

JUNE 2024

PENNLINES

Beyond the Backyard

Cornhole
Competitions
Go Big

WHAT IS MUTUAL AID
AND WHY DOES IT
MATTER?

ON THE ROAD TO
GREAT FAMILY
MEMORIES

LAZY DAYS OF
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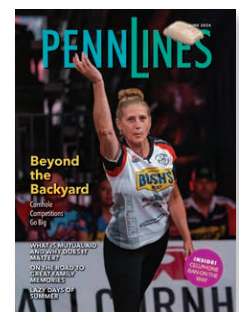
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As many as 25 million people worldwide play cornhole. Adams County's Connie Altice, who turned pro just a few years ago, is one of them.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE AMERICAN CORNHOLE LEAGUE

We've Got the Power

With Reliability at Risk, Consumers Can Help Cooperatives Keep the Lights on



STEVE BRAME

I'VE BEEN WORKING WITH RURAL electric cooperatives for more than two decades, and I've never seen energy policy get the kind of attention it's getting right now. Almost weekly, Congress is debating legislation that could have a direct impact on your cooperative and its ability to keep the lights on.

And the word is, Pennsylvania is working on its own set of clean energy policies, too.

In this climate, advocacy is important. That's why the leaders of Pennsylvania's rural electric cooperatives were out in full force this spring, participating in a pair of grassroots lobbying events in Harrisburg and Washington, D.C.

Over the course of a few weeks, co-op directors, chief executives, and staff met with hundreds of lawmakers and their staff members, and let me tell you, we sure had a lot to talk about. At the top of the list was a recent edict on power plant emissions from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

In a nutshell, the rule, one of four major new regulations issued by the EPA in April, requires existing coal and new natural gas plants to implement new carbon-capture technologies — or close.

The handwriting on the wall couldn't be any clearer: The measure will force the early retirement of always-available generation — namely, coal — as operators choose to shut facilities down instead of making expensive improvements. Meanwhile, the demand for electricity is growing. The Energy Information Administration projects power demand will reach record highs in 2024 and 2025, increasing by 2.5% and 3.2%, respectively.

Clearly, reducing emissions is a worthy goal, but the EPA's regulations rely on yet-unproven technologies as the answer. While carbon capture and clean hydrogen show promise, they are not ready or commercially available on the scale needed for power-sector adoption. The rule also contains timelines for plant operators that are unrealistic and unachievable.

Add to that the severe weather we've been experiencing in recent years. In December 2022, a severe cold snap threatened to shut down parts of Pennsylvania's power grid. It was an eye-opening experience — something none of us ever want to go through — and industry insiders believe events like this will become more frequent with the EPA's new rule. The nation's top grid monitor, the North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC), predicts more than 110 gigawatts of crucial generation resources will retire through 2033. Even worse: Nineteen states are at high risk of rolling blackouts during normal peak conditions over the next five years, NERC says.

In light of these challenges, it's clear the EPA's final rule is the wrong plan at a critical time for our nation's energy future.

Earlier, I mentioned Pennsylvania's cooperative leaders have been urging lawmakers to dial back this head-scratching rule that threatens to leave you, their consumers, in the dark. Last month, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association also filed a lawsuit to stop its implementation.

You can help, too, by going to voicesforcooperativepower.com/epa-act-now and telling Washington to find other emissions-reducing options that don't compromise the grid's reliability. Right now, we've got the power — literally and figuratively. Let's work together to keep it. 🌱

STEVE BRAME
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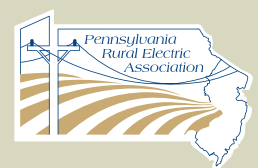
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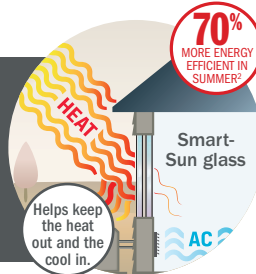
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COMMUNITY IS A TEAM SPORT

I like to look for diamonds in the sky. Baseball diamonds. When I'm flying and happen to be in a window seat, I try to find ball fields on the ground. There's something comforting about seeing their shapes nestled in corners of the communities below. Sometimes, the view puts me back on the fields of my youth.

I gave up playing baseball as a teenager, and I didn't think much about it at the time. I was in high school with plenty of other things on my mind. My dad suggested I reconsider the decision, thinking I might miss it. But what did Dad know about being a teenager? Besides, it was just a game.

The thing is, once you leave the ball field, you can never really go back. Baseball isn't something you can do on your own. You need teammates, you need coaches and volunteers. You need a community, and community is a team sport.



Deeply rooted in their local communities, rural electric cooperatives understand the importance of bringing people together. Cooperatives were established by local community members to improve the quality of life in their areas. It's why "concern for community" is a fundamental cooperative principle. Like a baseball league that fosters growth opportunities for local youth, cooperatives represent an investment in community.

My first baseball team was sponsored by our local dairy farm. We practiced on land donated by community members, including a farmer's field and a churchyard. My dad, along with other neighborhood fathers, coached my brothers and me. During the games, my mom pulled shifts in the concession stand with other parents. All these things were going on just so we could play a game. The team was much more than the nine players on the field. It was a community.

Despite my father's suggestion, I never took to the field in another game. Now that I have teenagers of my own these days, I think Dad may have known something. I did miss it. I still do. Only when I was out of baseball did I discover it was more than just a game. Some things require distance to see, like diamonds in the sky.

Happy Father's Day to all the dads out there.

PETER A. FITZGERALD
EDITOR



CELLPHONE BAN: Pennsylvania is expected to institute a ban that will prevent the use of hand-held cellphones while driving. Gov. Josh Shapiro has said he will sign the legislation, which its sponsor has called a "monumental victory."

A LIFESAVER

New cellphone ban targets distracted drivers

Pennsylvania plans to join 26 other states in banning hand-held cellphones while driving.

The ban, awaiting Gov. Josh Shapiro's signature at press time, will not go into effect until 2025, and once it does, law enforcement will only issue written warnings for the first 12 months.

The law's sponsor, Sen. Rosemary Brown (R-Monroe), said in a statement the ban represents a "monumental victory" for Pennsylvania that will protect drivers, prevent crashes and save lives. Pennsylvania's neighboring states already have similar bans.

Under the law, police can cite a driver using a hand-held device even if no other traffic offense has taken place. The first offense carries a \$50 fine.

The ban would apply to motorists sitting in traffic or stopped at a traffic light. Exceptions would include drivers who have parked safely on the side of the road or in another location, and commercial vehicle operators using a device for work. Also, drivers could use their phone to make calls and listen to music if they are using hands-free technology. In addition, phones could be used for navigational purposes or to alert emergency responders.

