person through and through. People were drawn to Billy because he took an interest in them. He was a friend, colleague and mentor to many in cooperative circles.



BILLY GIBSON JR.

Billy had recently retired after spending much of his career as an editor and communications director for electric cooperative organizations in Louisiana and South Dakota. An award-winning journalist, he also served as president of the National Electric Cooperatives Statewide Editors Association from 2008-2010.

Billy was on the ground when Hurricane Katrina hit in 2005, reporting on the storm that devastated the region. The experience touched him deeply – particularly the show of support from sister cooperatives across the country that came to help restore these battered communities. He would spend the rest of his career engaged in "Operation Gratitude" – a mission to thank co-op lineworkers and employees from other states for their support in Louisiana's time of need. Billy even visited Pennsylvania a few times to share his experiences with our cooperative communicators.

A man of deep faith, he was known affectionately as "The Reverend Billy" among his colleagues because he preached this cooperative spirit – and lived it. Billy continued serving his community in retirement, volunteering his time with ministries and camps. I know he loved the time he had to travel and be with friends and family, to connect with people.

Billy called me "brother," and I am grateful for the kinship we shared. Like a big brother, he's still teaching me things. He's there on my to-do list, reminding me to always put people first. Thank you, Billy. Rest in peace, my brother.

PETER A. FITZGERALD
EDITOR



EXTENSION.PSU.EDU

MUSHROOM MENACE: According to reports, Chester County's phorid fly infestation is getting worse, raising concerns about the future of its multi-billion-dollar mushroom industry.

BUG BATTLE World's smallest fly causing big problems in Chester County

Phorid flies, invasive insects that are barely visible to the naked eye, have reached an all-time high in southeastern Pennsylvania, where they're threatening Chester County's multi-billion-dollar mushroom industry.

The fly — the world's smallest — breeds in mushrooms and composting facilities, which are prevalent in Avondale and Kennett Square, also known as the "Mushroom Capital of the World." Homes in nearby communities are being infested, too.

A Penn State Extension article

reports the flies — sometimes called humpbacked, coffin and scuttle flies — are native to Thailand. The insects, which can lay up to 750 eggs in their lifetime, have the potential to devastate mushroom crops within weeks.

The region has been fighting the flies since 2012, a few years after the federal government began eliminating organophosphates, which growers had used to contain and eliminate the insects.

Late last year, local officials adopted resolutions declaring the problem a public health and economic emergency. They also urged the state to provide more funding and create a multi-agency task force to manage the infestation.

WANTED: PAMPERED PETS FOR PENN LINES FEATURE



How pampered is your pet? Do they have their own bed? Their own room? Social media presence? Don't be ashamed – brag about it. Better yet, brag about it in *Penn Lines*.

We're looking for pet moms and dads to show the rest of us how it's done. Tell us – in 100 words or less – how you pamper your pet for an opportunity to be featured with your best furry friend in an upcoming issue of *Penn Lines*.

Send your essay and a photo of your pet to PennLines@prea.com or *Penn Lines*, P.O. Box 1266, Harrisburg, PA 17108. All essays must be received by **Friday, March 21**. Please be sure to include your name, address, daytime telephone number, and the name of the cooperative that serves your home, business or seasonal residence.

READY FOR REAL ID?

With deadline approaching, Pennsylvanians urged to act if they plan to fly in U.S.

Starting May 7, all Pennsylvanians will need a REAL ID-compliant license/identification card or another acceptable form of ID, such as a valid passport or military identification, to board an airplane for a domestic flight or enter a secure federal facility.

The REAL ID driver's license and the ID card have a small star in the upper right corner to indicate they meet federal regulations.

"The REAL ID enforcement deadline is quickly approaching," PennDOT Secretary Mike Carroll said. "While there is no requirement that every resident obtain a REAL ID-compliant driver's license or ID card, we recommend that you start the opt-in process now if you will want a REAL ID-compliant product."

To get a REAL ID, individuals will need to visit their local Pennsylvania Department of Transportation Driver's License Center in person and bring certain documents to prove U.S. citizenship and Pennsylvania residency. For more information

about the specific REAL ID requirements, go to penndot.pa.gov.

FARMING NEWS

Adams County to be home of new Agricultural Discovery Center

The future home of the \$26 million Pennsylvania Agricultural Discovery Center will be in Adams County although the specific location, which will be near Gettysburg, has not been announced.

The project will include a 25,000-square-foot building that will promote the Commonwealth's agricultural industry and educate visitors about where their food comes from. The center will include exhibits, a 4-D movie theater and a large agriculturally themed playground.

Exhibits will address agriculture from multiple angles, including innovative careers, crops and food production, manufacturing and processing, and how food travels from the farm to grocery stores to consumers' homes and tables.

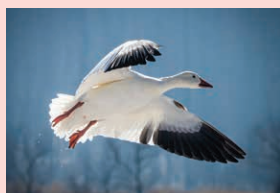
To learn more, go to discoverpaag.org.

TIME LINES



A decade ago, *Penn Lines* explored the "green" side of Pennsylvania with a feature on the eco-friendly public buildings popping up around the state. Featured sites -- touted as some of the most energy efficient in the state -- included the Tom Ridge Environmental Center at Presque Isle State Park, Erie County; the Nature Inn at Bald Eagle State Park, Centre County; and the Elk Country Visitor Center, Elk County.

FEBRUARY



SEE SOME SNOW GEESE

Experience a breathtaking sight when tens of thousands of snow geese return to Lancaster County's Middle Creek Reservoir in late February to early March. For more information, call the Middle Creek Visitors Center at (717) 733-1512. A livestream of the birds' return is also available at hdontap.com/stream/387619/pgc_middle-creek_snow-geese.

SURPRISE SOMEONE

Sure, we celebrate President's Day on Feb. 17, but there's another event happening you should know about. Feb. 17 is also National Random Acts of Kindness Day, so go ahead and make someone's day with an unexpected compliment or a small token of appreciation.



GET THE 'BEAR' FACTS

Join the Pa. Game Commission in exploring the fascinating world of black bears and how to coexist with them. The free Feb. 22 event at Tiadaghton State Forest, Waterville, will feature hands-on activities and a short walk, where visitors will learn to identify the bear's presence in the wild. For more information and to register, go to events.dcnr.pa.gov/event/black-bears-in-the-wilds.

CELEBRATE PA!

Celebrate Pennsylvania's 344th birthday March 9 with free admission to the Drake Well Museum and Park, Titusville. Visitors are invited to learn about their home state and its rich history while enjoying a birthday cupcake (while supplies last!). For more information, visit drakewell.org or call (814) 827-2797.



Crazy Contests



DARYL CONNOR THOMPSON

From Gut-Busting Burgers to Wood-Chopping Frenzies: Competitions Go to Extremes

MICHAEL T. CRAWFORD
Senior Technical Editor



SERIOUS CHOPS: A competitor at the Pennsylvania Lumberjack Championships and Outdoor Show in Bedford County attempts to make the cut.

AS A SPECIES, HUMANS ARE a competitive bunch.

In fact, as far back as we've had the ability to record history, we've made a point of detailing when we did something — anything — better than our rivals. And why not: Go big or go home, right?

While sports like soccer and basketball account for about 26% of television spending globally, not every competition makes it to a screen near you, so the *Penn Lines* staff scouted Pennsylvania for some of the more niche competitions. It's a world where participants eat, chop and hunt their way to victory.

Packing away the pounds

At Bad Boyz Bistro in Bedford, for instance, “no pain, no gain” rings true. There, competitors have one hour to devour a nearly 10-pound meal.

