

MAY 2025

PENNLINES

Rural and Proud

For These Pennsylvanians,
the Only Way to Live is
Off the Beaten Path

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JEFF FETZER

The Card family of Warren County is among many who have put down roots in rural Pennsylvania.

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ON THE COVER

Sisters and entrepreneurs Stephanie and Hayley Painter have a mission: to highlight rural living and champion the American farmer. And it all started at their family's Tioga County dairy farm.

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EDITOR
Peter A. Fitzgerald

MANAGING EDITOR
Jill M. Ercolino

SENIOR TECHNICAL EDITOR
Michael T. Crawford

LAYOUT & DESIGN
Kaylin E. Acri

ADVERTISING & PRODUCTION
COORDINATOR
Michelle M. Smith

CONTRIBUTING COLUMNISTS
**John Kasun, Anne M. Kirchner,
Yvonne Butts-Mitchell,
Steve Piatt**

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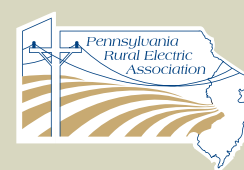
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Choosing Rural

Despite Population Challenges, the News Isn't All Bad for These Regions



DR. KYLE C. KOPKO

WHEN THE U.S. CENSUS BUREAU released its 2024 county population estimates, we observed a long-familiar trend: Rural counties of the Commonwealth, on average, lost population.

Now, this is not true of every rural county — indeed, several in the Northeast, for example, have gained new residents since the pandemic, boosting their net population count.

The general reason why we are seeing a decline is an imbalance between our birth rate and death rate. Since 2009, rural counties, on average, have had a higher death rate than birth rate. That is one component of population

change; the other often gets overlooked: migration patterns. That is, people moving in and out of an area. And this is where U.S. Census Bureau data confirmed another long-term trend: Rural counties have generally seen more people moving in than out, which is truly a bright spot for rural Pennsylvania.

When people have the ability to “vote with their feet,” they choose rural. We should acknowledge and celebrate this fact.

In the wake of the pandemic, millions of Americans rediscovered rural, and the data shows this to be true. Since 2020, the Census Bureau estimates 46,623 more residents moved into our rural areas than moved out. And why not? From their natural beauty and abundant outdoor recreation opportunities to their charming and historic downtowns, rural communities have so much to offer people of all backgrounds.

But there are other reasons why many individuals are choosing rural. Based on the Center for Rural Pennsylvania's latest cost-of-living analysis, it costs about 6% more to live in an urban county than a rural one. As a result, later-in-life professionals, remote workers and entrepreneurs are opting to move into rural communities. And for families with children, school districts in our rural counties have higher graduation rates, on average, than schools in our urban counties.

There are also more opportunities to get involved in our rural communities and make a meaningful difference — whether it's volunteering at the local fire company, supporting a local church or non-profit organization, or even serving on an electric cooperative board.

But perhaps the No. 1 reason to live in a rural area is the most obvious: the people. I have traveled to all 48 of Pennsylvania's rural counties. And while none of them are exactly the same, there is a similarity worth noting: Whether someone was born and raised there or moved from another place, I have consistently found that rural Pennsylvanians care deeply about their communities and their neighbors.

They are not afraid to lend a hand, and they also want to ensure their communities remain resilient for years to come. That dedication matters. While data trends may not always paint the picture we would like, we should never lose sight of all the good that is happening in our rural regions and what draws people to them. That is why I am optimistic for rural Pennsylvania's future. 🍷

DR. KYLE C. KOPKO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
THE CENTER FOR RURAL PENNSYLVANIA



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LIVING LEGACY

Market turmoil, tariffs and talk of trade wars. Shifting alliances and American isolationism. Executive orders transforming American society.

No, these aren't today's headlines. This is 1930s America. The country is still reeling from the Wall Street crash of 1929. Tariffs – implemented to protect farmers – have only worsened the Great Depression. Fresh from the Great War, the United States turns its attention inward, focusing on its own domestic troubles. Amid these turbulent times, President Franklin Roosevelt issues a series of executive orders to help put the country back on track.

Today's rural electric cooperatives represent a living legacy from that era. Ninety years ago this month, Roosevelt signed Executive Order 7037, establishing the Rural Electrification

Administration (REA) – part of his sweeping New Deal effort to restore hope and rebuild the economy.

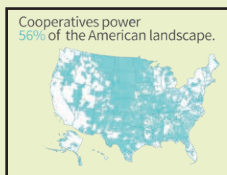
At the time, 90% of rural homes lacked electricity. The REA provided funding for communities to establish cooperatives and bring life-changing electricity to the American countryside. Today, nearly 900 electric cooperatives serve more than 42 million people across 56% of the American landscape. The 14 electric cooperatives in Pennsylvania and New Jersey reach more than 600,000 rural residents.

Built, owned and governed by those they serve, these co-ops remain integral to their communities, providing not only electricity but also powering local economies. Likewise, REA's legacy lives on through the Rural Utilities Service, part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Initiatives like the USDA's Empowering Rural America (New ERA) program continue to invest in rural communities. Like the original programs that helped spur the development of rural electric cooperatives, New ERA is helping today's co-ops address energy needs, modernize grids, and make energy more affordable and accessible.

Recently, Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc., the power provider for Pennsylvania and New Jersey's cooperatives, was awarded approximately \$20 million in New ERA funding. That funding will go toward a power-purchase agreement, helping stabilize costs for cooperative consumers in the region.

This effort was driven by your local cooperative leadership, and it reflects the same goals of the very first cooperatives established through the REA. It's a continuous effort to find solutions for rural communities. Cooperatives were born out of this effort, and that legacy lives on.

PETER A. FITZGERALD
EDITOR



TURTLE TIME?: A bill is making its way through the General Assembly that would designate the eastern box turtle as the official state reptile. State Rep. Perry Stambaugh, the former editor of *Penn Lines*, proposed the measure after a visit with first-graders at Juniata Elementary School in Mifflintown.

SLOW AND STEADY

Turtle inching closer to becoming state reptile

The state House Game and Fisheries Committee approved a bill that would designate the eastern box turtle as the Commonwealth's official state reptile. The legislation, sponsored by state Rep. Perry Stambaugh (R-Perry), now moves to the House of Representatives for consideration.

Stambaugh, the former editor of *Penn Lines*, told the committee the idea came to him while visiting with first-graders at Juniata Elementary School in Mifflintown. When questioned why the Keystone state doesn't have a state reptile, Stambaugh asked

students what they thought it should be. One student recommended "one of those yellow turtles we see on the roads all summer long."

That "yellow turtle" is the eastern box turtle, which can live to be more than 100 years old. Habitat loss, however, has made the turtle an at-risk species.

Stambaugh believes designating the turtle as the state reptile will help conserve it as well as other turtles, snakes and lizards.

GOING BATTY

Pennsylvania company hits home run

Victus Sports of King of Prussia has become the talk of the diamond after

CONSUMER FEEDBACK SOUGHT ON GRANT PROJECT

Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc. (Allegheny), the wholesale energy provider for rural electric cooperatives in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, is expanding its energy portfolio with a grant of up to \$20.5 million from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The funding would translate into direct savings for consumer-members and allow Allegheny to reduce pollution and carbon dioxide emissions by nearly 100,000 tons annually. Visit prea.com/community-benefit-plan to learn how the funding will improve energy reliability and affordability for rural Pennsylvanians and to offer feedback.

New York Yankees sluggers pounded nine home runs in an early spring game using the company's unusually shaped bat.

The design features an end that resembles a bowling pin as much as a torpedo.

Victus isn't the only company manufacturing bats with a bulge, but they are among the first to sell them online after the Yankees made them an overnight sensation. Calls and orders have been coming into the company's base near Philadelphia ever since. The company made only a dozen or so of the bats in 2024, but orders reached into the hundreds per week early in this season.

The bat's odd shape has little to no effect on how it is made, and the cost is similar to a standard bat, with a sticker price around \$200. The torpedo bat complies with all Major League Baseball bat rules.

OH, DEER!

Harvest numbers up in latest hunting season

The Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC) reports hunters harvested about 11% more deer in the 2024-2025 hunting season than they did

the year before. An estimated 476,880 deer were taken — 175,280 of them antlered and 301,600 antlerless.

The uptick was partly by design, PGC Deer and Elk Section Supervisor David Stainbrook said, noting the objective was to reduce deer numbers in areas impacted by chronic wasting disease, forest damage and population increases. Beyond that, he said, many variables can impact harvest totals from one year to the next.