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation reports there were

more than 11,262 distracted driving crashes in 2023, which outnumbered the 8,330 alcohol-related crashes that occurred.

CHANGE OF PLANS

National Guard scraps low-flying training flights over Pennsylvania Wilds

After two years of backlash, the Maryland Air National Guard has dropped plans to conduct low-flying training routes for fighter jets over the Pennsylvania Wilds.

U.S. Sens. Bob Casey and John Fetterman announced in May the proposal had been rescinded. The Democrats had fought the plan along with fellow Pennsylvania lawmakers, state agencies, residents, local leaders and recreation promoters. Opponents argued the test flights, some just 100 feet above the ground, would hurt local economies, public health and safety, and outdoor recreation.

"From the moment the Air Force's proposal was announced," Casey said, "I've been deeply concerned about how low, loud, and frequent flights could disrupt livelihoods in a tranquil region that has built its identity on outdoor recreation."

In 2019, the federal government announced the training proposal, which would have allowed Air National

Guard pilots to make low-altitude test flights over the Pennsylvania Wilds up to 170 days a year. Parts of Cameron, Clinton, Elk, McKean, and Potter counties would have been impacted.

A PLEA FOR WALLY
Pa. man's pet alligator goes missing in Georgia

Wally, the emotional support alligator who gained fame after being barred from a Philadelphia Phillies game last year, has gone missing.

Owner Joie Henney, who lives in Lebanon County, took Wally on a trip to Georgia in April, where he says the pet was stolen, later trapped by officials in someone's yard and then released with 20 other gators in a swamp.

"We need all the help we can get to bring my baby back," Henney said in an emotional video posted on TikTok.

As of press time, Wally was still missing, and an attorney was working with Henney to pinpoint the animal's whereabouts. Authorities, however, have said the odds of finding Wally are "slim to none."

To follow the story, visit the "Wallygator" Facebook page, where Henney and his supporters have been posting regular updates.

BUG OFF!
DEP ready to give biting bugs the treatment

Have you ever looked forward to spending time outdoors only to have your fun ruined by biting bugs?

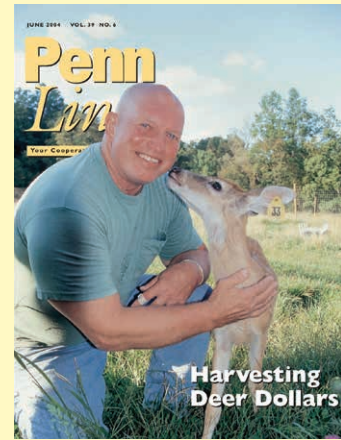
Well, the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has your back. This summer, the agency will be targeting black flies, aka biting gnats, along 48 rivers and streams spanning more than 1,800 miles in the Commonwealth.

Crews will be treating the pests from the air and ground. DEP noted that during aerial treatments, helicopters will be flying low over waterways and spreading a liquid that looks like chocolate milk. Ground crews will be wearing backpack sprayers.

The department uses Bti, a naturally occurring bacterium that degrades quickly. It's also not toxic to fish and does not harm the aquatic ecosystem, humans, birds, or other insects.

The frequency of the treatments will depend on weather and biological conditions. For more information about the black fly suppression program, visit dep.pa.gov.

TIME LINES



JUNE 2004

Big bucks – as in deer – took center stage in *Penn Lines* 20 years ago. The June feature delved into the world of deer farming, which was turning into a big business in rural Pennsylvania. At the time, nearly 1,000 deer farms were operating in the state, and the number was rising, a testament to the big bucks in big bucks, according to the Pennsylvania Deer Farmers Association. Farm-raised deer sporting world-class racks were fetching \$10,000 from sportsmen eager for a prize. Today, the number of farms has dipped to around 700 due to regulations enacted in 2014.



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SUMMER FUN

Kick off summer with a visit to the Clearfield Riverfront Festival June 7 to 9 at Lower Witmer Park. The event will feature food, fireworks, live music and activities for all ages. Learn more on the Clearfield Revitalization Corp.'s Facebook page.

CELEBRATE DAD

Father's Day is June 16, and there are lots of things you can do to make dads and father figures feel special. Bake his favorite dessert, go on a picnic, take a road trip, plan a family game night, watch a movie or just enjoy some quiet time together.



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TRAVEL BACK IN TIME

Get a taste for 18th century life during the Fort Loudoun Market Fair, June 21 to 23, at the Fort Loudoun Historic Site in Franklin County. More than 50 artisans specializing in 18th century crafts will be on-site along with food vendors and a colonial encampment. Adult admission is \$5. Learn more at fortloudounpa.com.

GO FISH

Try something new: Learn how to fish at Erie's Presque Isle State Park. Park educators and the Sons of Lake Erie will be teaching the basics to all ages at this free event starting at 10 a.m. Saturday, June 29, at Perry Monument Pavilion. Equipment and bait will be provided. Registration is required at events.dcnr.pa.gov/presque_isle_state_park/calendar.



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BEYOND THE BACKYARD

Cornhole Competitions Go Big

MICHAEL T. CRAWFORD



IN THE SPAN OF A SECOND, a hooker hammers three hangers for a four-bagger push. As onlookers gawk in equal parts disbelief and disappointment, two men reach down and pull their bags out of the hole in front of them. They can't hope to land a woody and call it a frame — they need nothing less than to sink a cornhole.

In an era of artificial intelligence and the ability to recall stories of the past with a few keystrokes, it's remarkably hard to find a clear explanation of why anyone would name a game "cornhole" and harder still to explain how the terminology evolved.

The game's origins are murky, too. Some say its roots date back to 14th-century Germany. Others claim the Blackhawk tribe of Illinois invented it. And then there are those who say a Kentucky farmer came up with the idea in the 1800s. More recently, Ohioans have been taking credit for the popular sport.

But seriously, who cares about all that when something is *fun*?

Something for everyone

The premise of the game is simple enough: Players take turns throwing small, square bags — commonly filled with resin or dried whole-kernel corn — at a raised, angled board with a hole in its far end. A game can be played against an opponent or with a pair of two-person teams, and the first to reach or exceed 21 points wins.

If you've been to an outdoor event or watch ESPN or CBS Sports, which regularly broadcast professional games, then you know just how popular cornhole has become. According to one poll, it was the most-played sport by Americans in 2022, followed by bowling and swimming. Some reports say as many as 25 million people play the game worldwide.