“I make them sign a waiver; if you're not used to this,

you could tear your stomach,” warns owner Bryan Speck, a former member of Bedford Rural Electric Cooperative (REC). “When your body says enough, please say enough. ... I had a bride and groom get married, have their reception, come here just to do this challenge and leave in an ambulance.”

“The Terminator” challenge consists of a quadruple stack burger — topped with onion rings, jalapeno peppers, four kinds of cheese, and pulled pork — 2 pounds of fries, and a 40-ounce drink. Anyone who can pack away the pounds within the hour gets the \$25 meal for free, a T-shirt and their name on the Wall of Fame.

Visitors come from as far as California and Texas to push the bounds of their stomachs but, according to Speck, only four people have ever completed the gut-busting challenge. As a consolation prize, competitors who can't stuff it all down in one sitting walk away with enough



'YOU CAN'T': John Lopez, left, a cook at Bad Boyz Bistro in Bedford, holds a freshly prepared “Terminator,” a quadruple stack burger topped with onion rings, jalapeno peppers, four kinds of cheese and pulled pork, one of two challenges offered by owner Bryan Speck, right. The restaurant also dishes up a hot-wing challenge, known as “The Hellraiser” for the intensity of the heat.

"I had a bride and groom get married, have their reception, come here just to do this challenge and leave in an ambulance."

Owner Bryan Speck, Bad Boyz Bistro, Bedford

leftovers for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

"People still love to be able to go to work and say, 'Guess what I did?'" Speck says. "So you have to play into it ... it has to be a big thing. When they win, I try to get the whole restaurant to clap because it's a memory they're going to take back. They're going to be at their office standing by the water cooler ... and I want them to be able to talk positively about it."

For smaller stomachs, Bad Boyz has a wing challenge, which was featured on the Food Network in 2011. Don't let those 10 pieces of chicken fool you — the challenge isn't called "The Hellraiser" for nothing.

"It's 9 million Scoville [heat units] (SCU) — that's twice as hot as commercial pepper spray," notes Speck, adding drinks are not allowed during the 20-minute challenge. "A mild wing is about 50,000 SCU. When we started [the competition], it was right around 3 million SCU. People got used to that, so we stepped it up a little bit. ... I could step it up to 17 million SCU — there are ingredients out there I could buy to do that — but once you pass 150,000 SCU, it's a totally different world: You immediately start to feel [the spice], your nose starts to run, your eyes start to tear up."

That hasn't stopped regulars or first-timers from putting their tongues to the fire, so to speak. Speck, who has operated Bad Boyz for 15 years, says he usually has two Hellraiser challenges a week in the summer and at least one every two weeks in the winter. Like The Terminator competition, those who successfully conquer The Hellraiser challenge get a T-shirt, their meal paid for and bragging rights. The contest has about a 30% success rate, he says, and that's fine with him.

"Ninety-five percent of the folks who try it say they never want to see them again," Speck says with a laugh. "My

theory that I tell everyone is that if you can get past three, you have a good chance of winning. Usually, when I tell them that, they try to eat them as fast as they can, but then the heat catches up with them and they're pounding the table, tapping out."

DARYL CONNOR THOMPSON



CUTTING AND CHOPPING: The Pennsylvania Lumberjack Championships and Outdoor Show in Bedford County draws thousands of spectators each August, all eager to see who will be the best lumberjack – or jill. Athletes test their strength, precision and speed in a number of events for the chance to win more than \$20,000 in prizes.

Continued on page 12

Continued from page 11

Making the cut

After meals like these, burning some calories might be in order. Not far from Bad Boyz Bistro, Bedford REC member Zachary Brouse hosts the Pennsylvania Lumberjack Championships and Outdoor Show at Camp Living Waters in Schellsburg.

Sponsored by Stihl Timbersports, the show draws thousands of spectators each August, all eager to see who among the hundreds of competitors is the best lumberjack — or jill. Athletes from all over test their strength, precision and speed in a number of events — from ax throwing to pole climbing — for the chance to win more than \$20,000 in prizes.

“If no one was there, it would be quite boring,” jokes Brouse, owner of Brouse Forestry & Tree Care, Inc. “It’s very rewarding to see [the event] supported.

“People come out in full force every year. At competitions,

we interact with the crowd, demonstrate wearing PPE (personal protective equipment), invite people to see our tools, answer their questions and get them involved in some way.”

Brouse, an arborist and forester, picked up his degree in forestry from the Allegheny College of Maryland, but his love of all things outdoorsy goes back to growing up at his father’s sawmill business. His love of the woods — and his competitive drive to chop them down — have taken him to 35 states across the U.S., several Canadian provinces and even to Sydney, Australia, to prove his chops as a lumberjack. A father of two, he brings his daughter and son along whenever he can.

“Lots of other competitors have kids they bring along, so our kids become friends with their kids,” he says. “My daughter has been to 19 or 20 different states that she wouldn’t have had a chance to visit otherwise.”

Because the show is family-oriented, Brouse doesn’t charge admission. This year, the Bedford County event celebrates its 10th anniversary, Aug. 8-10.

“It’s for and funded by the community,” he says. “People come in and enjoy the competition and can spend their money on the community vendors supporting the event.”

The thrill of the (rattlesnake!) hunt

In northern Pennsylvania, crowds of all ages gather for an entirely different spectacle: rattlesnake hunts.

Of the numerous hunts



WRANGLING RATTLERS: Rattlesnake hunters Jessica and Wade Graham hold the prize-winners that earned them the top spot in a 2022 teams contest.

PHOTO COURTESY OF WADE GRAHAM

there, Adams Electric Cooperative member Bill Wheeler coordinates the lion's share of them, stretching from Cameron County to Wyoming County and including territory served by Mansfield-based Tri-County REC, Forksville-based Sullivan County REC, and Wysox-based Claverack REC.

Like lumberjack competitions, rattlesnake hunts are the centerpieces of large community gatherings, Wheeler says. In Wyoming County, for example, the Noxen hunt is part of a five-day, carnival-like atmosphere, complete with fireworks and live bands. In other communities, the hunts will pair with mountain-men competitions, black powder demonstrations, and wildlife educational programs, and proceeds go to local sportsmen clubs or volunteer fire companies.

"Rattlesnakes have always been a spectacle — everyone is fascinated by snakes — and we use that as a hook to bring in people to spend their money on a good cause," says Wheeler, who has been coordinating hunts since the 1980s. "When it first started, it was all just hunting, then it became a contest ... and then it became a good way to get [people] together."

While licensed hunters may harvest one snake per year, snake-hunting competitions are catch-and-release. Each participating hunter — whether it's in Sinnemahoning, Noxen, Cross Fork or Monroeton — can submit a single snake caught within a 30-mile radius for evaluation (if it's a two-person team, that means eight snakes total, which nets 10 bonus points toward the championship title). While the longest and heaviest snake is generally a shoo-in for the winner, some hunts also recognize snakes with the most rattles.

Wade Graham, a former member of Sullivan County REC, won the Sinnemahoning Sportsmen's Club teams championship hunt last year. He has been hunting snakes for more than 30 years, and since 2021, his wife, Jessica, has joined him.

"It takes up a lot of time, but we really enjoy being outdoors together," says Graham, a health, safety and envi-



ronmental representative for Cudd Pressure Control, Inc. "When we handle [the snakes], we're very careful with them. If you're very calm and not aggressive with them, they stay pretty calm and docile. Very rarely do we have one strike at us. We enjoy handling them ... when we're done hunting, we return them to the same spot we found them."

But the competition makes it that much sweeter.