"We caution reading too much into annual variation in harvest," he said. "The trends in data are what give a truer picture of what's going on."

Across the state, about 28% of hunters took an antlered deer. That's the highest success rate since at least the late 1980s. And, as has become the norm since the implementation of antler point restrictions, most of those bucks were older ones. Two of every three were at least 2.5 years old. That's a huge change from decades ago, when most of the harvest was made up of 1.5-year-old deer.

The PGC's harvest estimates are calculated using antlered and antlerless harvest reports submitted by hunters in combination with data from processors across the state. 🦌

TIME LINES



MAY 2015

A decade ago, *Penn Lines* reported on the near-extinction of the American chestnut from blight in the past century and efforts to revive the historic species in eastern North America. The work of The American Chestnut Foundation and its chapter representing Pennsylvania and New Jersey continues today with the development of a disease-tolerant and genetically diverse population of trees that are adaptable to a broad and changing climate. Learn more at patacf.org.



SOMETHING'S FISHY

Anglers of all ages are invited to participate in St. Leo's 21st Annual Trout Derby, May 10 and 11, along the shores of Elk Creek in Ridgway, Elk County. Raffles, games, entertainment and food are also planned at the event's headquarters, the Ridgway Firemen's Grounds. Learn more at stleofishingderby.com.

CELEBRATE MOM

We all have special women in our lives, so let them know how much they mean to you on Mother's Day, May 11. A phone call, a handmade card, breakfast in bed, doughnuts and coffee from a favorite place, or maybe even a morning hike are all thoughtful ways to show your appreciation.



UNLEASH YOUR ARTSY SIDE

Celebrate the unique spirit of Appalachian culture and tradition at the Edinboro Art & Music Festival, May 16 to 18, in downtown Edinboro, Erie County. The free three-day event will feature live music, children's activities and workshops, dancing, art shows, local artists, jam sessions, yoga, pilates, and more. Learn more at edinboroartandmusic.com.

LET OFF SOME STEAM

A good time awaits at the Spring Gas-Up, May 17 and 18, at the Portersville Steam Show Grounds, Butler County. Visitors will enjoy a vintage village, tractor pulls for kids and adults, farm animals, a flea market, crafts, food, and more. Admission is \$5 per person and free for children, 11 and under. Find out more at portersvillesteamshow.org.



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RURAL and PROUD



For These Pennsylvanians, the Only Way to Live is Off the Beaten Path

JEFF FETZER

Penn Lines Contributor

Pennsylvania's rural population has been on a steady decline for decades, but the appeal of living off the beaten path remains as strong as ever.

The Commonwealth boasts the third largest population of rural residents in the nation, at more than 3 million strong. Of the state's 67 counties, 48 are designated as rural by the Center for Rural Pennsylvania, with those residents spread out across 75% of the state's land mass.

Although researchers worry about deeper population drops over the next 25 years (see article on page 18), rural Pennsylvania continues to beckon people from all walks of life.

Take the story of two sisters who grew up on a family dairy farm in Tioga County, left for college and to see the world, and returned to build a thriving yogurt business to sustain their family's legacy.

Or the investment banker from Sullivan County who spent years living in New York City and Australia's two largest metropolises, only to retire to her home county. Today, she's spearheading an effort to build a pioneering health and wellness center there.

Then there's the woman who left the bustling streets of the Bronx in search of wide-open spaces and close-knit communities and wound up restoring a house and several dilapidated cabins in Huntingdon County.

And of course, there are those, like the administrative assistant at the Warren County Visitors Bureau, who never left – and never plan to.

These stories are more than anecdotes; they represent a growing movement of people who see the value in the land, the community, and the lifestyle that rural Pennsylvania offers – despite the statistics.

FARMING FOR GENERATIONS: The Painters – Stephanie, Hayley and their dad, Clinton – overlook their 5,000-acre Tioga County dairy farm, which has supported four generations in this rural part of Pennsylvania. Although the sisters left for a time, they always knew they would return. In 2022, the pair started a successful yogurt brand and business at the farm.

Continued on page 10

'Barefoot and wild'

Stephanie and Hayley Painter grew up “running barefoot and wild” on their family’s organic dairy farm, Painterland Farms, in Tioga County. When they weren’t milking cows, feeding calves, or doing other farm chores, the girls played sports, hiked in the woods and rode four-wheelers. They also dreamed of raising their own families on the farm, which receives power from Mansfield-based Tri-County Rural Electric Cooperative (REC).

The siblings always loved farm life, especially working with family — siblings, cousins, parents and grandparents — to support the 400-head dairy operation. But they learned at an early age that financial struggles are common.

“When I was in third grade, I remember getting off the bus, and our dad and grandpa were sitting there crying when we got home,” Hayley recalls. “They were getting their milk dumped for three weeks straight, and they thought if something didn’t change, we would have to sell.”

While Painterland Farms survived, many of the neighbors’ farms did not. And the instability of the milk market and resulting financial scares remained in the back of the sisters’ minds.

JEFF FETZER



“We always knew we were going to do something together on the farm,” Stephanie says. “We always knew we were going to get back to our roots.”

A plan takes shape

After graduating from college — Stephanie holds a business degree from Susquehanna University and Hayley earned an animal science degree from Iowa State University — the pair traveled internationally and took a months-long road trip across the United States to tour farms and make connections.

Their goal: to preserve their family’s rural way of life. “We didn’t know exactly how we were going to do that,” Stephanie says, “but we had a million ideas.”

They ultimately settled on producing Icelandic-style organic yogurt using milk sourced from the family farm. Partnering with a co-manufacturing creamery in Carlisle, Pa., Painterland Sisters Organic Skyr Yogurt began production in March 2022. Described as thicker, richer and more nutrient-dense than other yogurts, Painterland Sisters found a niche, and success came quickly.

“We were national in about three months,” Stephanie says. “That’s almost unheard of. Our second full year in business, we were in stores in all 50 states and sold about \$4 million worth of yogurt. Last year, we reached \$12 million in sales. This year, we are on track to sell \$30 million worth of yogurt, and we will be in about 6,000 locations nationwide by the end of the year.”

In addition to sourcing milk directly from the family farm, the business also supports an additional 25 organic dairy farms, mostly in Pennsylvania. “That means we can keep farmers farming,” Stephanie says. “The yogurt is giving us a voice for the change we want to make.”

That change, Hayley adds, ensures farming and rural traditions continue. Ultimately, though, it’s helping to revitalize their rural community. The sisters have more than 15,000 Instagram followers and host numerous public events on the farm each year. Through these channels, they’re striving to engage consumers and the community about the benefits of farming and being good stewards of the land.

“We want to bring the farm to the world,” Hayley says, “and the world to the farm.”

'I've always come back to Shunk'

While the Painter sisters returned to their rural roots while still in their 20s, Mary Baumunk Blondy took a longer, more

WARREN COUNTY IS HOME: Lisa Card, a seventh-generation Warren County resident, shares her passion for rural living and local history with visitors who stop by the Warren County Visitors Bureau, where she serves as the administrative assistant.

SOMETHING ABOUT SHUNK: Mary Baumunk Blondy pauses before setting out on cross-country skis along the Summit Loop, a hiking trail on the grounds of the future site of The Summit: Center for Wellness near Laporte, Pa. A former investment banker who lived in New York City and abroad, Blondy has returned to her native Sullivan County, where she's leading an effort to create a much-needed health and wellness center for the community.

circuitous route to get back to her native Sullivan County.

Mary grew up in the tiny community of Shunk, where her family owned the village's general store and a lumber company. After graduating from Sullivan County High School in the late 1970s, Mary attended St. Lawrence University in Canton, N.Y., earning a degree in economics. Mary's first job was with The Chase Manhattan Bank in New York City.

Her career and marriage took her many places, including Australia, where she and her late husband, Steven, lived in Melbourne and Sydney for six years, New Jersey, and North Carolina. Eventually, though, Mary returned to Pennsylvania, purchasing a home overlooking Loyalsock Creek in Sullivan County in 2018.

"Wherever I've lived around the world, I've always come back to Shunk," she says. "I always consider [Sullivan County] my favorite place in the whole world."

A member of Forksville-based Sullivan County REC, Mary, now retired, says she loves the area's scenic beauty, tranquility and outdoor opportunities. She enjoys figure skating, cross-country skiing, fishing, kayaking and, especially, swimming.

Like many kids in the area, Mary learned to swim by taking lessons at the home of Bill and Lucy Sick in Dushore. The couple allowed instructors to use their in-ground pool to offer swimming lessons to the community for around 50 years, Mary says.