The allure is that practically anyone can play the game nearly anywhere — driveways, parks, tailgates, campgrounds, beaches and even indoors. Or, as the American Cornhole League (ACL), which promotes the sport for all ages and skill levels, likes to say: "Anyone can play; anyone can win."

So, if you have enough space to place two playing boards 27 feet apart, are strong enough to throw a 1-pound cornhole bag 30 feet into a 6-inch round hole and have solid hand-eye coordination, you can get in on the action, too.

Good times and a good cause

In Bedford County, Lindsay Salas has people of all ages — as young as single digits and up to their late 60s — lining



up to play cornhole for a good cause at the Bedford Elks Country Club, where each player pays \$20 to get in on a game.

With about five games going simultaneously, bags and bravado fly freely between friends and family in the carpeted hall of what is usually a ballroom.

HOW TO PLAY CORNHOLE

You don't need to be a certified pro to play cornhole. All you need is four cornhole bags, a partner who can throw said bags about 30 feet, and some relatively smooth boards with a hole in each end. Here are the basic rules so you can play with friends and family:

- ▶ Boards are placed 27 feet from front edge to front edge.
- ▶ Both players play one board at a time and stay in their designated lane for the whole game (right or left).
- ▶ Players start the game at one board and alternate pitching bags until each player has pitched all (four) of their bags.
- ▶ Players must deliver the bag with an underhanded release.
- ▶ Feet must stay behind the line of the front of the board at the time of releasing the bag.
- ▶ Players walk to the end of their lane to the other board and take score before pitching back to the other cornhole board.
- ▶ Any cornhole bag that remains on the cornhole board playing surface at the conclusion of the frame is worth one point each.
- ▶ Any cornhole bag that passes through the cornhole board hole at any time within the frame is worth three points each.
- ▶ A bag that comes to rest touching the ground and the board does not count as a point.
- ▶ The points of one player cancel out the points of their opponent. Using this method, only one player/team can score in each frame.
- ▶ The player/team who scored in the preceding frame pitches first in the next frame. If neither player/team scores, the player/team who pitched first in the preceding frame does so again in the next frame.



- ▶ If bags become piled inside the hole and interfere with or obstruct the next pitch or if there is a question about whether a cornhole bag would have naturally fallen through the hole, a player may request to "rake" the cornhole bags that have fallen inside the hole.
- ▶ Games are played to 21 or more points.

"It's a fun, simple thing to do with my son," says Brian Baldinger of Bedford between throws. "It's a nice atmosphere. The competition is friendly, and you can usually catch up with people you don't see often."

Salas, vice president of Abby's Angels Animal Haven and daughter of Bedford Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) member James Buchanan, says she decided to capitalize on cornhole's popularity to raise funds for the animal rescue, which her sister founded in 2019 (abbysangelsah.org). The non-profit, which pulls dogs from kill-shelters across the country and takes in pets voluntarily surrendered by their owners, operates entirely on donations and fundraisers, like cornhole tournaments, candy sales, and basket raffles.

"This is our third year doing winter cornhole tournaments at the Elks," says Salas, who is also the Main Street manager for Downtown Bedford, Inc. "We start mid-November and end mid-March, and we play every Tuesday night."

The organization advertises its games through the local radio station and newspaper, but predominantly operates on social media, specifically Facebook and Instagram. Like most organized cornhole games, Abby's Angels uses a tournament structure, pitting winners of two separate games — or brackets — against each other until one player eventually wins all of his or her games. Sometimes, a tournament will draw as many as 14 teams, while other times there will only be enough people for one-on-one matches.

Salas has learned, however, that if you want to draw a crowd, you've got to make it worth their while. So, winners will usually take home cash and prizes, sometimes worth as much as \$1,000.

"If you have a guaranteed payout, then you're guaranteed people are going to come," she explains. "If you do a blind draw, it's still hit or miss, but if you do a bring-your-own-partner event, you're guaranteed to have more teams, but the payout is the biggest thing. If you get sponsors to cover the payouts and you broadcast, like, 'Hey, first place gets 500 bucks,' you're going to have like 30 to 50 teams."

Going pro

While Salas admits her cornhole game is hit or miss, she says her 10-year-old son is pretty good. Thanks to the game's accessibility, it's almost never too early to give it a try.

The ACL, which is headquartered in South Carolina, opens its ranks to all comers, regardless of age or skill. Although players under 17 are placed in a juniors division, they can still achieve the rank of ACL pro — and take their shot at a share of \$1 million in prize money.

And it's never too late to start, either.

Twenty years ago, on a camping trip, Connie Altice of Aspers, Adams County, visited the recreation hall with her husband and two children, where they stumbled across a

game called “cornhole.” Their curiosity turned into a night of throwing corn-filled bags across the room. It ended with some free ice cream.

“It was something we enjoyed as a family,” recalls Altice, a former member of Gettysburg-based Adams Electric Cooperative. “We looked it up on the internet, built a set of boards and just played when we went camping.”

Four years ago, some of Altice’s camping friends invited her to join them at a regional cornhole tournament. Placed in a bracket for the first time, Altice faced 83 other players and came out on top.

“I thought, ‘Maybe I’m pretty decent at this game,’” she jokes. “So, I figured I would go down and see how I compared to other women in the United States.”

Every year in Rockhill, S.C., the ACL holds its World Championships, where players from around the globe come to play cornhole for a week with the hope of taking home titles and a share of the million-dollar jackpot. In 2022, as a relative newcomer, Altice played round after round, beating some of the best women in the sport. Then she went up against her most formidable opponent: ACL Pro Cheyenne Bubenheim, who happens to hold the most wins in ACL history.

“I wasn’t prepared for it, but I was excited to be there,” says the stay-at-home mom and grandmother. “I was a nobody, and I had just beaten all these pros. I was about to play on ESPN against the No. 1 ranked female pro in the country. I didn’t win, but it was very special to me that I even made it that far.”

Altice returned the next year as an official ACL pro, one of 256 in the United States. To achieve pro status, players must earn points at games across the country — some are blind draws, others are open to teams or individual players, and some are for ACL pros only. When selecting the lineup of pros each year, the ACL holds a qualifier tournament for hopefuls who didn’t score enough points at events throughout the year to be guaranteed a slot.

“You have to win all your games in the morning and all your games in the afternoon,” says Altice, who won the Women’s Singles B at the 2022 ACL World Championships, earning \$1,000. “You’re up against the best of the best in six games, probably 20 to 25 rounds each game, so each game lasts about half an hour to 45 minutes. It’s a very hard and very long day.”