"We ended up winning the Gallagher Award, which was for a team of a male and female, and that was a turning point for Jessica, because she wanted to hunt for the whole season after that," Graham says. "In 2022, we went out to four different hunts, and Jessica brought back four snakes, and we went on to win the teams state championship for 2022, 2023 and 2024.

"We really love doing this; it's one of our favorite hobbies," he adds. "Whenever the winter ends, it's all we're thinking about." 🐍

"Rattlesnakes have always been a spectacle – everyone is fascinated by snakes – and we use that as a hook ..."

**Bill Wheeler,
rattlesnake hunt coordinator**

Local Lore

Bedford Rural Electric Cooperative

The Lost Boys

“It’s 10 p.m. Do you know where your children are?”

That question, popular in the 1960s, was used as an opener to local news broadcasts following curfew laws enacted at the time. However, in the age before cellphones and instant messaging, the answer wasn’t always easy to answer.

On April 24, 1856, Samuel and Susannah Cox of Bedford County — home to Bedford Rural Electric Cooperative — realized they didn’t know the answer to this question. Samuel had gone hunting that morning, and Susannah thought their children — George, 7, and Joseph, 5 — were with him. They weren’t.

As word spread, nearly 1,000 people joined the search, which was hampered by light snow and freezing temperatures.

About 10 days after the boys went missing, a local farmer, Jacob Dibert, claimed he had dreams about looking for the children. After having the same dream three nights in a row,

he convinced his brother-in-law to join him in locating the route he had followed in his dreams. At the foot of a birch tree along Ciana Run — a stream in what is now known as Blue Knob State Park — the men found the boys cuddled together.

Tragically, it was too late. The pair had died from exposure and starvation.

Nearly 170 years later, people still journey to the Lost Children of the Alleghenies Monument — or Cox Monument — to pay their respects. Visitors can find the parking lot, located at State Game Lands 26, Bedford County, on the edge of the state park off Monument Road, 2.5 miles from Route 869.

What are the local legends where you call home? Let us know your stories at communitycorner@prea.com.



UNKNOWN NEWSPAPER PHOTO FROM 1910. PUBLIC DOMAIN

GONE, NOT FORGOTTEN: The monument for the Lost Children of the Alleghenies was erected on the 50th anniversary of the brothers’ deaths. People still visit the site in Blue Knob State Park, Bedford County, to pay their respects.



Main Office: Bedford, Pa.
Consumer-members served: 9,566
Website: bedfordrec.com

Rainbow Spotting

“I enjoy spotting rainbows. The first rainbow I see in the spring is very special. It signals new beginnings. The [Punxsutawney] Phil family celebrating the arrival of new babies and those who have overcome great obstacles like Branden [Bauer, a lineman from United Electric Cooperative who nearly lost his life in a contact accident]. I like rainbows because they encourage me and make me smile.”

Ellis Greenawalt, age 6, Bedford Rural Electric Cooperative



CALLING ALL KIDS, ages 5 to 17:

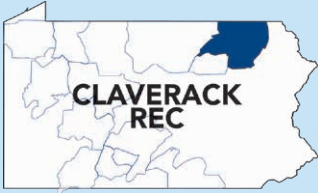
Show off your artistic skills!

Each month, we’ll feature the artwork of our young readers (or our readers’ youngsters), inspired by something they’ve read in *Penn Lines*. 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.

Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative

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CLAVERACK REC

32750 Route 6
Wysox, PA 18854
570-265-2167
800-326-9799

Email: mail@claverack.com
Website: <https://claverack.com>

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- Jennifer W. Jones, *Chief Financial Officer*
- Brian F. Zeidner, *Director, Member Services*

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Monday through Friday
7:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Casey M. Wood, *VP, Communications*
C&T Enterprises, Inc.



ENTERPRISES, INC.

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

Revolution Broadband: Expanding Connectivity in 2025



KYLE LANE

CLAVERACK'S REVOLUTION BROADBAND is poised for another year of significant growth in 2025. Fiber-optic technology is the backbone of global connectivity, with rising demand for faster speeds, greater reliability, and support for data-heavy applications like streaming, gaming, remote work, and wireless devices. The outlook for building and expanding the infrastructure is both exciting and challenging. We are committed to meeting our members' need for better broadband access.

This year, we will begin by connecting consumers in our Middletown substation area. We will continue to host open houses to educate eligible members about fiber broadband and Revolution's services. Our construction efforts will focus on the Franklin Forks and South Montrose substation areas, along with the 1,268 additional locations (homes and businesses) supported by the Capital Projects Fund — Broadband Infrastructure Program grant we were awarded in April 2024. Connections will begin in Franklin Forks and South Montrose before the end of the year. Our goal is to complete the installation of more than 350 miles of fiber in Susquehanna County.

As the federal government executes its final push to connect rural America, Pennsylvania has been allocated \$1.2 billion to distribute throughout the state. We are examining the feasibility of applying for additional funding to fill in the gaps not included in our original project.

In addition to expanding our network, we plan to expand our local team in 2025. Now that we have more than 2,300 subscribers, it has become clear that our local operation and focused attention on serving our members' needs are major contributors to our success. We plan to add field personnel to maintain our outside plant as we transition from the construction phase to the operation phase.

Revolution will continue to focus on the safety, security and reliability of our service. We diligently monitor our network to ensure the best internet experience for our customers. We also schedule periodic updates throughout the year to provide optimal performance with minimal disruption of service.

We want to remind our current and future customers that all Revolution internet packages now include ProtectIQ and ExperienceIQ, which can be accessed through the Revolution WiFi app:

- **ProtectIQ** keeps all in-home network-connected devices safe with 24/7 scanning of network threats, automatic blocking of suspicious activity and intrusion prevention to help stop viruses.
- **ExperienceIQ** provides enhanced parental controls, including the ability to block content from certain apps and websites, set screen time limits, and prioritize bandwidth by device or activity.

Additional details can be found at revolutionbroadband.net/wi-fi.

We sincerely thank all our current consumers for trusting us with your internet and phone needs. We are honored that you chose Revolution. To all our future consumers, we can't wait to connect with you! 📶

KYLE LANE
DIRECTOR OF BROADBAND OPERATIONS

Navigating 2025: Claverack REC's Rate Schedule

STEVE ALLABAUGH, PRESIDENT & CEO

AT CLAVERACK RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE (REC), we constantly monitor our costs to ensure we are financially healthy and well-positioned to deliver on our mission to provide our members with safe, reliable, and affordable power. Your cooperative has advantages that investor-owned utilities do not, which help to safeguard our rates. Despite our diligent efforts, Claverack REC members will see a modest increase in their electric rates beginning with the February bill for January usage.