"Lucy passed away in 2017," Mary recalls, "and I was at the funeral, and I said, 'Where is everyone going to learn to swim?'"

Now she's spearheading a project to address that question. It's The Summit: Center for Wellness, which will offer an indoor swimming pool and track, a fitness center, exercise classrooms, community rooms and outdoor hiking trails.

Mary established the Loyalsock Foundation in 2019 to build The Summit. Since then, the organization has secured 72 acres near the Sullivan County High School in Laporte to house the \$20 million facility, which Mary hopes to open in the next five years.

"I'm trying to find a good way to give back to the area that I was raised in," Mary says. "I'm using my experiences in life, from working in finance to building a house, and bringing that together with my passion for swimming and living a healthy lifestyle for this project."

Despite the scope of the project, she says she has received

JEFF FEITZER



considerable support from businesses, government entities and the community. Mary has no doubt The Summit will be built.

"It will get done," she says. "It will happen."

Born and raised – and stayed

While it's not uncommon for young people to grow up in a rural community, move away and return later in life to raise families or retire, there are plenty of folks who never leave.

Lisa Card, a seventh-generation Warren County resident, is among them.

"I never left," she says. "I never wanted to, and I never will. I love everything about where I live. I love walking through town. I love walking in the woods. I like the peace. I don't like congested places, noisy places. I like what rural living has to offer."

More than anything, Lisa cherishes the sense of community.

"If my car broke down anywhere in this county, I could walk up to the nearest home and ask for help, and I'd receive it," she says. "What I like most is that people here come together, and they help one another."

She found that out firsthand in 2023. Her husband, Mike, suffered a massive heart attack, and she was diagnosed with lymphoma. Mike has since recovered, and Lisa's cancer is in remission, but during that difficult period, the family received an outpouring of community support.

"I had hundreds of people call me," she says. "Friends, neighbors, and even people I didn't know were asking what they could do to help. I got an anonymous check

for \$1,000 in the mail. You don't realize the goodness of people. It just humbles you."

Lisa's affinity for her community and home county, coupled with a passion for local history, prompted her to apply for a job as the administrative assistant with the Warren County Visitors Bureau about three years ago.

"Out of 110 who applied for this job, I got it," she says. "Not because of my education, but because of my love for the county and my knowledge of it."

The bureau, located on Route 6 between Warren and Youngsville — where Warren Electric Cooperative is headquartered — receives about 4,000 visitors a year. Lisa is the enthusiastic woman behind the counter, sharing local history, highlighting upcoming events, shopping, and dining opportunities, and directing folks to points of interest, like nearby Kinzua Dam and the Allegheny National Forest.

Like most of Pennsylvania's rural areas, Warren County is experiencing a population decline, but Lisa is doing her part to highlight its attributes. She says getting visitors to shop and stay locally boosts the economy and promotes the area to prospective residents.

"I love my life here," she says. "We got married here. I had my kids here. Everything significant in my life is here and, when something happens, people here have your back."

'I'm going country'

Growing up in the Bronx, Monique "Moe" Payne's only connections to rural living came from television shows and visits to City Island, a nearby neighborhood where her mother would treat her to a horseback ride each summer.

Yet, from childhood on, she says she dreamed of living in the country. She loves animals and appreciates greenery, noting her mother, who is Caribbean, always maintained a small vegetable garden on their city lot.

After getting a degree in human services, Moe moved to Wilkes-Barre, where she worked for the school system and owned a beauty shop. She met her husband, Robert, online. He had a good job with the Port Authority of Allegheny County, so Moe moved to Pittsburgh in 2009.

"Before I moved out there, I told him, 'I don't know where this relationship is going, but I'm going country,'" she recalls, adding she dreamed of having horses and land.

Robert had lived in the Steel City his entire life and wasn't as enthusiastic about the idea of rural living, but he relented. "He was so sweet," Moe says. "I was on realtor.com, and every weekend we went shopping for land. I was looking for 100 acres and a house."

After three years of searching, Moe found her Pennsylvania dream home: a 50-acre site near Raystown Lake with a house and nine rental cabins in various stages of disrepair.

They closed on the property in 2016, and Moe immediately moved to Huntingdon — by herself — and began updating the buildings and clearing the overgrown property, which had been vacant for at least seven years.

"I was here four years by myself," Moe says, noting her husband had to work those four years before he could retire and join her at what is now called Urban Saddle Ranch. The property now encompasses 150 acres, and the updated cabins, featuring a rustic western decor, are rented as vacation get-aways.

As a lifelong city resident, Moe admits she experienced some culture shock when she first moved to the remote mountain property. But, she says, she immediately fell in love with rural life.

"You don't know none of your neighbors in the city," she says. "They ain't waving at you. Here, they wave. When I first moved here, everybody was bringing me eggs. It was just more homey, and I always wanted that."

Moe says she is blessed to live in such a beautiful area with great neighbors. "They're gonna cremate me and spread my ashes right here," she says. "I'm not going anywhere." 🍷

STAYING PUT: Growing up in the Bronx, Monique "Moe" Payne only knew city life. That changed a few years ago when she and her husband, Robert, bought a 150-acre campground in Huntingdon County, revived the business and embraced the slower pace of life. "Here," she says, "they wave."



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Local Lore

Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative

The No. 1 Rambler

Many decades ago, the term “hobo” referred to a specific kind of migrant worker, and the “king” of these freight-train stowaways hailed from Cambridge Springs, home to Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative.

The community — formally Cambridgeboro until the discovery of mineral springs prompted a name change in 1897 — was settled in 1822 and quickly grew into a resort town. Less than a century later, the town became a hobo hotspot, thanks to the descriptions of one Leon Ray Livingston in his book, “The Ways of the Hobo.”

Livingston, also known as “The Rambler,” referred to Cambridge Springs as idyllic, delightful, and charming, and it was here he recovered from and wrote about his many ventures. Traveling under the moniker “A-No. 1,” he developed a graffiti system that informed fellow

rail-riders about jobs and free food and steered them toward generous people or away from unwelcoming communities.

Others tried to impersonate Livingston, so he always carried some of his published works and a scrapbook of his adventures with him. Livingston wrote 12 books before settling down in Erie with his wife, Mary, in 1914. He worked in the electric and steel industries and eventually became a traveling lecturer, warning families against the very way of life he had followed.

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



THE RAMBLER: Leon Ray Livingston, the self-appointed “King of the Hobos,” wrote 12 books about the lifestyle before warning others against it. He wrote his works in Cambridge Springs and Erie, where he lived until his death in 1944.



Main Office: Cambridge Springs, Pa.
Consumer-members served: 20,289
Website: northwesternrec.com

Lighting the Way

This month’s artwork comes from 9-year-old Megan Grammer, whose aunt receives electricity from Cambridge Springs-based Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative. Megan saw a lighthouse when she was on vacation and knows that it is important that they don’t lose electricity. Thank you for sharing your picture with us, Megan!

Megan Grammer, age 9, Northwestern 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 okay! 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.



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Guest Column

REVOLUTIONizing Electric Distribution: The Power of Fiber-Optic Technology



NICK BERGER



KYLE LANE

FIBER-OPTIC TECHNOLOGY HAS BECOME ESSENTIAL to modern infrastructure, **REVOLUTIONizing** industries, from telecommunications to energy, and transforming businesses of all sizes, from small member-owned enterprises to large corporations and everything in between.

Fiber optics enhances performance, reliability and efficiency in electric distribution systems. When Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative embarked on its fiber-optic construction project, we emphasized the need for reliable communications channels. Providing fast, reliable broadband internet to many of our members was crucial, but enhancing communication capabilities for our electrical infrastructure was equally important. During our build, we dedicated fibers specifically to Claverack REC's electric system.


Fiber optics allows real-time communication between electric substations, field devices and our offices. With high-speed data transmission, we can monitor the health of the grid, detect faults and make adjustments to prevent potential issues. It allows for quicker response times and more efficient management of our electric distribution system.

Advanced sensors provide immediate feedback on the status of the grid, detecting real-time issues, such as voltage drops, line failures or short circuits. This promotes faster restoration and reduces outage times, ultimately ensuring minimal impact on our members. This type of monitoring traditionally occurs at substations, but with using our fiber network, we can deploy this capability to field devices, too. We'll continue to install more sensors as our fiber system grows.

Outside of communication, the fiber project has enabled the cooperative to make other improvements to the system. We are replacing aging poles, shortening spans and relocating lines to more accessible areas.