Last year, nearly 900 players took their shot at becoming an ACL pro, says Altice, who’s held the title for three years. The ACL accepted 32 of them. Professional cornhole players can make between \$5,000 and \$25,000 per season, career adviser zippia.com reports, while top players can make as much as \$60,000 per season. Pros can also earn money from sponsorships and endorsements.

“I try to throw as much as I can because it’s not just a

mental game,” explains Altice, who placed 17th overall at the 2023 ACL World Championships, where she also co-captained the Pennsylvania Ringers, which took home the top teams title last year. “You have to have stamina. I’m not young; if I don’t stay with it, I will be tired. There are so many young kids nowadays; I’m 57, and you could step up to the board and be next to someone who’s 10 years old. And they’re good.”

For the fun of it

But you don’t have to be in it to win it to enjoy cornhole — just show up and play.

Alexis and Joseph Diehl, members of Bedford REC, find out about games on social media and online message boards, where dozens of local and regional cornhole groups coordinate competitions across the Commonwealth. While they enjoy the tournaments, the couple is just as happy playing cornhole with friends at races and other events.

“Cash is nice,” says Alexis Diehl, a regular at the Abby’s Angels’ games at the Elks, “but we play more to have fun.” 🍷



DELIVERING AIRMAIL: Connie Altice left, American Cornhole League (ACL) pro and former member of Gettysburg-based Adams Electric Cooperative, throws a cornhole bag beside opponent and ACL Pro Cheyenne Bubenheim at the 2022 ACL World Championships in Rock Hill, S.C.

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Breeze into Savings and Comfort with the Right Ceiling Fan

JAMES DULLEY

DEAR JIM: I want to install a couple of ceiling fans. What sizes do I need, how do I compare models, and which way should I set the blade rotation and when? – *Kris U.*

DEAR KRIS: Using ceiling fans can save money and improve comfort year-round. Before you go out and buy a few, however, it is important to understand how running one saves energy. If you install a ceiling fan and don't adjust your thermostat settings accordingly, you may be more comfortable, but adding to your summertime electric bills.

Running a ceiling fan in summer makes you feel cooler by creating a downward breeze over your body. Look at the pitch of the blades to determine which rotation direction makes the air blow downward. This should enable you to set your central or room air conditioner thermostat a few degrees higher to reduce overall electricity usage. Also, run the ceiling fan on medium or high speed in summer to increase the wind-chill effect on your skin.

During winter, flip the small switch on the side of the ceiling fan housing to reverse the blade rotation from summer. Run the fan on low speed so it creates a gentle upward breeze and does not create the wind-chill effect on your skin. By gently forcing the warmer air up near the ceiling out and down the walls, you will feel warmer. This should allow you to set your furnace thermostat a few degrees lower and save energy overall.

When selecting a fan, there are important design features to consider. These include the motor, blade material and pitch (twist), speed

ranges, and sound/vibration-reducing features. Most ceiling fans with a \$400 or higher price tag will likely incorporate these design features, but you can also find them on some cheaper ones. Price, however, is often a good indication of the quality of a ceiling fan.

A large motor with a cast-iron housing is better than a stamped steel one. The extra weight of the cast iron improves stability and controls heat buildup. Some of the best large motors use about 2,200 feet of copper wire, so this explains the higher cost. Sealed motor bearings are the best. A rubber-mounted hub, where the blades attach, reduces sound and vibration.

A greater blade pitch also moves more air at a lower fan speed. This reduces noise and wobble. Also, on high speed, a fan with a higher blade pitch will create a stronger breeze than a cheaper one with little blade pitch. Fans with a greater blade pitch will often have a more powerful, heavy motor, too. Look for a fan with a slow, low-speed setting, which you should use in reverse rotation during winter.

The size of a ceiling fan is rated by the diameter of the blades. This is more important during summer when you want to feel the breeze. A common sizing rule of thumb is to use a 36-inch fan for rooms up to 150 square feet, a 48-inch fan in rooms up to 300 square feet and a 52-inch fan in rooms up to 450 square feet. For larger rooms, use two fans spaced about one-quarter of the way in from opposing walls.

A remote control is a convenient



FAN FACTS: Ceiling fans can help you breeze into savings during summer and winter. Before investing in one, however, do some research on what to look for in a fan and how to operate it when you bring it home.

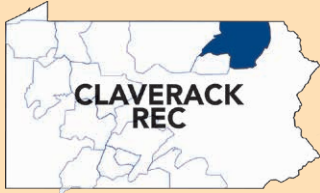
feature that can be found in both cheap and expensive models. Natural wood blades are attractive, but inexpensive ones made of synthetic materials are generally well balanced. A rubber-mounted hub reduces noise and vibration. But even the best ceiling fans may require you to attach small balancing weights to stop the wobbling at high speed.

For safety when installing a fan, make sure the blades are at least 7 feet above the floor. Most fans include 3- and 6-inch downrods. For a high ceiling, select a long downrod length so the blades are 8 feet above the floor, which is a good height for effective air flow. For lower ceilings, select a ceiling-hugger model, but realize the flow will not be as effective that close to the ceiling. 🚫

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

Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative

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Guest Column

Pollinator Habitats in Utility Rights of Way



BRIAN ZEIDNER

AS ESSENTIAL AS ELECTRICITY IS, the maintenance of electric utility rights of way is often viewed as a nuisance or a challenge. Landowners would prefer to fully use their property with their preferred trees and plantings. Your electric cooperative, however, is required to manage the vegetation around power lines. There can be consensus.

Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) maintains a 40-foot right of way (20 feet on each side of the line) for most of its high-voltage power lines. Our crews follow a maintenance schedule to spray, mow and cut these rights of way.

We are excited to share that Claverack REC is developing a native pollinator habitat evaluation program to help us determine if we can manage our rights of way with a new approach. Enhanced service reliability, reduced costs and minimal environmental impacts — while creating new habitats for pollinators — hold broad appeal for many involved in the maintenance of our 2,800 miles of rights of way. As we have considered this initiative, we feel there are many mutual benefits.

Member relationships

Landowners, forestry and wildlife resource professionals, apiary managers, naturalists, and conservationists have recognized the value of establishing and providing natural habitats for many years, especially pollinator habitats. With minimal maintenance, plant species for pollinators can be established and maintained without growing into power lines, and landowners can enjoy watching pollinators at work.

Costs

Traditional electric right-of-way management programs include tree trimming, tree removal and brush cutting. More recently, strategic spraying has been used for vegetation control. Mechanical cutting costs are high and always increasing.

Costs to establish pollinator habitat usually include spraying, no-till planter rental, seed mix purchase and employee or contractor time. Costs to maintain pollinator habitat would include occasional maintenance mowing, as well as spot treatment of tree seedlings and invasive species. Reduced maintenance costs mean lower rates — another member benefit.