Generation

Generation prices for consumers of investor-owned utilities are expected to rise dramatically in 2025 due to an increase of more than 800% in the open-market cost of electric capacity in our region. Claverack REC, along with the 13 other electric distribution cooperatives in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, maintains ownership in generation assets like the Susquehanna Steam Electric Station and Raystown Hydroelectric Plant through Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc., our wholesale energy provider. This strong partnership and investment portfolio allows us to supply approximately 65% of our power supply needs. This generation ownership also limits our exposure to the market and helps mitigate cost increases. Fortunately, while the generation portion of the bill for a typical Claverack REC residential member will increase by approximately 9% in 2025, our members will not be

Claverack REC New Rates

RESIDENTIAL, SEASONAL AND SMALL COMMERCIAL RATES

Cost of Service:	\$40 per month
Accelerated Ash Removal Charge:	\$0 per month (discontinued)
Distribution:	\$0.05585 per kilowatt-hour (kWh)
Generation and Transmission:	\$0.08390 per kWh

RESIDENTIAL TIME-OF-USE RATES

Cost of Service:	\$43.30 per month
Accelerated Ash Removal Charge	\$0 per month (discontinued)
<i>Distribution</i>	
Summer (June - September) On Peak:	\$0.05448 per kWh
Winter (October - May) On Peak:	\$0.05448 per kWh
All Off Peak:	\$0.04872 per kWh
<i>Generation and Transmission</i>	
Summer (June - September) On Peak:	\$0.2574 per kWh
Winter (October - May) On Peak:	\$0.1810 per kWh
All Off Peak:	\$0.0341 per kWh

COMMERCIAL THREE-PHASE RATES

Cost of Service:	
Secondary Service:	\$54 per month
Primary Service:	\$85 per month
Accelerated Ash Removal Charge:	\$0 per month (discontinued)
<i>Distribution</i>	
Demand:	
Secondary Service	\$8.40 per kW
Primary Service	\$7.93 per kW
Energy:	\$0.01335 per kWh
<i>Generation and Transmission</i>	
Demand:	\$3.80 per kW
Energy:	
First 400 Hours Use of Billing Demand:	\$0.07750 per kWh
All Remaining kWh:	\$0.06350 per kWh

exposed to the dramatic impacts investor-owned utility customers are expected to experience.

Distribution

In addition to power supply costs, we recently evaluated the cost of delivering power to our members, which is covered by the distribution portion of your bill. In 2025, Claverack REC's service and energy rates will increase slightly due to ongoing investments in infrastructure and operational needs amid high industry prices. However, this increase is largely offset by the removal of the accelerated ash removal charge rider at the end of 2024. This temporary surcharge, which funded the removal of dead and dying ash trees threatening our electric lines, was charged for the final time on the January 2025 bill for December 2024 usage.

Overall impact

Considering both the adjustments in generation and distribution costs, the average Claverack REC residential member can expect an approximate 4% increase in their overall electric bill in 2025. We understand that any cost increase impacts our members. Therefore, we are committed to minimizing these effects while ensuring the reliability and sustainability of our service and making prudent investments in our system. 📌

ATTENTION HIGH SCHOOL JUNIORS

COMPETE FOR AN ALL-INCLUSIVE TRIP TO
WASHINGTON, D.C., WITH THE 2025
RURAL ELECTRIC YOUTH TOUR

CLAVERACK'S STUDENT APPLICATION DEADLINE IS MONDAY, FEB. 10

From June 16-21, selected participants will have the opportunity to visit historic sites, explore world-famous museums, gain valuable insight into the electric cooperatives and the cooperative movement and have the opportunity to meet congressional leaders from Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

To be eligible for the Claverack Youth Tour, you must be a high school junior for the 2024-25 school year, and your parents or legal guardians must be Claverack REC members. Claverack REC will select and sponsor up to four students to participate in this unforgettable adventure.

To apply for consideration, submit your application by
4 p.m. on Monday, February 10.

For complete contest rules and the online application, visit
claverack.com/youth-tour.

If you have any questions or need more information, please contact
karene@ctcenterprises.org or 570-268-1332.

Official Notice of Director Elections

DEMOCRATIC MEMBER CONTROL IS ONE of the hallmarks of membership in a rural electric cooperative.

As a member, you can take an active role in democracy at Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) by running for a seat on the board of directors or voting in the director elections.

This year, Claverack REC will hold director elections for Zones 7, 8, and 9, currently served by directors Charles Bullock, Charles McNamara, and Anthony Ventello, respectively.

Duties of a director

Directors are responsible for developing co-op policies and long-term plans. They voice members' concerns and make recommendations to Claverack REC's management staff.

Nine directors comprise the cooperative's board, and each represents a specific area within the utility's service territory.

Directors serve three-year terms. Elections take place on a rotating basis, with director seats in three of the co-op's nine zones up for election each year. The board meets the fourth week of each month at the cooperative's headquarters in Wysox.

To be eligible for director candidacy, you must meet all guidelines listed in the cooperative's bylaws, which may be viewed at claverack.com. A copy of the bylaws can also be obtained by contacting the cooperative or visiting the co-op's Wysox office at 32750 Route 6.

To serve on the board, you must be a member and a bona-fide resident of the zone you seek to represent.

You cannot be employed by or financially interested in a competing enterprise or business or be a close relative of an employee or board member.

Election procedures

Residential members from Zones 7, 8, or 9 who are interested in running for a position on the cooperative's board of directors must be nominated by a petition signed by at least 15 members residing in the candidate's respective zone. Petitions and further instructions are available by contacting Annette Koder at 800-326-9799, 570-265-2167 or mail@claverack.com.

To be considered, petitions must be received by Friday, March 21. The election of directors will be conducted via mail-in ballots; therefore, adequate time is needed for the petitions to be received and reviewed by the cooperative's Credentials and Election Committee.

Qualified candidates will also be asked to submit a brief biography, which will be included with the official ballot and published in *Penn Lines*. 🗳️

AREAS SCHEDULED TO ELECT DIRECTORS IN 2025

Zone 7 includes Auburn, Bridgewater, Brooklyn, Dimock, and Springville in Susquehanna County, and Nicholson in Wyoming County.

Zone 8 includes Franklin, Great Bend, Harmony, Liberty, New Milford, Oakland, and Silver Lake in Susquehanna County.

Zone 9 includes Burlington, Canton, Franklin, Granville, Leroy, Monroe, North Towanda, Overton, Smithfield, Towanda, West Burlington, and Wysox in Bradford County; McNett and Union townships in Lycoming and Tioga counties, respectively.

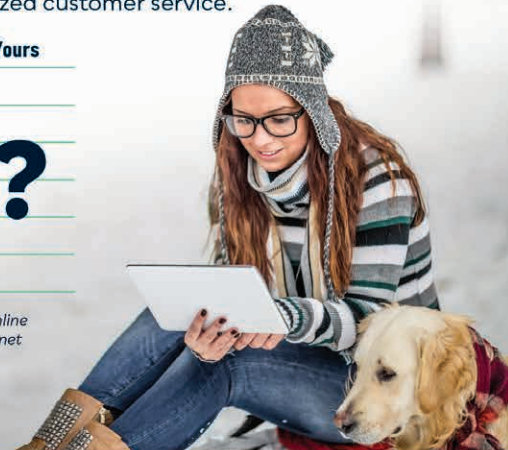
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LOCAL technical support	✓	
LOCAL customer service	✓	
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* Latency is the time it takes for data to travel from your device to a website or online game and back again. The lower the latency, the faster the response. Fiber internet has lower latency than satellite, DSL and cable connections.

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The Anatomy of a Storm

STEVEN G. ALLABAUGH, PRESIDENT & CEO

WINTER HADN'T EVEN STARTED WHEN our region was hit with the first significant snowstorm of the season on Nov. 22. As is sometimes the case with fall or spring storms, the snow was wet and heavy — the kind that is particularly destructive.

More than a foot of snow fell in large portions of our service territory, weighing down trees and wires and bringing down poles. The result was more than 13,500 Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative members without electric service that morning. The challenging conditions made it difficult for our crews to access the lines, as fallen trees and snow made travel throughout our rural areas treacherous. Many of our members were without power for several days. Despite the difficulties, our cooperative and the community came together as we worked to restore service.

After every significant outage event, our engineering, operations, and communications teams follow up to discuss what we did right and what we can improve. We also listen to our members. Following this storm, I had numerous discussions with members about our successes and their ideas for improvement, and I know many of our other employees did as well. We understand how frustrating it is to be without power, especially when cold temperatures set in. I can assure you that all of us at the cooperative want to restore service to our members as safely and quickly as possible.