In addition to these benefits, our co-op-owned, private-fiber network significantly reduces our vulnerability to outside attacks. Simply put, by limiting the interaction of our remote devices with the public internet, it's easier for us to fend off cyberattacks.

While the initial installation of fiber-optic infrastructure can be costly and time-consuming, the long-term benefits are substantial. Reduced maintenance costs, improved system efficiency and a quicker response to outages translate into savings for our members. This partnership between electric and fiber is truly **REVOLUTIONary**.

Fiber optics enhances communication, reliability and operational efficiency in electric distribution systems, bringing vast advantages. As the demand for smarter and more sustainable energy solutions grows, fiber-optic technology will continue to play a role in the future of electric distribution. 

NICK BERGER, SENIOR DIRECTOR OF ENGINEERING & OPERATIONS

KYLE LANE, DIRECTOR OF BROADBAND OPERATIONS

A Local Legacy Reclaimed

CASEY WOOD, C&T VICE PRESIDENT OF COMMUNICATIONS

IN THE HEART OF ROME, PA, passion meets craftsmanship, and quality is reborn. Northeast Wood Products, established in the 1990s by Dave Oley and left vacant for nearly 15 years, has found new life thanks to the vision of two local entrepreneurs, Jake Park and Mike Goodenow. While Northeast Wood Products primarily produces recently cut, kiln-dried, FSC Certified Pennsylvania Hardwoods, it also provides essential services for Modern Timber Craft, which focuses solely on reclaimed wood.

Jake and Mike, both Northeast Bradford High School alumni, grew up in this tight-knit community surrounded by vast woods, the medium at the heart of their products. They began their journey to revive the business in July 2021, driven by a shared passion for woodworking and a deep connection to their roots.

Jake's journey and inspirations

Jake, inspired by his father, Jan, whom he fondly describes as “an engineer without a degree,” inherited a wealth of practical knowledge and ingenuity from his dad.

“If he wanted something, he just made it, fixed it, restored it,” Jake says. “He was an auto-body guy, plumber, welder, electrician, Boy-Scout-manual-worthy campfire maker and excellent problem solver. He instilled a lot in me. I guess maybe that’s why I have an appreciation for making stuff out of wood, particularly out of reclaimed wood.”

Jake grew up on a non-working farm, where his neighbor and bus driver, Walt Burrowes, who is a master craftsman and operated a small family sawmill, built his house and everything inside it, including the cabinets, flooring, and furniture. Jake can still remember the scent of the wood.

Between his dad and Walt, Jake was surrounded in

youth by two incredibly talented men who influenced his passion for woodworking and entrepreneurial pursuits.

“I can remember I was an 80-pound kid with a one-speed bike and two Radio Flyer wagons, and I would transport the largest log I could cut down and bring it back to the house to create something,” Jake recalls with a smile.

The fascination with reclaimed wood

Jake has always found barns both “intimidating and fascinating,” a sentiment that fuels his passion for working with reclaimed wood. Each piece of wood tells a story, and Jake commits to uncovering and sharing these stories with his clientele.

“The history behind the wood — where it came from and what it was used for — is something I always aim to learn more about and pay tribute to in some small way,” he says, “even if it’s just by sharing the information with others through our website.”

Professional growth and business ventures

Jake graduated from Bloomsburg University in 2004 with a degree in communications. He moved to Philadelphia and worked for his landlord, a real estate developer, renovating properties in lieu of rent. In 2006, he became the operations manager at his landlord’s new cabinet business, RTA Cabinet Store, helping to develop the website and the e-commerce side of the business, which grew into a company with \$10 million in annual sales. Jake reflects, “nearly all of that RTA success was attributed to my business mentor, Gary Nealon.”

In late 2014, after tearing the porch off his 1930s twin apartment as part of his renovation duties, Jake was left with beautiful red oak beams. After a few cuts and reclaiming those beams into 5-foot mantles, he eventually sold them on Amazon. This led to the establishment of Modern Timber Craft, another thriving business Jake owns and operates with his wife, Raquel, in Bridgeport. Raquel is the customer service agent for both businesses. “She should really teach a course on customer service, as she is brilliant,” Jake says.

As a self-employed business owner, Jake acknowledges the challenges, noting, “The only thing you fully control is your customer service, your product, and your website,” emphasizing the importance of Revolution’s reliable and fast internet for their business and livelihood.

After spending weeks tearing down old barns in search of reclaimed wood, renting an old cinder-block garage for his materials and adding a few part-time employees, Jake discovered that sourcing materials directly would help the business grow faster, and he’s followed this strategy ever since.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF JAKE PARK



CARVING A NICHE: Northeast Wood Products co-owners Jake Park and Mike Goodenow discuss plans for the day to fulfill a large online order, ensuring top-quality craftsmanship and timely delivery.

Craftsmanship and quality

Northeast Wood Products specializes in working with various hardwoods, including cherry, hard maple, and red and white oak, as well as poplar, a softer hardwood, and pine, a softwood. The crew welcomes unique requests for pieces made from sycamore, beech, walnut, or other types of specialty woods.

With few limitations on what they can create, they focus a lot on flooring, baseboards and crown moldings. The business' finished products are Forest Stewardship Council-certified and free from medium-density fiberboard and other harmful chemicals, ensuring both quality and safety.

"One of the challenges that we encounter is that the mainstream is often concerned more about the look than the quality of the product," Jake explains. "If you want both — the look and quality — we're your place. We work with contractors, builders, homeowners and individuals."

Embracing modern technology

As members of Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative utilizing Revolution Broadband service, Jake and Mike have leveraged the power of modern technology to transform Northeast Wood Products. Most of the business' operations are driven by e-commerce, with their website serving as the primary platform for sales and customer engagement. This digital presence is crucial, allowing them to manage their business efficiently and reach a broad audience.

"Having reliable and fast internet access is vital to our success," Jake explains. "It enables us to quickly and

effectively manage our website and sales, even from our rural location in Rome, Pa."

A testament to community and resilience

Northeast Wood Products stands as a testament to what can be accomplished when local talent, community support and modern technology converge. In recognition of Small Business Month, we encourage you to support local enterprises like Northeast Wood Products. Buying local strengthens our community. 🇺🇸

SCAN ME!



PHOTOS COURTESY OF JAKE PARK

CHIP OFF THE OL' BLOCK: A young Jake Park sits on a log with his father, Jan. Now the proud co-owner of Northeast Wood Products, Jake's passion and inspiration for woodworking are deeply rooted in these cherished moments with his dad.

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We're halfway through our fiber build, and we're incredibly proud of the progress we've made. Claverack is grateful to those who have chosen Revolution internet. We look forward to making more connections this year.

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Ask Mother Nature: to Plant or Not to Plant?

BRIAN ZEIDNER, DIRECTOR OF MEMBER SERVICES

I AM EXCITED TO REPORT on the progress of our native pollinator habitat project at the cooperative's headquarters in Wysox. We expect many benefits from our project, including improved environmental stewardship, the evaluation of new right-of-way management strategies, educational opportunities for local students and groups, and reduced lawn maintenance costs.

Over the past year, we have shared a lot of information about our project in *Penn Lines* and on our website. We've discussed our planning process and partners, defined what pollinators do, invited you to share and use the site, and discussed how we maintain our rights of way. All this information, along with some great photos, is available at claverack.com/native-pollinator-habitat-project.

We had hoped to have native flowering plants and wild-flowers by now, but we have had some challenges. Last summer, we prepared the three-acre plots with herbicide and planned to plant our selected seed mixes in the fall using a no-till drill to avoid erosion.

However, the fall weather was too warm, and we didn't want to take a chance on seed germination. So, in coordination with one of our partners, Pheasants Forever, which owns the no-till planting equipment, we waited for cooler weather. Instead of cooler weather, however, we got extremely cold weather, and the ground froze, making planting impossible.

One of the lessons we learned from this project is to be flexible because, like Mother Nature, plans change. As I write this article, we are discussing timing to ensure the equipment is available and monitoring the ground temperature in preparation for spring planting.

We will plant our native wildflower seeds as soon as the weather cooperates. When we do finally get the planting completed, we'll be sure to take photos and add them to the website we've created for this project.

We hope you have enjoyed learning about our lawn-to-native-pollinator-habitat transition project. When the plants and flowers bloom and the pollinators stop by for a visit, we hope you do, too!