Environmental considerations

Restablishing native species helps control invasive plants and pests and creates greater biodiversity in the environment. Birds, bees, butterflies, and other beneficial insects thrive in areas designed, constructed, and maintained to support them. The decline of the honeybee population in our region has concerned beekeepers for years, and increasing pollinator habitat is a proven practice to help with the recovery of bee populations. Many insects are critical to the pollination of fruits and vegetables and ultimately contribute to the nation's food supply.

Utility rights of way can also provide habitat for declining species of songbirds. Combining early successional low-shrub habitat with pollinator plantings provides

Continued on page 12B

GUEST COLUMN

Continued from page 12A

both food and cover for some of these species.

Rich, undisturbed soils are full of biodiversity, have plants with established root structures, and act as a filter for streams, rivers, and aquifers, so clean water is another byproduct of good soils.

Pollinator habitats contribute to improved water quality compared to soil-disturbing activities done with heavy, traditional right-of-way maintenance equipment. Claverack REC and landowners agree: a healthy and improving environment benefits us all.

Planning

Our native pollinator habitat program will start with lawn conversions on cooperative-owned property and may expand to member pilot projects in the coming years and potentially to larger right-of-way plantings. There will be an opportunity for review and evaluation at each phase of the project.

Projected partners include our local conservation districts, Ernst Seed Company, professional consultants,

local vendors and contractors, and cooperative staff. We also hope to develop on-site field trip opportunities for environmental civic organizations and local students and educators.

Our goal is to prepare the site and plant the seed mixes this spring in an area near the cooperative headquarters. We'll let you know the status of the project, and we encourage you to come and check it out.

With this project, we are evaluating best practices and improvements to our 2,800-mile rights-of-way management program. Through it, we will also lower our lawn-mowing costs, reduce pollution, provide quality native pollinator habitat and promote educational experiences. As an electric cooperative, whose leaders and staff live and work in the communities we serve, we value strong environmental stewardship, and we are proud to share this initiative with you. 🌱

BRIAN ZEIDNER
DIRECTOR OF MEMBER SERVICES



Three High School Juniors to Represent Co-op on Youth Tour



THREE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS FROM Claverack Rural Electric Cooperatives's (REC) service territory have been selected to join nearly 2,000 students from all over the United States in June for the National Rural Electric Youth Tour, a weeklong trip to the nation's capital, Washington, D.C. During the tour, students will visit historical sites, including the Vietnam Veterans and Korean War Veterans Memorials, the Smithsonian museums, the National Zoo, and the World War II Memorial. Selected on the basis of an application, video and extracurricular activities, the following high school students will represent Claverack REC on the 2024 Youth Tour:



Ryan Jones, son of Richard and Jennifer Jones, attends Northeast Bradford Junior/Senior High School, where he serves as the class president. He is also treasurer of the Northeast Bradford National Honor Society and a member of the Student Government Association. Ryan is involved in cross-country and track & field, where

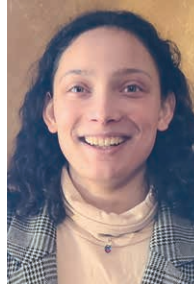
he has qualified for the cross-country state championship twice. He leads multiple volunteer teams, including one at his church, and has participated in mission trips. Ryan received state Sen. Gene Yaw's Good Citizenship Award and has been recognized for perfect attendance and exceptional academic achievement. In his community, he developed a synchronized Christmas music and light show for the public to enjoy. Ryan's goal is to run at least 1 mile per day, which he has accomplished for more than 1,400 consecutive days. He enjoys following the engineering process of Apple and Tesla through their new product development. Ryan's career goal is to become an electrical engineer and entrepreneur.



Laina Beebe, daughter of Larry and Hope Beebe, attends Wyalusing Valley Junior/Senior High School. She is actively involved in the National Honor Society and Yearbook Club and serves as the Senior High Chorus secretary. Laina participates in Science Olympiad, where she has won regional medals twice. She is also

involved in Early Morning Jazz, the spring musical and Spotlight. Laina excels in cross-country and track & field,

qualifying for the cross-country state championship twice and winning the district championship. She volunteers at her church and assists organizations, such as Rotary and Wreaths Across America. Outside of her academic pursuits, Laina enjoys running, drawing, singing, baking and cooking. Her career goal is to open her own catering business, combining her passion for baking and culinary arts.



Marisa Wise, daughter of Amy Brennan, attends the Achievement House Cyber Charter School. She is actively involved in the National Honor Society and is a founding member of the Student Ambassadors. Marisa has participated in several leadership conferences, including the Rotary Youth Leadership Awards and Pan-African

Centre for Policy Studies. As a competitive swimmer for five years, she recently joined USA Swimming and has earned multiple district qualifications and silver medals. In 2023, Marisa was named Female Swimmer of the Year for contributing the most points to her team. She has also participated in cross-country and track & field, qualifying for districts and earning various awards, including Outstanding Female Jumper and two-time Female Runner of the Year. Marisa has received an Official Commendation for Lifesaving and the Abe Snyder Award. She is heavily involved in her local YMCA and will soon begin an internship program in Tanzania. Marisa enjoys various artistic pursuits, strength training, reading and developing her YouTube channel. Her career goal is to become an electrician, studying construction and eco-energy to build sustainable homes. 🏡

ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

Did you know ceiling fans can help you save energy? Ceiling fans create a windchill effect on your skin to make you feel a few degrees cooler. Raise the thermostat a few degrees and turn on fans to reduce air conditioning costs.

Set fan blades to rotate counterclockwise during summer months and clockwise during winter months. Remember, ceiling fans cool people but don't actually lower the indoor temperature. Turn them off when you leave the room.

Source: energy.gov

**All Claverack REC
offices will be closed
Thursday, July 4,
in observance
of Independence Day**

FIBER vs. SATELLITE THE CHOICE IS CLEAR

In rural areas with limited internet service options, satellite internet might seem like a good option...

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COST	No upfront costs or equipment to install.	Initial cost can be as high as \$600, and dish installation is often DIY.
LOCATION	32750 Route 6, Wysox — the same great people you know and trust for your electric service.	The major satellite operators are in Texas, California, and Maryland.

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SWIMMING POOL SAFETY

Make sure that any lighting equipment in your pool is up to code and regularly examined by a professional. To change or repair a light, ensure the electricity to the pool is first turned off at the circuit breaker.