The process

No two storms or outages are the same. The damage needs to be assessed carefully to effectively manage restoration efforts. Each event provides valuable lessons about how we can respond to future storms more efficiently.

During every outage, we employ universal protocols. First and foremost, we must work safely. The procedures and safety practices our crews employ every day are essential to protect them from the hazards of working around high-voltage electricity. These lifesaving measures, like grounding downed wires, performing proper lock-out/tag-out of the lines and equipment, and wearing protective gear, take time. We cannot — and will not — compromise safety by cutting corners to get the job done faster. Second, we respond to emergencies first. For example, if we get a 911 call for lines down or poles in the road, we dispatch a crew as quickly as we can to protect our members and the public.

After that, we prioritize our restoration efforts, focusing first on restoring substations and main lines/ areas. As we finish restoring larger outages, we move to more isolated lines and finally to individual service outages. This time-honored process is

employed universally by electric utilities to restore service safely to the greatest number of members in the shortest time possible. This process is also critical because even if a member's individual electric line appears to be undamaged, their power cannot be restored until the upstream electrical system is operational and all damage is repaired.

This event was particularly challenging due to the number of individual outages and damaged locations. Our crews, along with multiple lineworkers from other cooperatives and companies who responded to our call for mutual aid, restored more than 450 outages — 267 of which affected 20 members or less. We had a significant workforce, with nearly 100 workers in the field repairing damage, but it was a time-consuming process to get to hundreds of locations and make the necessary repairs. Inevitably, someone will always be last in the process. For those members who were a part of a small outage and left waiting until the very end to get power restored, we understand your frustration.

Opportunities for learning

In our post-storm assessments, we actively seek input from our members, employees, field crews and emergency coordinators. And during the follow-up to this storm, we considered ideas to safely speed up our response when the damage is so widespread. We also discussed communication, including how to provide the most accurate information to our members and EMS agencies as quickly as possible. By working together and learning from each storm, we strive to refine our processes and better serve our members in the future.

We're proud of the hard work and dedication of our employees and the mutual aid crews who worked tirelessly to restore service during the storm. Their commitment and willingness to learn from each event helps us continually improve our response.

I also want to sincerely thank our members for their patience and support. Your words of encouragement, understanding and willingness to help truly motivate us as we work to restore service during these difficult situations. With any outage, your safety is extremely important to us.

We remind you to always call our office or use SmartHub to report power outages and dangerous situations; this is imperative so we can communicate critical information and safety issues promptly to field personnel. In addition, stay at least 30 feet away from downed lines and never attempt to cut trees off utility lines of any type. Together, we can weather the storms safely. 🌩️

**Do's and Don'ts
During A Power Outage**

DO'S	DON'TS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Do call 800-326-9799 or use SmartHub to report outages and dangerous situationsDo sign up for email/text "notifications" for outage updates via SmartHubDo use generators properly and safely	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Don't use Facebook or any Claverack email options to report outages or dangerous situationsDon't get near downed lines of any type (stay at least 30 ft. away)Don't attempt to cut trees off lines of any type

More information at claverack.com/outages

WINTER WEATHER

CAN BRING POWER LINES DOWN



STAY WHERE YOU ARE

You've just been in an accident involving a downed power line. Your first instinct might be to get out and run, but that could cost you your life. In most cases, the safest place to be is inside your car or truck. Wait there until electric utility workers deenergize the power. If your car is on fire or you see smoke, escape as safely as possible by making a clean, solid jump out and hop away with both feet together as far as you can. Warn others not to approach the scene.



DID YOU KNOW:

- That downed power lines are extremely dangerous and even deadly?
- The current could spread throughout the ground and anything touching the ground?
- Stray voltage spreads like ripples on a pond?
- If you step from one "ripple" (voltage) to another you could be electrocuted?
- Downed lines could be hiding under standing water, ice or debris?

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How Co-ops Are Preparing for the Growing Demand for Electricity

SCOTT FLOOD

LAST MONTH IN ENERGY MATTERS, we examined the dramatic increase in demand for electricity and noted that America's peak demand is forecast to grow by 38 gigawatts through 2029 — the equivalent of adding another state the size of California to the nation's power grid. At the same time, power producers plan to retire more than 110 gigawatts of baseload, or always-available generation, by 2033.

When demand outpaces the supply of any commodity, prices tend to increase. With electricity, there's also the potential for rolling brownouts and blackouts.

While co-op members may not notice the impact of the supply/demand imbalance for some time, it has gotten the attention of your cooperative directors and staffs.

A decade ago, a huge commercial project might have increased a co-op's total load by 20 or 30 megawatts.

"Now they're getting multiple requests for projects in the hundreds of megawatts," says Stephanie Crawford, regulatory affairs director for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

Artificial intelligence (AI) and cloud computing are key drivers of this added demand. As use of AI skyrockets and a greater share of computer applications and storage migrates to the cloud, all that data needs to be stored somewhere. Data centers, which are massive groups of high-capacity computer servers, provide the most efficient way to handle it.

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, data centers can consume as much as 50 times the energy per floor space of other commercial buildings. A single large data center may use more than 100 megawatts of power, enough to power 80,000 households.

A changing industry

A generation ago, power supply discussions were fairly straightforward. Today's cooperative directors, however, must learn about sophisticated and challenging issues as they weigh decisions affecting their co-op's operations and financial viability for years to come.

Co-ops have long emphasized

relationship-building, and Crawford stresses the importance of doing just that with the companies developing large projects such as data centers.

"That has to include honest conversations about the costs and timelines involved," she explains.

For example, while a data center project may ultimately need a significant supply of megawatts, if its operations are phased in gradually over several years, the co-op may have additional time to prepare for the maximum load.

In addition to preparing for these projects, co-op leaders also need to keep a finger on the pulse of existing commercial accounts, Crawford says.

"Being proactive and reaching out to understand how a commercial account's energy needs may be changing in the coming years will inform conversations and decisions about timing, rate design and other factors, even if they're not making specific requests yet," she says. "That will help the co-op serve emerging needs while protecting the reliability for all of its members." ❧

About the author: For more than four decades, business writer **SCOTT FLOOD** has worked with electric cooperatives to build knowledge of energy-related issues among directors, staff and members. Scott writes on a variety of energy-related topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 electric co-ops.

About Allegheny: ALLEGHENY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC., based in Harrisburg, Pa., is a generation and transmission supplier serving 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.



A THIRST FOR POWER: As the demand for electricity continues to increase, America's peak demand is forecast to grow by 38 gigawatts through 2029 — the equivalent of adding another California-sized state to the nation's power grid.

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Cooking up Some Basic Skills

ABIGAIL ZIEGER

MY TWEEN RECENTLY MADE TWO loaves of her own bread recipe to accompany a lunch we were sharing with friends. She mixed the ingredients, set timers for the rises, and only asked me for help when it was time to put the loaves in and take them out of the oven. She is still building her skills; however, the bread was delicious and we ate every last bite.

It wasn't always like this. When the kids were little, we spent many a kitchen session giving a child a bowl and a spatula so that they could "help." We'd usually end up with batter splattered all over the counter and more chocolate smeared on their face than in the baking dish. Generally speaking, involving kids in the kitchen creates more work for the parent — more time, more teaching, more messes and more clean-up. That isn't always fun. In fact, our initial attempts to get the kids cooking and baking tried my patience more than I care to admit.

However, I know that learning to cook and bake is a worthwhile endeavor that is beneficial for all ages. Not only does a child learn an essential life skill when they learn to

cook, they also gain experience in other areas. For example, cooking requires fine motor skills, spatial awareness and mathematical calculations. It helps kids practice problem solving and think critically. It also builds their confidence. Can you envision the sense of accomplishment and pride on your child's face when they realize they've created something they can share with others?