We also invite you to stop by our website for updates. 📺



POWERING PROGRESS: ONGOING SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS

NICHOLAS BERGER,
SENIOR DIRECTOR OF ENGINEERING & OPERATIONS

It's that time of year when we are in full swing of another busy construction season. Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) has a \$2 million budget this year dedicated solely to system improvements and upgrades. Last year, we successfully rebuilt more than 10 miles of line. We aim to achieve a similar milestone in 2025.

Before discussing the specifics of our slated projects, it's important to understand the overall strategy and process for line rebuilds and upgrades.

Project selection is based on several key factors. At the forefront, in 2020, an external engineering group developed a 10-year, long-range plan that analyzed potential system growth and overall performance. This data has been vitally important to our strategic planning. The assessment has resulted in plans and projects to enhance the functionality of our distribution system. We use this data and other reliability considerations, including infrastructure age, budget, and current system conditions, to develop a yearly project list.

Once projects are identified, our engineering group starts working on them. Each project is engineered a year ahead of the construction. For example, the 2025 projects were engineered in 2024.

One of our main objectives is to increase the accessibility of our facilities. Landscapes, for example, have changed since we built our system, and in some cases, pastures and fields are now wooded. Our engineering group works with landowners to secure new easements, allowing us to install facilities closer to roads or in areas that are easier to access. In the long run, these projects will save substantial maintenance dollars and help reduce outage times, thereby improving overall reliability for our members. We greatly appreciate our members' understanding in these areas and their support in allowing us to improve our system. If you have provided an easement for a line relocation, thank you – this is a win for all members and the cooperative.

In 2025, Claverack REC has approximately 10 miles of system improvements planned. We have already completed our first major project in the Middletown substation area. Additional projects are planned in the Brooklyn, Franklin Forks, Meshoppen, Monroeton and Steinbach substation areas. These projects include facility upgrades, such as new poles and conductors. Additionally, as I mentioned earlier, we will also be relocating lines to more accessible areas. These projects will have a significant impact on our distribution system.

I am happy to discuss these projects in greater detail with our members. Please feel free to call our office or visit the engineering and operations table during our Member Appreciation Event. Claverack REC is continually working to improve our system, and we sincerely appreciate our members' cooperation.

May is Electrical Safety
Month, and safety is at
the heart of our mission
at Claverack REC.



A blue tractor is visible in the background, working in a field. In the foreground, a young corn plant is growing out of the soil. The sky is cloudy and the overall scene is a rural farm setting.

GROW

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- **ALWAYS HAVE 10 FEET** of clearance surrounding the live lines — even if no contact is made, an electrical current can arc or jump.
- **STAY AWAY** from a sagging or downed line; call 9-1-1 to have the utility dispatched.
- **USE A SPOTTER** with a broad vantage point when operating machinery around power lines.
- **TEACH** the 10-foot clearance rule to anyone working on your farm and review power line locations.

Learn more at **SafeElectricity.org**

 **Safe
Electricity.org**

Power Life Safely

May is Electrical Safety Month

ABBY BERRY

EVERY MAY, ELECTRICAL SAFETY Month serves as a vital reminder of the importance of preventing electrical hazards at home. Electricity powers nearly every aspect of modern life but, if handled improperly, it can pose serious risks, including injuries and property damage.

By following key safety practices, you can reduce the risk of electrical hazards and ensure your family stays protected not only this month, but also

year-round. Here are five essential tips for powering up safely at home.

1. Be vigilant. Regularly inspect your home's electrical system for any signs of damage or outdated components and replace any frayed electrical wires or cords. The Electrical Safety Foundation International estimates roughly 3,300 home fires originate from extension cords every year, either from overloading, overheating or fraying. If you're relying on extension cords as permanent power solutions, consider contacting a qualified electrician to install additional outlets where you need them.

2. Use surge protectors.

Safeguard your sensitive electronics and appliances with surge protectors. These handy devices help divert excess voltage from your electronics, reducing the risk of damage or electrical fires. Not all power strips include surge protection, so read the product label carefully. Additionally, surge protectors can lose effectiveness over time and should be replaced when damaged or outdated.

3. Practice safe powerstrip use.

Avoid overloading electrical outlets with power strips that exceed the outlet's capacity. High-energy devices, like heaters, microwaves and hairdryers, should be distributed across multiple outlets. Overloading an outlet with "busy" power strips can lead to overheating and create a fire hazard, so be sure to check the power strip's wattage rating before plugging in items.

4. Don't mix water and electricity. It may seem obvious,

but accidents involving water contact with electrical items happen. Always keep electrical appliances and devices away from water sources, like sinks, bathtubs, and swimming pools. Make sure your hands are dry before touching any electrical switches or appliances. Ground-fault circuit interrupters should be installed in areas where water and electricity are typically in close proximity, including kitchens, bathrooms, and outdoor outlets.

5. Educate family members. One of the best ways to ensure the safety of everyone in your household is to talk about electrical safety. Teach children not to play with electrical outlets or appliances and ensure they understand the potential dangers of electricity. Create and practice a home fire escape plan that includes electrical safety precautions in case of emergencies.

Practicing electrical safety at home is essential for protecting your family, property and peace of mind. Remember, electrical safety isn't just a one-time effort — it's a year-round responsibility. Taking these steps can help ensure a safer, more secure home for you and your loved ones. 🏡

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

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



POWER-STRIP PROBLEMS: Avoid overloading electrical outlets with power strips that exceed the outlet's capacity.

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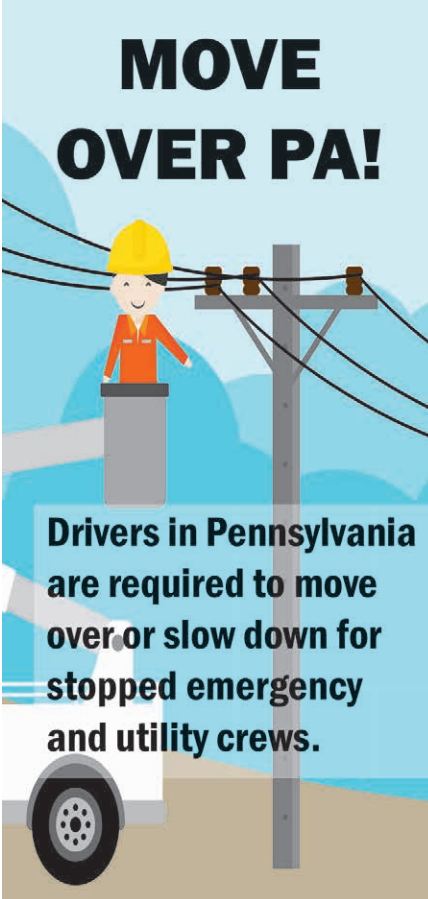
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NEXT STEPS

Commission Looks for Answers to Revitalize Rural Pennsylvania

JEFF FETZER

Penn Lines Contributor

IT SEEMS ALMOST PARADOXICAL to consider that one of the looming challenges facing rural Pennsylvania is population decline.

By its very nature, “rural” translates to fewer people inhabiting a given geographic area. That paucity of population is a big part of the appeal for those who choose to live in the relative tranquility of the Commonwealth’s countryside.

But the delicate balance between rural charm and demographic challenges is beginning to tip in an increasingly concerning direction. While the allure of open spaces and solitude continues to attract some to rural areas of the state, the broader trend is the continuation of a decades-long population slide — a shift that carries significant implications for the future of the state’s rural counties.

Moving the needle

A study released by the Center for Rural Pennsylvania (Center) in October 2023 projects that by 2050, the population of the state’s 48 U.S. Census-designated rural counties will shrink by 5.8%.

That indicates an acceleration of a downward trend that began as far back as the 1960s and ’70s, according to Dr. Kyle C. Kopko, executive director of the Center, a bipartisan, bicameral legislative agency that serves as a resource on rural policy for the General Assembly.

“On top of that, there are fewer young people and more senior citizens,” Kopko says. “That’s going to create a wide range of policy pressures and is one of the reasons we have had workforce issues in recent years.”

To address these challenges and stabilize the slide, state lawmakers last year created the Rural Population Revitalization Commission, an outgrowth of the Center.

Kopko, the commission’s chairman, says the 15-member group is a fact-finding body tasked with making policy recommendations and attracting and retaining rural residents.

Last fall, the commission hosted 10 listening sessions in rural communities statewide to share demographic data and seek local input.

“The trends that we’re talking about here have been decades in the making,” Kopko says, “so it’s going to require a concerted effort over time to address them. The trick is, first of all, we’ve got to start small. We have to be able to identify some pretty concrete solutions here that are pragmatic and can move the needle in the right direction.”