*If you are in the water and feel electric current, which can cause a tingling sensation, shout to let others know, try to stay upright, tuck your legs up to make yourself smaller, and swim away from anything that could be energized. **Do not use a metal ladder to exit the pool.***

*Remember, water and electricity are a dangerous mix, even outside the pool. **Never touch any electrical appliances or outlets when you are wet or standing in water.***

Learn more at

 **Safe
Electricity.org**[®]



Local Lore

REA Electric Cooperative

The Wonder of One Life

Actor Jimmy Stewart reminded audiences of the power of a single life in the Christmas classic, "It's a Wonderful Life." In the 1946 film, the trials of his character, George Bailey, show how a seemingly ordinary person can have a dramatic impact on the world.

Stewart's own life is a good example. Born in Indiana, Pa., the actor and his legacy are honored at the Jimmy Stewart Museum, which welcomes more than 6,000 visitors a year to his hometown — also the base for REA Energy Cooperative.

Obviously, the museum wouldn't be there had the man not starred in dozens

of films and Broadway shows, but what else — or who else — might be missing from the world if Stewart hadn't been around?

During World War II, for instance, then-Capt. Stewart participated in a daytime air raid against a Nazi military production facility with more than 2,000 allied aircraft. During the raid, Stewart noticed the group he was following was off course, and shortly thereafter was caught in the path of intense ground-to-air and air-to-air fire. While that group perished, Stewart managed to lead his squadron home safely without injuries or fatalities.

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



MOVIE STAR: James "Jimmy" Maitland Stewart, born in Indiana, Pa., started acting while at Princeton University. He performed on stage and in film until World War II, where he served as a pilot in the 703rd Bomb Squadron and later deputy commander of the 2nd Bombardment Wing. He resumed acting in 1946, and is probably best known for his role as George Bailey, above, in "It's a Wonderful Life."



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On the Road to Great Family Memories

ABIGAIL ZIEGER

A FAMILY ROAD TRIP CAN be an iconic vacation. For many people, it's easier to pack up the car and take a long drive than it is to catch a flight or train. What's more, road trips can be a lot of fun. I love driving with the windows down, blasting music, and stopping to see the scenery and attractions. However, if you have young kids, a long drive can sometimes be daunting.

When our firstborn was just a toddler, my husband and I decided to take a cross-country road trip all the way from New York City to San Francisco and back. We packed up our little Honda Civic with camping gear, a cooler and, of course, diapers and wipes. We were set for the adventure of a lifetime.

We ended up successfully making the journey, complete with snowy mountain vistas, desert crossings, camping in forests and plains, and only a few car troubles. Throughout it all, our toddler napped in his car seat, ambled about the tent and enjoyed the same sights we were seeing.

It's easy to get irritable and tired when you're stuck in a car together for long hours. However, we learned some things during our three-week adventure that helped make the road trip more pleasant. Now that we have four kids, we are still trying to implement them.

Let's start with food. When we get hungry, we get grumpy — kids and adults alike. Keeping the car stashed with long-lasting snacks like nuts, dried fruit, granola bars and chips can be a great strategy. We also make sure everyone has a water bottle, and we keep an extra gallon or two in the back in case we need to refill in an area with no convenient stops. For longer drives, we bring a cooler with ice and all the fixings for picnic lunches.

Next, let's talk about breaks. I know I get tired and achy after many hours of sitting in the car, so it's only natural my kids will feel the same. As much as I am inclined to get as many miles behind us as possible, being willing to

stop periodically to allow everyone a walk and a bathroom break can do wonders to break up the monotony.

Keeping a rotation of different activities that can be done in the car can also help keep spirits up. We break up the hours with audiobooks, music, tablet time or playing road-trip games. One favorite is looking for words outside of the vehicle that start with each letter of the alphabet in order. The letter X is always a challenge!

Kids also need flexibility. It's almost inevitable that something will go wrong. Carsickness may strike, or the baby will blowout his diaper. Instead of getting frustrated over these delays and challenges, we try to anticipate and

accept them. On our last expedition in the minivan, I found myself telling my kids over and over, "It's all part of the adventure."

Finally, we embrace the fun of the road trip with interesting stops along the way. If we are on our way to a final destination, we keep these breaks relatively short — perhaps a 30-minute picnic or a walk on a short trail. However, if the journey itself is the vacation, then we hit up as many museums, landmarks, and attractions as time and budget allow.

Stopping to see small-town curiosities and notable sights are part of the trip's charm.

Over the years, we've done many more road trips. None have been as lengthy or as epic as our cross-country tour, but each has been its own unique experience. I cherish the sights we've seen and places we've visited, but more than that, I love that we took these trips together. With a little preparation and flexibility, a road trip can turn from a rocky road into a memorable route. 🚗

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.



What is Mutual Aid and Why Does it Matter?

JENNAH DENNEY

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES EMPLOY a variety of methods to reduce the likelihood of power outages — from regular tree trimming and equipment maintenance and repairs to local grid updates.

Another way co-ops prepare for major outages and disasters is through mutual aid, which is a collaborative approach to emergency planning. The mutual aid model allows electric co-ops to help each other during times of need. This approach permits co-ops to “borrow” lineworkers from other co-ops to increase their workforce response to a major outage event. It’s essentially about neighbors helping neighbors, even when those neighbors work for a co-op hundreds of miles away.

Electric co-ops operate according to seven principles, and two of them — “cooperation among cooperatives” and “concern for community” — are directly connected to the mutual aid model.

Electric co-ops were formed to provide reliable electric service to their members at the lowest reasonable cost, and mutual aid is a fundamental part of their DNA. From the very beginning, electric co-ops have relied on each other to assist in times of need, and mutual aid provides an essential safety net in times of crisis.

Mutual aid ultimately benefits co-ops’ consumer-members. During major outage events, co-ops are able to increase their workforce and respond faster, leading to shorter outage times for members.

Disaster response and mutual aid are managed by electric co-ops as



SUSSEX RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

SENDING SUPPORT: When widespread emergencies occur, rural electric cooperatives band together to help each other out. That was the case in April 2023 when a severe wind storm swept through Pennsylvania. Lineworkers from New Jersey’s Sussex Rural Electric Cooperative, above, grabbed their gear and headed to Dubois-based United Electric Cooperative, which was among the hardest hit. Those lending a hand were, from left, Linemen Brian Garvilla and Jake Hasert, and Chief Linemen Jeff Rowen and Kevin Brownlee.

well as their statewide organizations. Your cooperative, for instance, works closely with the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association and Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc. in Harrisburg, which send out calls for mutual assistance across the state and into New Jersey when a member system alerts them that a large-scale outage has occurred.