Ultimately, making one's own food is an important life skill our kids are going to need one day. Knowing how to do this will save them money, increase their independence and help them on their journey to confident adulthood. While introducing our own kids to the kitchen may have had a rocky start, I've learned a little bit about what works and what doesn't while teaching our four kids.

First, I discovered that I needed to scale things back and start with the basics. Learning how to combine ingredients,

chop vegetables and fruits safely, and work with heat all require time and supervision. Even something as simple as measuring ingredients accurately requires some level of practice. While it should go without saying, always keep safety in mind.

Next, I learned to assign tasks that were appropriate for my kids' ages and skill levels. The youngest children can stir a bowl of ingredients or play with a bit of dough while grown-ups work. Elementary-aged children can learn how to level a cup of flour or cut lettuce with a safety knife. Older children can take charge of making a whole salad, scrambling eggs or baking something simple. As our kids have grown, we've gradually loosened the reins.


Finally, one other thing I found really helped was to work on my own patience. When kids are in the kitchen, I remind myself that it's a learning process. There are going to be messes, mistakes, goofiness, sometimes frustration and sometimes giggles. However, I found that the more I relinquish control, lower my expectations, and allow us all to learn and have



fun, the more positive our kitchen experiences become.



Lest you think my children are miniature chefs, do not be fooled. It's an imperfect process. Some of them are more willing to help with cooking and baking than others. I imagine that some will eventually cook elaborate meals for pleasure, and others will simply do the bare minimum. That's OK. My goal is to help each of them develop a basic skill before they leave the house. It may not be picture-perfect, but by one muffin-mixing, one veggie-chopping, one pasta-making experience at a time, I think we'll get there in the end. 🍷

ABIGAIL ZIEGER is a music teacher and singer by trade, but also enjoys capturing life experiences through writing. When not singing, teaching or typing, she can be found working in her kitchen, helping her kids with school or consuming copious amounts of coffee. A member of Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative, Abigail lives with her husband and four children in northeast Pennsylvania.



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ecosystems.psu.edu/forest-conference



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IT'S CONTEST TIME!

Take PENNLINES on a Road Trip

Guess who's got a big birthday coming up? It's *Penn Lines*, and we want you to be a part of our **60th anniversary** celebration. Before the confetti flies in 2026, though, we're kicking off a handful of photo contests this year; enter one — or all three.

Here are the details about **Contest No. 2:**

If you're headed somewhere far beyond Pennsylvania's borders, take *Penn Lines* along for the ride.

- Take a photo of yourself with the magazine at your destination. (Be sure to include a recognizable landmark or a sign with the location's name)
- Write a brief description of your trip (50 to 100 words) and include the location's distance from Pennsylvania.

WE WILL NEED: your name, address, daytime telephone number, and the name of the cooperative that serves your home, business, or seasonal residence

PRIZE FOR THE LONGEST DISTANCE: A \$50 gift card and your photo will be featured in *Penn Lines* in 2026

DEADLINE: Friday, Oct. 31

SEND ENTRIES TO: PennLines@prea.com (put "PL Road Trip" in the subject line) or *Penn Lines* Editor/PL Road Trip, P.O. Box 1266, Harrisburg, PA 17108-1266.



Celebrate Sweet Sensations

ANNE M. KIRCHNER

FEBRUARY IS NOTORIOUS FOR SWEETS that we share with those we love and appreciate. This year, celebrate with some unique “sweet sensations.” Start the morning with a spicy apple bread baked in a skillet. You’ll appreciate the simple preparation and short baking time.

For an afternoon treat or dinner appetizer, enjoy the complex flavors of baked brie and roasted tomatoes. The earthy sweetness paired with dark balsamic vinegar will make your heart sing. The day’s finale is a flourless chocolate cake topped with cinnamon whipped cream. Chocolate lovers can’t resist this rich fudgy cake, which offers a piece of heavenly bliss. 🍫

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



APPLE SKILLET BREAD

- 2 eggs
- 1 cup whole milk
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 3 teaspoons baking powder
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon ground allspice
- 3 Granny Smith apples, peeled and finely chopped
- 2 tablespoons raw sugar

In a mixing bowl, beat together the eggs, milk, sugar and olive oil. In a separate bowl, combine the flour, baking powder, salt, cinnamon and allspice. Slowly add the flour mixture into the egg mixture, stirring until well blended. Fold in the chopped apples. Pour the batter into a greased oven-proof skillet. Sprinkle with raw sugar. Bake the bread at 350 degrees for 35 to 40 minutes. Serve warm.
Makes 12 servings.



BAKED BRIE WITH ROASTED TOMATOES

- 3 cups diced tomatoes
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon Italian seasoning
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon coarse black pepper
- 16 ounces brie
- 1 tablespoon dark balsamic vinegar
- Crostini or crackers, for serving

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Place the diced tomatoes in a single layer on a baking sheet. Add olive oil, garlic, Italian seasoning, salt and black pepper; gently toss the tomatoes to distribute the seasonings evenly. Place the tomatoes in the oven and bake for about 1 hour. Slice the brie into 1/4-inch-thick wedges; fan the wedges around a pie pan. Spoon the baked tomatoes decoratively on top of the brie and place the pie pan in the oven for 10 to 15 minutes or until the cheese is warmed. Garnish the brie and tomatoes with balsamic vinegar and serve with crostini or crackers.
Makes 12 to 15 servings.



FLOURLESS CHOCOLATE CAKE

- 1 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips
- 1 stick butter
- ¾ cup granulated sugar
- 2 teaspoons espresso powder
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 3 large eggs
- ½ cup cocoa powder, sifted
- 1 cup whipping cream
- ¼ cup powdered sugar
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon

Grease an 8-inch round cake pan generously; lay a round piece of parchment paper in the bottom of the greased pan. Melt the chocolate chips and butter in a double boiler. Remove from the heat. Whisk in the sugar, espresso powder and vanilla. Whisk in the eggs until smooth. Stir in the cocoa powder. Spoon the cake batter into the prepared pan. Bake at 375 degrees for 25 minutes. Remove from the oven; cool for 10 minutes. Loosen the cake from the pan edges with a knife and turn onto a serving plate. Cool cake completely before serving. Whip the cream until soft peaks form. Add the powdered sugar and cinnamon; continue whipping until stiff peaks form. Serve the cake with cinnamon whipped cream. *Makes 12 to 16 servings.*

The Little-Known Way to Start Seeds

GEORGE WEIGEL

SOME GARDENERS START THEIR SEEDS indoors this time of year using sleek plant stands, heat mats, high-efficiency grow lights and domed trays.

Others go the cheaper yet still-effective route of DIY scrap-lumber stands, workshop lights from the home center and recycled seedling containers.

But there is a third seed-starting method that's the cheapest and easiest of them all: "winter-sowing." It involves starting seeds outside in winter under protective coverings. Recycled gallon milk jugs work nicely.

The main caveat is that you can't do it with just any plant. Species that despise cold soil and/or croak at anything close to freezing are not good winter-sowing bets. That includes summer vegetables such as tomatoes, peppers, and eggplants as well as most summer annual flowers, such as marigolds, zinnias, impatiens, and petunias.

However, that still leaves a fairly large chunk of the plant world that can be started via winter-sowing. These are the plants that gardeners typically start inside in mid-winter for planting outside around the end of March through mid-April. That includes "cool-season" vegetables such as lettuce, onions, and all of the cole crops (things like broccoli, cabbage and cauliflower) as well as annuals that can take a frost, such as pansies, snapdragons, and sweet alyssum.