While issues vary from region to region, Kopko says some of the most frequently cited areas of concern center on housing and community infrastructure, childcare, elder care, broadband access, and health care.

Finding a balance

The ability to retain youth is another universal concern, he says.

“We want to ensure our young people realize that there are opportunities in rural areas, and we want them to stay and be the next generation of leaders,” Kopko says. “Unfortunately, when it comes to things like youth retention, we don’t really have a lot of great information as to why young people want to stay or want to move away.”

While “brain drain,” a phenomenon in which educated people migrate from their hometown to work or live in another location — usually for higher wages or more opportunities — contributes to declines in rural population, it’s not the main factor, according to Kopko.

“What’s really driving population change is the birth and death balance,” he says. “Yes, there are migration issues

that we need to worry about, but the fact that we have an older population and fewer young people is the No. 1 driver right now. We're simply having smaller families, and we're not at the 2.1-births-per-woman replacement rate."

Over time, this population decline could lead to serious consequences.

"It's not going to be a pretty picture," Kopko says. "That's why we're trying to take action now. At some point, some of these communities are going to have severe contraction of their economic base and their tax base."

Even though Pennsylvania is shedding rural residents, even while making slight gains in urban counties, primarily in the south-eastern part of the state, rural living remains appealing to many.

"Pew does surveys from time to time asking respondents if they could live in any type of environment — rural, suburban, metropolitan — what would it be?" he said. "And rural always gets the plurality of answers."

The attractions to country living are obvious: natural beauty, outdoor recreation, clean air, less traffic, slower pace and, generally, a lower cost of living.

"They're beautiful communities," Kopko says. "These are places where you have excellent quality of life. You get to know your neighbors. You can make a real contribution

in these types of areas. You're also going to have a sense of history, charm."

Ready to listen

But drawing people to those areas to stem the population decline is much more complex than simply touting the benefits of rural living.

"The first thing we have to determine is if a community even wants to go that direction," Kopko says. "That is something that has to be addressed at the local level. And this is why we want to make local capacity such an important early goal of the commission."

"If a community wanted to attract new residents but it doesn't have the ability to market or plan for that, it's not going to get very far."

With the commission's listening sessions complete, the group has started holding hearings to gather additional public input.

"We're going to be out in the communities, and these are all open meetings for folks to come out and talk with us," he says. "It's necessary that we hear regional perspectives and ideas on what would benefit their communities."

Kopko also encourages rural residents to provide feedback and suggestions to the commission directly at commission@rural.pa.gov. They can also visit rural.pa.gov to learn more about the Center for Rural Pennsylvania, the commission and upcoming hearings. 📍



REVITALIZATION COMMISSION



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE CENTER FOR RURAL PENNSYLVANIA

REVITALIZING RURAL: Dr. Kyle Kopko, center, who chairs the state's new Rural Population Revitalization Commission, is shown at a recent meeting with the group's members. After statewide hearings, the commission will make recommendations to help rural communities retain residents and address other challenges, including housing and health care.

Tips to Beat the Energy Peak

MIRANDA BOUTELLE

DEAR MIRANDA: What does “beat the peak” mean, and why should I care about it?

A: When your electric cooperative talks about “beat the peak,” it is a call to action for energy consumers to reduce electricity use during periods of highest demand. Using less energy during peak times can ease the strain on the electric grid, benefit your

cooperative and help to lower your electric bill.

Electricity generation and energy supply must match consumption in real time to ensure safe, reliable power. Every moment of every day, an entire workforce monitors energy use, adjusting power plant production up or down as needed to keep the grid balanced.

As energy demand grows, all of us can do our part to use less. To put this in perspective, peak electricity demand is expected to increase by 38 gigawatts over the next four years, according to the Energy Information Administration. That’s like adding another California to our nation’s power grid.

Peak time varies for each electric utility but typically occurs in the morning when people get ready for the day and in the evening when they return home from work and school. During these times, we turn on lights, cook, adjust the thermostat, run the dishwasher and do laundry — to name just a few energy-consuming activities.

Typically, the price of power increases when demand is higher. Reducing your electric use during peak times can help lower market prices for everyone and lessen stress on the electric grid.

Electric cooperatives set electric rates to cover costs. Some utilities have time-of-use rates that reflect higher costs during peak demand periods. Whether you have time-of-use rates or not, these tips can help keep costs down for your utility and establish smart off-peak energy habits.

As a general rule, I try to spread out my use of equip-


ment and appliances. For example, I avoid washing dishes and clothes, and cooking all at the same time. Running a lot of hot water will cause your water heater to use more energy, too.

Increasing the energy efficiency of your home can lower its impact on the grid, too. Weatherize windows and doors and add insulation to improve comfort. You can also upgrade to energy-efficient appliances or use energy-saving features on existing appliances.

If you haven’t already, switch your incandescent lighting to LEDs, which use at least 75% less electricity and last up to 25 times longer, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. There are many affordable options on the market.

Schedule your dishwasher run time. My dishwasher, which is several years old, has a “delay-start” button. This is also handy if your dishwasher is loud. Setting it to start after you go to bed shifts that energy consumption to off-peak hours, and you don’t have to hear it.

Running your washing machine and dryer during off-peak hours can help, too. If you’re in the market for a new washer or dryer, look for a model with a high integrated modified energy factor and a low integrated water factor to save water and energy.

Small changes at home can make a big difference to the energy grid. Incorporate these energy-wise habits into your daily routine. 

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



BEAT THE PEAK: As energy demand continues to rise, find ways to use less energy during peak times to ease the strain on the electric grid.

Rent a Goat – A Great Gift for Moms and Dads

MITCHELL KYD

“HOW ABOUT SOME HELP with the yard work?”

Is that the response we’re all afraid we might get if we risk asking moms and dads what they’d really like for Mother’s or Father’s Day? Game tickets or dinner out is so much easier, but what if you could give something they would really appreciate? Have you considered renting goats?

A quick query online confirms that yes, you can find goats for rent. Visit hiregoats.com, a worldwide collective of goat owners, for your introduction to nature’s sure-footed weedwackers. Experienced goatscapers — a handful of these businesses service Pennsylvania — will be delighted to take care of all those pesky outdoor chores, especially in hard-to-reach places. (But they don’t trim lawns; for that, you’ll need sheep.)

Have poison ivy, poison sumac or an overgrown embankment on your property? Maybe that invasive mile-a-minute weed is threatening to gobble up your patio? With goats, it’s gone.

Forget that scary business of weeding on steep hillsides or twisting an ankle near the rock pile. There will be no more hard starts on power equipment and no replacing string on the trimmer. No gas is needed, and electric cords can stay tangled in the shed. You won’t need safety glasses or hearing protection, either.

Better yet, there are no smelly, polluting emissions from goats, and the by-product that is released comes conveniently packaged as pellets. Rich in nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium, goat pellets are one type of “cold” manure that won’t burn plants when applied directly. That eliminates the need to shovel and compost.

Rental goats aren’t just for personal use; hired flocks have been busy near me with stream-side cleanups sponsored by our borough. Goats have also been clearing a walking trail, a project sponsored by a nonprofit. Volunteer numbers always increase when critters are on the job, a side benefit that creates a greater sense of community.

On the website you’ll find links to providers by state along with details about the areas they cover, the size of the jobs they book (often one to 10 acres) and how

pricing is handled. The people behind the scenes are professional herdsmen and women who understand the responsibilities of animal husbandry and are invested in their flocks. They are committed to meeting the needs of their four-legged business partners as well as those of their customers. The rental plan includes everything the flock needs on the job: fencing, water, etc.

If I could conduct an on-site interview with a goat, I imagine the response would be something like this: “I love my job! It’s something new all the time, and with company-paid travel, I get free lodging and long lunches with friends at the all-you-can-eat buffet. It’s like a movable feast! Drinks are always available, and nobody tracks my trips to the water cooler. I get free health care

with regular check-ups, dental and hoof included, because my boss cares about my well-being.

“I’m a people-pleaser so I particularly like the jobs that get volunteers involved. I love it when people tell me I’m cute!”

In one of my other lives, I used to travel across seven counties for meetings and events. One early morning, as I was passing through the cut-away in the rocks along Route 30 in Bedford County, I had to do a double take. A small group of grungy

but chunky goats and sheep was grazing contentedly at the precipice while cars and semis rushed past below. I thought it was extraordinary. Apparently, it was not a rare sighting for neighbors and regular commuters.