Outage responses also require a variety of equipment to complete repairs, including bucket trucks and other specialized vehicles, utility poles, transformers and wires. Skilled lineworkers, tree trimmers, damage assessors and other key personnel are often shared among co-ops, too. These experts provide critical skills and manpower to speed up the restoration process.

Because the national network of transmission and distribution infra-

structure owned by electric co-ops has been built to federal standards, line crews from any electric co-op in the U.S. can arrive on the scene to provide emergency support while being secure in their knowledge of the system’s engineering.

Today, mutual aid continues to be a vital part of how electric co-ops operate and serve their members. The goal is to restore power as quickly and safely as possible after a major outage. By sharing resources, cooperatives can significantly enhance their response capabilities. In essence, mutual aid ensures members receive reliable electricity even in the face of major challenges. 📍

JENNAH DENNEY writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives.

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 **1-800-307-9811**. "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 **1-800-307-9811** 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 **PLOM624** when you call.

Lazy Days of Summer

ANNE M. KIRCHNER

Summertime is here, beckoning us to make refreshing salads. Simple to toss together and super flavorful, summer salads can be enjoyed as a full meal or as a side dish. Salads are also the perfect “take-along” dish for potlucks and neighborhood barbecues. Consider the following tips for making a tasty summer salad.

Think beyond lettuce and greens. Add color and texture with fruits and vegetables. Include grains and nuts to pack your salad with fiber, vitamins and minerals. For extra protein, use beans or legumes as the salad’s core ingredient. And to make a salad stand out, add supporting ingredients, such as a squeeze of lemon juice, grated or crumbled cheese, or fresh herbs. 🌱

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



MATISSE CHICKEN SALAD

- 1½ pounds chicken, cooked and diced
- 1 (15-ounce) can mandarin oranges, drained
- 1 (15-ounce) can pineapple tidbits, drained
- 2 ribs celery, diced
- 1 green pepper, seeded and diced
- ½ cup Greek yogurt
- ½ cup sour cream
- ½ cup honey
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon coarse black pepper

Combine the chicken, mandarin oranges, pineapple tidbits, celery and green peppers; set aside. In a separate bowl, mix the yogurt, sour cream, honey, salt and pepper. Pour the yogurt dressing over the chicken mixture; stir gently until all ingredients are coated well. *Makes 10 to 12 servings.*



MEDITERRANEAN QUINOA SALAD

- ½ cup quinoa
- 1 cup water
- ½ red pepper, diced
- ½ cup sliced black olives
- ½ English cucumber, diced
- ⅓ cup parsley, chopped
- ¼ cup pine nuts, toasted
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 8 ounces mozzarella pearls

Place the quinoa and water in a pot; bring to a boil. Reduce to medium-low heat and cover with a lid. Cook the quinoa for 10 to 12 minutes or until the water is absorbed. Remove the lid, fluff the quinoa and allow to cool. Transfer the cooled quinoa to a large mixing bowl and add the remaining ingredients. Refrigerate until serving. *Makes 6 to 8 servings.*



CHICKPEA SUNDRIED TOMATO SALAD

- 1 (15-ounce) can chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- ½ cup julienne sundried tomatoes
- ½ cup golden raisins
- ¼ cup feta crumbles
- ¼ cup chopped pecans
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- ¼ teaspoon coarse black pepper

Place all ingredients in a large mixing bowl and stir until well combined. Refrigerate until serving. For enhanced flavor, make the salad one day ahead. *Makes 6 to 8 servings.*

The Weed That's Trying to Swallow Pennsylvania

GEORGE WEIGEL

POISON IVY MIGHT BE THE poster child of bad Pennsylvania weeds, but there's another botanical squatter that beats it for sheer bulk and invasiveness.

Many Pennsylvanians might not know knotweed by name, but anyone who's walked a Pennsylvania stream-bank or driven past a damp Pennsylvania meadow has seen it.

Knotweed is that tall, white-flowering shrub that makes dense, green walls in damp, sunny areas throughout the state and most of the U.S.

You'll usually find it along streams and rivers, in roadside swales, drainage ditches, and damp meadows, and under and around bridges. But it's also versatile enough to grow in drier areas and in the partial shade of woodland edges.

That kind of tenacity is why knotweed was introduced to America from Asia in the 1800s. Besides the ornamental value of its flowers, this was a plant that would grow anywhere and solve challenges, such as stabilizing streambanks and covering strip mines.

Knotweed's never-say-die attitude, though, is also its downfall. It's spread enough to earn a slot on the World Conservation Union's list of 100 most invasive species. Three different forms of knotweed — Japanese, giant and bohemian — are also on Pennsylvania's noxious weed list, a rogues gallery of the worst plant invaders. The state Department of Agriculture classifies knotweeds as "Class B" weeds, meaning they're widely established and beyond hope for eradication. In other words, knotweed is here to stay.

What can you do?

Although leaves drop and plants die back in fall, knotweed's underground parts are cold-hardy to minus-31 degrees.

If you try cutting the plants, the runners, or "rhizomes," which can be up to 20 feet long, just send up new shoots. And if you leave behind any dug-up roots or cut-off stems, those fragments can root in moist soil. This is a plant that doesn't give up easily.

So what can you do?

Penn State Extension recommends a combination of cutting and treating the regrowth with a kill-the-roots herbicide, such as glyphosate.

It suggests cutting knotweed plants in June, then waiting at least eight weeks to spray the regrowth. Spraying is most effective later in the season when plants are storing sugars in the roots for winter, taking herbicide along for the ride.

Penn State Extension also suggests spraying herbicides twice — in early summer and late summer — as another option. Either way, it's likely to take at least two seasons for good results.

Penn State Master Gardener Joan Jubela of Wayne County, who has

How to Identify Knotweed

- ▶ Plants grow in dense, leafy colonies 10 to 15 feet tall. New shoots are reddish-purple.
- ▶ Leaves are green, arranged alternately on stems and shaped like elongated hearts. Japanese knotweed leaves are about 6 inches long. Giant knotweed leaves can grow nearly a foot long.
- ▶ Flowers are white, mildly fragrant and grow in long, spiky clusters in late summer. Non-native honeybees like their nectar.
- ▶ Stems are hollow (similar to bamboo) and arranged in a zig-zag pattern on the plants.



ONE TENACIOUS PLANT: Japanese knotweed grows in tall, dense, green walls and produces spiky white flower clusters in late summer. It's spread enough in Pennsylvania and elsewhere to earn a slot on the World Conservation Union's list of 100 most invasive species.

battled knotweed along the Delaware River for 25 years, says her strategy is to "cut, cut, cut" since she'd rather not spray herbicides around waterways.