Most herb and perennial flower seeds are also good candidates for winter-sowing.

The three main advantages of winter-sowing are: 1) it doesn't take up inside space, 2) there's no need to invest in lights, and 3) there's very



CHEAP AND EASY: Milk jug "flip-top" containers are ideal for winter-sowing seeds.

little watering or other care involved.

Watering is more "forgiving" outside than in — where it's easy to overwater and rot seedlings — and winter-sown seedlings usually turn out to be stockier than their indoor, light-grown brethren.

Here's how to winter-sow:

Step 1: Cut gallon or half-gallon plastic milk or drink jugs horizontally about a third of the way down (except at the handles) to create "flip-top" containers. Then cut small drainage holes or slits at each bottom corner with an X-Acto knife.

Step 2: Add about 4 inches of seed-starting mix to each container. Good-quality, light-weight potting mix is also fine. Just don't use heavier soil from the garden.

Step 3: Dampen the mix with water, and scatter seeds on the surface. For larger plants, place seeds individually to allow sufficient growing space.

Tamp the seeds and lightly cover with the amount of mix recommended on the seed packet for each variety. Water so the mix is thoroughly damp. Label which seed you've planted.

Step 4: Use duct tape, placed vertically on two of the sides, to secure the container and create a mini-greenhouse. Set outside in a sunny spot with the caps off.

Step 5: Open to sprinkle with water every few days if the seed-starting mix is going dry. As the weather warms,

the seeds will sprout.

Your plants are ready to go in the ground as soon as they grow one to two sets of leaves.

There's no need to "harden them off" gradually as with indoor-grown seedlings since winter-sown seedlings are already used to the outside light and temperature.

Winter-sowing allows seeds to sprout at their own pace based on current weather and gives gardeners young transplants a few weeks earlier than direct-seeding in the garden.

The combination of added warmth and an ideal seed-starting mix gives winter-sown seeds an advantage over trying to start them directly in the ground, where decreased drainage and colder soil temperatures increase the odds of rotted seed.

In general, a good time to winter-sow a particular crop is six to eight weeks before you'd like to have plants ready to transplant.

This same protective technique can be used to give summer veggies and flowers a few weeks jump on the season, but you'll have to wait until at least early spring to start those. But then that's "spring-sowing," not "winter-sowing." 🌱

GEORGE WEIGEL is a retired horticulturist, author of two books about gardening in Pennsylvania, and garden columnist for *The Patriot-News*/PennLive.com in Harrisburg. His website is georgeweigel.net.

Fireplace Efficiency: Maximize Warmth and Minimize Waste

MIRANDA BOUTELLE

Q: I heard fireplaces can make your home colder. How do I keep my home comfortable while enjoying cozy fires?

A: When I was a little girl growing up in North Carolina, I remember my dad telling me that some nights were too cold to have a fire. That always seemed crazy to me, but like many other things he said, he was right.

A heat pump heated our home. We had an open fireplace that was more suited for ambiance than creating heat. When you have a fire, warm air rises and draws the smoke

out through the chimney. This also draws the warm air out of the house. This invisible force is called the stack effect. And the greater the difference between the indoor and outdoor temperatures, the greater the stack effect, hence Dad's rule of no fires on the coldest nights.

However, if you enjoy curling up in front of the fireplace in the winter, here are some tips to efficiently operate one in your home.

Because it is out of sight, it can be easy to forget to close the chimney damper. The damper should be open when you have a fire going or when any hot ashes are in the fireplace to ensure smoke and carbon monoxide don't come into your home. Once the fire and all ashes are fully extinguished, close the damper. Leaving the damper open allows warm air to escape, wasting energy.


If your damper doesn't close properly or your chimney doesn't have one, purchase a product designed for the task. There are a

variety of chimney plug sizes and styles available, including inflatable options designed to fit snugly in place. While you are at the hardware store, pick up some caulking and weatherstripping to seal air leaks around windows, doors and pipes along exterior walls.

Fireplaces with gas logs are required to be installed with a mechanism that always keeps the damper open. This safety feature allows gases from the pilot light to escape. Glass doors can reduce the impact of air leakage in winter and summer.

Sealed combustion gas fireplaces are fully enclosed systems that draw air from the outside. When properly installed, you get the benefit of the warmth of the fire without the worry of heat loss from drafts. If you enjoy the ease of a gas fireplace, consider upgrading to a sealed combustion unit.

Turning the pilot light off in the summer can reduce wasted gas but be sure to follow the instructions in the owner's manual to avoid any potential safety issues.

Woodstoves and pellet stoves are additional options that provide more heat than wood or gas fireplaces. Federal tax credits are available for high-efficiency biomass stoves. Visit energystar.gov for more information. Also, if you have a woodstove, fireplace or any fuel-burning appliance in your home, be sure to install and maintain smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. Carbon monoxide is an odorless, colorless gas that can be harmful or even deadly if not detected. 

MIRANDA BOUTELLE is the chief operating officer at Efficiency Services Group in Oregon, a cooperatively owned energy efficiency company. She has more than 20 years of experience helping people save energy at home, and she writes on energy efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives.

MARK GILLILAND, PIONEER UTILITY RESOURCES



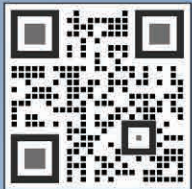
EFFICIENCY MATTERS: If your two- and four-legged family members enjoy curling up in front of the fire, be sure to lock in comfort and savings by efficiently operating the fireplace in your home.

SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

The Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association (PREA) Scholarship Trust Fund offers a range of educational scholarships and is accepting applications for the 2025-26 college year.

ATTENTION HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS:

The Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association Scholarship Trust Fund in Memory of William F. Matson is offering scholarships to high school seniors whose parents/guardians are members or employees of Pennsylvania and New Jersey electric cooperatives. Scan this QR code for more information about the scholarship and the application.



ATTENTION FORMER YOUTH TOUR STUDENTS:

The Jody Loudenslager Scholarship is available to any college-bound or current college student who was selected to participate in the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association Youth Tour program. Scan this QR code for more information about the scholarship and the application.

REQUIREMENTS & DATES TO REMEMBER:

Applicants are required to furnish necessary aptitude test scores, transcripts (high school or unofficial college, if applicable). All applications and required documentation must be emailed to Steph Okuniewski (email address below) no later than **May 5, 2025**. Finalists will be sent a follow-up questionnaire that must be returned by **June 6, 2025**. Scholarship recipients will be notified in July 2025, and will be featured in the October 2025 *Penn Lines* issue.



QUESTIONS:

Steph Okuniewski, *Member Engagement Specialist*

Stephanie_Okuniewski@prea.com

717.982.1455

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING

ISSUE MONTH AD DEADLINE

April 2025	February 14
May 2025	March 14
June 2025	April 15

Please note ads must be received by the due date to be included in requested issue month; ads received after the due date will run in next issue. Written notice of changes/cancellations must be received 30 days prior to issue month.

No ads accepted by phone/email. For more information, please call 717-233-5704.

CLASSIFIED AD SUBMISSION/RATES:

ELECTRIC CO-OP MEMBERS:

\$20 per month for 30 words or less, plus 50¢ for each additional word.

NON-MEMBERS:

\$70 per month for 30 words or less, plus \$1.50 for each additional word.

SPECIAL HEADINGS:

\$5 for co-op members, \$10 for non-members. The special heading fee applies to any heading not listed under "FREE HEADINGS," even if the heading is already appearing in *Penn Lines*. For ads running a special heading in consecutive months, the fee is a one-time fee of either \$5 (members) or \$10 (non-members) for all consecutive insertions.