Although I never saw that group again, local accounts confirmed they roamed the area freely for some time. I wonder now if they spontaneously decided to walk off the job and freelance one day, then regretted missing the truck home. Now that I know more about all the great things these animals do, I want to think a little band of friends simply chose to retire and do volunteer work full-time, the happiest roadside cleanup gang ever. 🐐



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

Foodies Celebrate Spring

ANNE M. KIRCHNER

EVERYONE'S MOOD IS LIFTED WITH the arrival of spring. It's a season full of new beginnings and growth. Now is the time to plant a tree, pick a wildflower bouquet and feed your culinary senses. This month's recipes can be served for lunch, dinner or a weekend brunch.

Commemorate spring's sunshine with Chicken Stroganoff. This adaptation of the traditional beef dish showcases cremini mushrooms and fresh spinach. Garlic Dill Potatoes and Carrots offer a tasty, vibrant side dish. The Strawberry Sheet Cake is infused with fresh, pureed strawberries and will feed a crowd. Let the celebration begin! 🍷

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



CHICKEN STROGANOFF

- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1¼ pounds chicken breast, thinly sliced
- 1 teaspoon garlic salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- ½ yellow onion, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 8 ounces cremini mushrooms, sliced
- 2 tablespoons flour
- 1 cup chicken broth
- 1 to 2 teaspoons paprika
- 1 cup sour cream
- 4 cups fresh baby spinach

Heat the olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the chicken slices and season with garlic salt and black pepper. When cooked through, remove the chicken and set aside. In the same pan, cook the onions and garlic until softened. Add the mushrooms and cook until the juices are released. Sprinkle flour over the vegetables and stir to combine. Slowly add the chicken broth, stirring constantly. Add the paprika and sour cream, stirring until well blended. Return the cooked chicken to the pan. Stir in the spinach and cook until wilted. Serve stroganoff over penne noodles or brown rice. *Makes 6 to 8 servings.*



GARLIC DILL POTATOES AND CARROTS

- 1 pound small new potatoes, halved
- 1 pound carrots, peeled and sliced
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 1 to 2 teaspoons dried dill weed

Place the potatoes in a large pot. Cover with water 2 inches above the potatoes. Bring the water to a boil over medium high heat. Reduce the heat to low and simmer uncovered for 10 minutes. Add the sliced carrots and cook for 5 minutes more or until the potatoes can be pierced easily with a knife. Meanwhile, whisk the remaining ingredients in a small bowl. Place the drained potatoes and carrots in a serving bowl. Add the garlic-dill mixture. Toss gently to combine. *Makes 6 to 8 servings.*



STRAWBERRY SHEET CAKE

- 1 pound fresh strawberries, rinsed and hulled
- 3 eggs
- ¾ cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1 box lemon cake mix
- 3 ounces strawberry gelatin, divided
- ½ cup butter, softened
- 8 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 1 tablespoon almond extract
- 3 to 4 cups powdered sugar

Puree strawberries in a food processor or blender; set aside. Using a hand or stand mixer, blend the eggs, olive oil and cake mix on medium speed for 2 minutes. Add the strawberry gelatin (reserve 1 tablespoon for the frosting) and 1 cup strawberry puree. Mix at medium speed for 2 minutes. Pour and spread cake batter onto a greased 12-by-18-inch jelly roll pan. Bake for 12 to 15 minutes at 350 degrees. Cream together the butter, cream cheese, almond extract and the reserved 1 tablespoon of strawberry gelatin. Add 3 cups powdered sugar and the remaining strawberry puree; mix until smooth. Add another cup of powdered sugar if frosting is too thin. Frost the cooled cake and refrigerate until serving. *Makes 24 servings.*

Birth of a Turkey Hunter

STEVE PIATT

THE FIRST GOBBLE OF A wild turkey I ever heard was in the late 1970s, on a Sunday morning in May.

I was holding a fishing rod when a gobbler casually strolled across on the other side of the farm pond. At that point I forgot all about fishing, instead listening and watching the morning unfold as hens called below me and several toms thundered a response.

I was mesmerized; I knew it was spring gobbler season and knew I had to see what it was all about.

Back then, the turkey-hunting craze had yet to explode across the Keystone State, perhaps because turkey numbers themselves hadn't yet taken off. In our town, either there weren't many spring gobbler hunters or they were keeping things to themselves, happily pursuing toms without others squeezing into their hotspots.

I eventually met up with one willing to share his knowledge. Dick Allyn, a noted wildlife photographer, sat me down at his Sheshequin Township home in Bradford County one evening, gave me a few basics and handed me a Quaker Boy kee-kee mouth call. It took a bit of work, but before I left I could gag my way into a passable yelp.

"You'll call birds," he said as I thanked him repeatedly, not knowing that years later there would be times I would jokingly curse him for leading me into this obsession.

I needed more help, however. I was just back from college, and my firearm lineup was sadly lacking. But Dan Barrett, a young lawyer (and later district attorney of our county), loaned me his Harrington & Richardson 10-gauge, a hefty implement that gave me a workout

as I toted it up and down ridge and valley.

It was already well into the season — third week, if I recall — when I took some time off work as a young newspaper reporter and headed into the woods.

As the sun slowly rose on a beautiful spring morning, I played the only card I had.

I yelped.

I couldn't believe it when a turkey gobbled.

Now, after nearly five decades as a turkey hunter and so many birds harvested (and too many missed), I realize the morning standoff was likely the product of the bird not wanting to leave his strut zone or his hens.

But back then, all I knew how to do was yelp. And so I did, for several hours until legal shooting hours ended at noon. Neither of us budged, and I wondered if the gobbler was getting dizzy from sounding off because I was getting light-headed from yelping all morning.

We repeated the scenario for the next two days. I set up in the same spot, and the gobbler erupted from the same hollow below until it was time for me to head home.

The next day, I set up in a different location. I'm not sure why, but I know it wasn't some strategic decision on my part. Maybe I just needed a change of scenery.

The gobbler may have needed one, too. Eventually, I could tell he was advancing my way. And when he first came into view, strutting and gobbling, he was downright glowing in the morning sun.

It took a couple minutes before I realized I had a shotgun in my lap, and when the longbeard stepped behind a



TAKEN WITH TURKEYS: Since the 1970s, Steve Piatt has been obsessed with turkey hunting, thanks to a little help from some friends along the way.

big oak, I hoisted the heavy 10-gauge onto my shoulder and fired.

Moments later I was admiring my first gobbler, not knowing then how my life would change, how many more memories would be made, and how this amazing bird would lead me to so many states and allow me to make so many friends across the country.

In my excitement, I carried the big bird off the wrong side of the hill, working myself into a dehydration headache before hitching a ride back to my car.

I didn't care. I was, in my mind, a turkey hunter. 🦃

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

ISSUE MONTH AD DEADLINE

July 2025	May 15
August 2025	June 16
September	July 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:

Penn Lines Classifieds
P.O. Box 1266
Harrisburg, PA 17108-1266

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:

- | | |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Around the House | <input type="checkbox"/> Motor Vehicles & Boats |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business Opportunities | <input type="checkbox"/> Nursery & Garden |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Employment Opportunities | <input type="checkbox"/> Real Estate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Events | <input type="checkbox"/> Recipes & Food |
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SPECIAL OFFER – BOTH COOKBOOKS FOR \$12. "Country Cooking" – \$5, including postage. "Recipes Remembered" – \$7, including postage. Both cookbooks are a collection of recipes from men and women of the electric co-ops of Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Payable to: Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association, P.O. Box 1266, Harrisburg, PA 17108. Write Attention: Cookbooks.

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ROLL-OFF DUMPSTER RENTAL SERVICE available in Adams, Cumberland, Franklin, and Fulton counties, Pa., and beyond. Contact us for pricing and scheduling. 717-860-6274 or heckconstruction33853@gmail.com. Heck Construction, based in Orrstown, PA 17244.

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SPECIAL OFFER – BOTH COOKBOOKS FOR \$12. "Country Cooking" – \$5, including postage. "Recipes Remembered" – \$7, including postage. Both cookbooks are a collection of recipes from men and women of the electric co-ops of Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Payable to: Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association, P.O. Box 1266, Harrisburg, PA 17108. Write Attention: Cookbooks.

HEALTH INSURANCE

DO YOU HAVE THE BLUES regarding your health insurance? We cater to rural America's health insurance needs. For more information, call 800-628-7804. Call us regarding Medicare supplements, too.

HEATING & COOLING - GEOTHERMAL

SAVE UP TO 70% IN HEATING, COOLING AND HOT WATER COSTS with a geothermal comfort system from WaterFurnace. Benefits include energy savings, comfort, quiet, safety, reliability, and long life. Find out if geothermal is right for you at waterfurnace.com/Concierge or call 1-800-GEO-SAVE.