She cuts once in late May or early June, then again in early to mid-July. Besides weakening the plants, the double cutting stops flowering, which in turn stops any seeding, she says. Jubela then piles the cuttings so they dry and don't migrate to root on bare soil.

Once knotweed is knocked back, something else should be planted or encouraged so knotweed — or some other invasive — doesn't immediately reclaim the space.

Jubela and Penn State suggest native damp-leaning perennials, such as sneezeweed, Allegheny monkey flower, wild bergamot, blue vervain, and Joe Pye weed; woody plants such as dogwood, willow, and St. John's wort; and grasses such as switchgrass, wild rye, and prairie dropseed. 🌱

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.

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September 2024	July 15
October 2024	August 15

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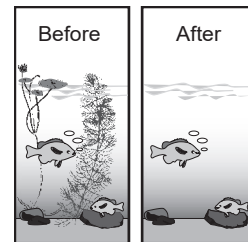
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Taken Down in an Elevator

JOHN KASUN

WHEN IT COMES TO THE spoken or written word, I've always considered myself quick-witted and creative. I was a legend in my own mind — kind of like a gunfighter in the Old West, where you had to live by your wits and be faster on the draw than your opponent.

After graduating college, I taught electronics for the military for several years. It was challenging work because most of the students joined the Army to either drive a tank or shoot a machine gun. Instead, they were assigned to electronics school, where they learned how to maintain and repair missile launching control systems. It's tough enough teaching electronics, but when you're teaching it to people who aren't interested, it borders on the impossible.

I quickly learned the best way to get students interested was to pepper the class with as much humor as possible. Most of my classes consisted of 80% of the students laughing and learning, while the other 20% kept asking their classmates, "What did he say?" I became very good at controlling the class with what I called "wit and charm." When my service was complete, I returned to civilian life and brought my newly honed communications skills with me. These skills came in handy during business meetings and corporate presentations as well as at the numerous hunting seminars I presented at sports shows. I was able to hold people's interest, make the points required and draw the group into a cohesive unit wrapped around a common objective. I was very comfortable in front of people and never got nervous.

However, communicating for a living is like riding a motorcycle. Just when you feel you are in total control, it's time to sell the motorcycle. That is exactly what happened recently when I met "Chaplain Barbara," who serves patients at our local hospital.

My wife and I were visiting a relative at the hospital

and heading up to their room in a crowded elevator. The elevator stopped, and a small woman with neatly combed hair with hints of gray bounced through the open door. She was attractively dressed, wearing a casual scarf around her neck that was adorned with decorative pins.

As the doors closed, she turned to me and said, "You're the fellow who writes those humor columns in the local paper aren't you?" Flattered she recognized me I replied, "Why, yes." But before I could add another word, she took total control of the conversation.

"You are really funny, and I enjoy your columns," she said before turning to my wife — about whom I often lovingly write — and blurting, "I don't know why you let him write about you the way he does. If I were you, I wouldn't let him do that, and I certainly would give him the what-for!"

Just as she finished the elevator stopped, the door opened, and she bounced out like a bunny rabbit — gone in a flash. As the door

closed, I found myself in an elevator full of total strangers, all staring at me as my mouth hung open and my ego hung in shreds on the floor. For someone who prided himself on being quick-witted, all I ever got to say was, "Why, yes." If this had happened in the Old West, I would have never even got my gun out of the holster. I felt as if I had just gone up against a cross between Wyatt Earp and Wild Bill Hickok with a touch of Calamity Jane thrown in for good measure.

Chaplain Barbara, if you happen to read this column and give advanced communications classes, sign me up because it seems I definitely have more to learn. 🍷

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.

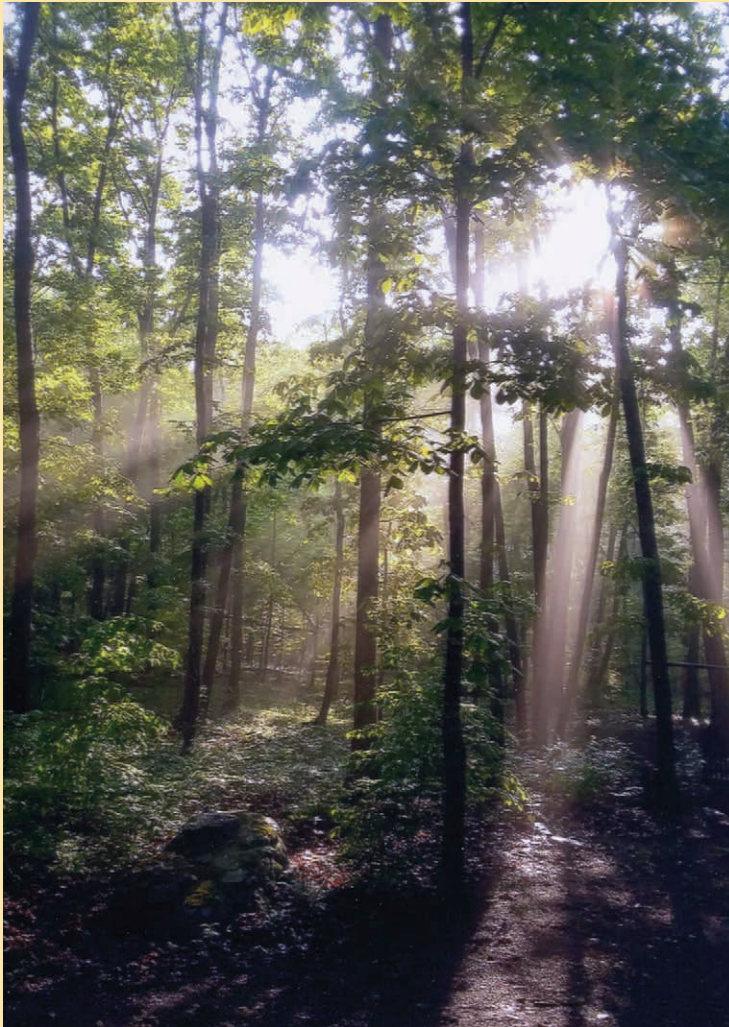


Lighten Up

THE SKY BRIGHTENS EARLIER and earlier these days, making it mighty easy to grumble about how we wish we were able to squeeze out just a bit more sleep. But take a cue from nature and look on the bright side — there's plenty of little things to smile about in the morning that you just don't get to see in the dark.

While the light's shining, make sure you photograph what you see and enter your creative images in this year's Rural Reflections contest. Winners in five categories (artistic, human, landscape, animal and editor's choice) will receive \$75 each and runners-up will each receive \$25. 📷

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How to enter

AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHERS are encouraged to send photos for the 2024 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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