PAYMENT:

Please make CHECK/MONEY ORDER payable to: PREA/Penn Lines. Insertion of classified ad serves as proof of publication; no proofs supplied.

SEND COMPLETED AD COPY AND PAYMENT TO:

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PLEASE SUBMIT A CLEARLY WRITTEN OR TYPED SHEET WITH THE FOLLOWING REQUIRED INFORMATION:

- Cooperative members should please submit the mailing label from *Penn Lines* as proof of membership.
- Non-members should submit name, address, phone number, and email address, if applicable.
- Month(s) in which the ad is to run.
- Ad copy as it is to appear in the publication.
- Heading ad should appear under, or name of special heading (additional fee). See below for FREE heading options.

FREE HEADINGS:

- Around the House
- Business Opportunities
- Employment Opportunities
- Events
- Gifts & Collectibles
- Livestock & Pets
- Miscellaneous
- Motor Vehicles & Boats
- Nursery & Garden
- Real Estate
- Recipes & Food
- Tools & Equipment
- Travel & Tourism
- Wanted to Buy

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POTTER COUNTY: HUNTING CABIN on state forest leased land. Three bedrooms, wood frame with metal roof, four miles north of Cross Fork, Pa., near native trout stream. Call Garry, 717-443-2511.

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ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

If you have a home office, look for opportunities to save energy in your workspace. Use ENERGY STAR®-rated equipment, which consumes up to 50% less energy than standard models. Set equipment like printers and scanners to automatically switch to sleep or energy-saver mode when not in use. In addition to saving energy, the equipment will stay cooler, which will help extend its life. Another way to save energy in your home office is to use efficient lamps for task lighting. Replace any older bulbs with energy-saving LEDs.

Source: energy.gov



The Paper Terminator

JOHN KASUN

MOST PEOPLE WHO FEED BIRDS toss out some mixed bird seed and stale breadcrumbs. My wife, on the other hand, stocks a variety of seeds, dried worms and suet blocks from which the birds can choose. So, a snack for the birds at my house is more like a banquet at the local country club.

My wife's dog, Abbey, always tags along on these bird-feeding adventures because even though she cannot fly, she loves to snack on the bucket of bird feed every time my wife stops to fill a feeder. The focus of this column, however, is not on what happened in the yard while feeding birds, but in the garage while getting ready.

My wife is a big believer in working efficiently, so whatever she is doing, she is sure to be doing something else at the same time. While she was in the garage filling up her bird-feeder bucket — which is next to the area in our house where Sam's Club appears to store its surplus paper towels and toilet tissues — she decided to open the door to the family room. There, she stacked several rolls of toilet tissue which she planned to distribute after completing her bird-feeding chores.

The problem is, when she finished outside and returned to the house with Abbey, she headed directly to the laundry room, completely forgetting about the unprotected and defenseless toilet tissue stacked in the family room. Abbey did not.

Now, Abbey is not a destructive dog. She has never chewed a shoe or gnawed on furniture legs, although she does gather up loose shoes and steals handkerchiefs from pants pockets and pocketbooks. Anything she takes, however, can be found neatly stacked next to the swivel chair in front of our large living room window. This is where she spends a lot of her spare time supervising neighborhood activities and maintaining household security.

Did I mention she loves tearing up paper, too? If she were a machine, she would be the Terminator of paper shredders. The few times she was able to snag the daily newspaper, she laid in the living room, tearing it apart one strip at a time. She also pulled a \$10 bill off my office desk once and quickly converted it into paper change.

I discovered her latest offense as I was taking a break and walking past the family room. I admit I had to do a double take. I went to my wife in the kitchen and told her to close

her eyes, explaining I had a surprise. I guided her gently and quietly into the family room. As we walked, she might have been expecting a ring, a necklace or maybe even a new car parked outside, but when she opened her eyes, she realized the truth. Abbey was stretched out before us, sound asleep, on what appeared to be several inches of white, fluffy cotton-like material, which turned out to be a mass of 1- to 2-inch pieces of toilet paper. An almost identical pile was in the living room. It was amazing how big a pile of scrap a dog can make out of three rolls of toilet paper if she has enough time.



As my wife stood frozen with her mouth hanging open, I said quietly, "It's going to cost a good bit to buy tape to put all of these pieces back together, and I am pretty sure it will not be comfortable to use afterward. What do you think about just patching up one roll and putting it in the guest bathroom?"

I realized then, even though a situation is extremely funny, it might be best to remain silent. 🐶

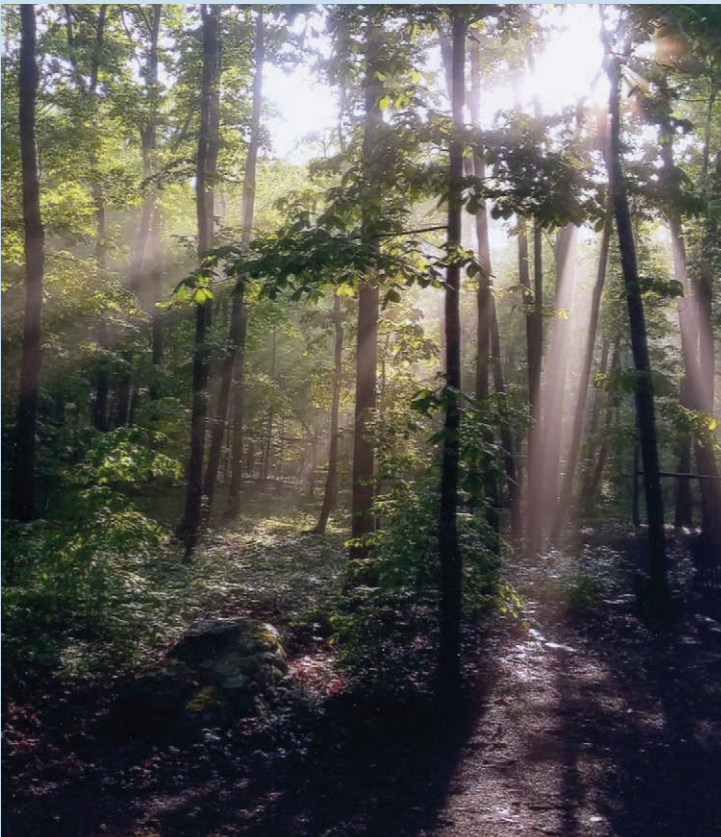
JOHN KASUN, a lifelong Pennsylvanian with more than 30 years of writing experience, looks for the humor in everyday life and then tells a story from that perspective. He is a member of Huntingdon-based Valley Rural Electric Cooperative.



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More Favorite Photos

WE FEATURED WINNERS of the 2024 Rural Reflections contest in January and awarded each of the photographers \$75. This month, we present the 2024 runners-up, each of whom will receive \$25.

In March, we will begin publishing photos submitted for the 2025 contest, so please start sending your snapshots now (no professional photos, please). See the entry information below. 📷

SAM EFFLAND • VALLEY REC



How to enter

AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHERS are encouraged to send photos for the 2025 Rural Reflections contest (no digital files) to: *Penn Lines Photos*, P.O. Box 1266, Harrisburg, PA 17108-1266. On the back of each photo, include your name, address, phone number and the name of the electric cooperative that serves your home, business or seasonal residence.

Remember: Our publication deadlines require us to work in advance, so send your seasonal photos in early. Photos that do not reflect any specific season may be sent at any time. Photos will be returned one year after receipt if a self-addressed, stamped envelope is included.

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