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GARY & SONS, INC., HEATING AND COOLING – Be ready for the heat this summer with a new or improved air conditioning system or heat pump. We can provide your heating and cooling needs, as well as tank and tankless hot water systems. We are a Lennox Premier Dealer and Mitsubishi Diamond Elite Contractor, and we service all brands. Now is also the right time to plan so you are comfortable later. Located in Falls Creek, Pa., visit us online at garysinc.com or call 814-204-2633. Payment plans offered. PA192811.

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ANGUS FREEZER BEEF. \$3.00/LB. HANGING WEIGHT, plus processing. No antibiotics or hormones, grass-fed, grain-finished, excellent marbling. By the quarter, half or whole – discount for halves and multiple quarters. Allison Farmz, Alexandria, Pa. 814-669-4014.

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FOR SALE: BUCKETS, FORKS, THUMBS, grapple buckets and pallet forks for skid loaders, backhoes, and excavators. Tires for backhoes, rubber tire loaders and excavators also. Call 814-329-0118.

2016 SHASTA FLYTE TRAVEL TRAILER. Model 185FG, 21-feet. Very good condition – \$9,500. Many extras included. 717-432-8326. Leave a message, I will return the call.

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LOOKING TO BUY OR SELL? Timberland Realty specializes in land, sporting properties, camps, cabins, farms, waterfront, exquisite second homes and timberland since 1987. Call our office at 716-962-9935 or agents by region – Western Pa.: Ron Westover, 724-422-5525. Central Pa.: John Rudy, 717-319-0082. Northern Pa.: Dave Anderson, 585-808-5696. Brian Bullard, Managing Broker, 716-499-5608. www.timberlandrealty.net.

SUSQUEHANNA COUNTY, PA. 5.3 wooded acres with masonry hunting cabin. Well, no septic. Septic tested. Includes producing oil, gas and mineral rights. \$115,000. Country Landmarks R.E., Inc., www.countrylandmarks.com, 1-570-278-9000.

CAMBRIA COUNTY – 18.2 ACRES, mostly fields, gas well, with option to purchase gas rights, \$109,000; Clearfield County – 502 acres, wooded, two streams, wilderness land, \$1,499,000; www.timberlandrealty.net. Ron Westover: 724-422-5525, 716-962-9935.

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FISHING RODS, RODS WITH REELS, spin cast, closed faced, level wind. Also reels, new, used. Abu Garcia, Daiwa, Shimano, Zebco, fair prices. From quality to kids. Bass, bluegill, crappie, catfish, trout, ocean. 717-781-4897.

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STOP BEING A TIMESHARE VICTIM! TimeShareBeGone will get your timeshare legally cancelled. 100% money-back guarantee. A+ BBB rating, 17 years in business. Low payment plans. Call 800-214-4460, timesharebegone.com.

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84" TITAN IMPLEMENT FINISH MOWER. New condition. Built exactly like Land Pride or Woods. Only 33 hours, three-point connection. Paint is still on undercarriage. \$3,000. Call Tom, 267-231-8959.

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15-PASSENGER VANS TO MINI-VANS to car rentals. Call Rent-A-Wreck in Erie. Locally owned for the last 37 years. Rent-A-Wreck, 814-833-9941.

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ANTIQUe AND CLASSIC American and foreign cars, motorcycles, trucks, Broncos, Blazers and Scouts. Any condition. Will buy entire car collections. krmiller1965@yahoo.com. 717-577-8206.

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

WANTED: OLD VINTAGE SODA AND BEER SIGNS. Also advertising salesmen samples and store displays. Gas and oil signs, and oil cans. Call 814-299-0025.

LOOKING TO BUY ADVERTISING ITEMS such as signs, clocks, thermometers, globes and gas pumps. Gas and oil, soda, beer, whatever you have. Please call or text 814-952-5449.

JEEP 1940s WILLYS OR FORD ARMY-TYPE JEEP. Rusty, broken down in field. Any condition considered. 570-395-4127. Email: ironrider111@yahoo.com

IT'S CONTEST TIME!

Penn Lines has a big birthday coming up, 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.

CONTEST NO. 1 – OLDEST ISSUE OF PENN LINES! If you have an oldie but a goodie around the house, take a photo of it with you. Please make sure the publication date is visible.

CONTEST NO. 2 – MOST WELL-TRAVELED PENN LINES! Take your favorite copy of *Penn Lines* beyond the borders of the Commonwealth. Send us a photo of you holding the magazine at your destination in front of a recognizable landmark or a sign that tells where you are. Also include a 50- to 100-word essay about where you were and why you brought that issue.

CONTEST NO. 3 – A DATE WITH PENN LINES! We'll be honest: We like it when we get to go to some place nice. Take your favorite issue of *Penn Lines* to a special place in your community and take a photo of yourself with it.

FOR ALL CONTESTS, WE WILL NEED: your name, address, daytime telephone number, the month and year of the magazine, and the name of the cooperative that serves your home, business, or seasonal residence.

PRIZES: \$50 gift card for each contest winner; the winning photos will be featured in a 2026 *Penn Lines* issue.

DEADLINE: Friday, Oct. 31

SEND ENTRIES TO: PennLines@prea.com (put "60 Years of PL" in the subject line) or *Penn Lines* Editor/60 Years of PL, P.O. Box 1266, Harrisburg, PA 17108-1266



Spring Cleaning

JOHN KASUN

SPRING HOUSECLEANING WAS A TERM that took root years ago when people normally cleaned their house once a year. They hung their clothes outside to “air out,” draped the rugs over the fence and beat them with a stick, and gave the house a good sweeping. Today, house cleaning, at least in my house, is a 24/7/365-day affair. Something is always being cleaned, sanitized, polished, buffed or scrubbed. Anything that fails to respond by being shiny and bright is soon headed for the scrap heap and replaced.

It is almost laughable when my wife says things are dusty. (However, due to my long and successful marriage, I am smart enough not to laugh but simply grunt and nod in agreement.) When I was a kid growing up, things got dusty because we had a wood cook-stove in the kitchen and a coal furnace to heat the house. People thought an air filter was when you hung your clothes on a nail on the porch.

Today, my home has an electronic air cleaner that zaps dust particles too small to see with a microscope. The air cleaner is backed up by a UV light that is guaranteed to kill any living germ foolish enough to enter uninvited. I remember when the salesman explained that the UV light would provide the same air quality found in a hospital operating room for a cost slightly more than my last truck. I carefully explained to him that unless I decided to make extra money by doing heart transplants on my kitchen table, I didn’t see the reason to spend that kind of money. That was just before my wife asked him if they had a larger size and said she wanted him to add it to our air handling system. Our space-age air-cleaning system is partnered with a whole-house central vacuum that could suck chrome off a trailer hitch.

So, as you might guess, spring housecleaning to me is a little bit of overkill, kind of like using a hand grenade to get rid of a pesky fly. However, that is just my opinion and as I speak, my wife, complete with a kerchief covering her hair

and apron strings flying, is in the middle of turning every room in our house inside out, looking for any speck of dust that could have escaped our air-cleaning system. After a recent trip to the grocery store for cleaning supplies, we had so many chemicals in our car that I was sure we would need escort cars ahead and behind us with “hazardous materials” signs on their roofs just to get home.

Due to recent back issues, I have managed to pretty much stay out of this year’s housecleaning marathon. I think my wife’s sympathy for my condition and an occasional well-placed moan have kept her from asking for my

help. However, that is slowly coming to an end as the last room on her list is my office. Now, normally, my idea of cleaning my office is picking up the magazines from the floor and putting them in a pile on the bookcase. This year is going to be much more painful, though, because my wife is constantly talking about “going through” the office, including the closet. From experience I know that as spring cleaning draws to a close, my wife gets more focused. It is almost as if she thinks she is driving all the dust to one spot, where she can suck out its life with her

vacuum cleaner. This could get nasty.

However, this year’s cleaning frenzy helped me make one important decision. When making our final arrangements recently, I chose cremation. However, now I see that buying an urn for my ashes would be a total waste of money. I am sure in one of my wife’s cleaning frenzies, my remains would get vacuumed out and the inside of the urn polished. While the Bible may say, “Dust to dust,” my wife says, “Not in my house!”



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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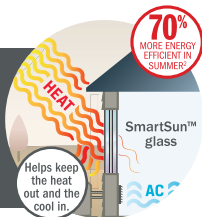
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