

**Northwestern
Rural Electric
Cooperative
Association, Inc.**

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

Northwestern REC
P.O. Box 207
22534 State Highway 86
Cambridge Springs, PA 16403
Home Page:
<http://www.northwesternrec.coop>

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Kathy Cooper-Winters**
President
- Larry Proper**
Vice President
- David Rectenwald**
Secretary
- Kim Docter**
Treasurer

- William "Jack" Sheffer**
District 1
- AnneMarie Sundean**
District 2
- Roger Follett**
District 3
- Robert G. Agnew**
District 4
- Ronald Wineland**
District 8
- Lanny Rodgers**
District 10

TELEPHONE NUMBERS

- Billing/Moves/Credit/Consumer Services**
1-800-352-0014
- Engineering/New Construction/Field Services/Water Heater Servicing**
1-800-473-3567
- Emergencies/Outages**
1-800-474-1710
- Administration/General**
1-800-472-7910
- FAX**
814/398-8064

OFFICE HOURS

Monday through Friday
7 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Mary Mulligan-Haines, Editor

FROM THE MANAGER & CEO

73rd Annual Meeting



by Michael D. Tirpak
General Manager & CEO

NORTHWESTERN Rural Electric Cooperative's 73rd annual meeting was held on Aug. 1, 2009, at the Crawford County Fairgrounds on a simply glorious day! Bright sunshine and low humidity made for a great day for our annual event. Over 1,000 members and their families, along with our employees and directors and our community helpers, added up to

a record-breaking crowd of over 3,000 attendees.

Art's Kentucky Fried Chicken did an outstanding job of feeding everyone in a timely fashion. Our community helpers and our employees did a great job with the numerous tasks of handling this many people and I saw a lot of happy members. Great job everyone!

U.S. Rep. Kathy Dahlkemper (D-3rd) addressed the membership during our business meeting. Most of our local political leaders were also on hand. It was great to see this level of support.

Member Jack Sheffer was elected to the board of directors for District 1 to fill the unexpired term of Francis Surovick, who has retired for health reasons after 39 years on the board. Roger Follett, Kathy Cooper-Winters and Lanny Rodgers were re-elected to three-year terms on the board of directors. Thank you to all members who attended and voted in the director elections, which is a very important part of our democratic cooperative model!

The board elected the following officers: president, Kathy Cooper-Winters; vice president, Larry Proper; secretary, Dave Rectenwald; and treasurer, Kim Docter. Kathy Cooper-Winters was also re-elected to the position of Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc. (our wholesale power supplier) director from Northwestern.

Questions & Answers

A few questions were asked during

the annual meeting that I wanted to share with all members:

Q: With the new meters going in the homes, will the price of electricity go up?

A: No, the new Automated Meter Reading System being installed will not cause an increase in electric rates. In fact, the new system will allow us to save close to \$300,000 in meter-reading costs each year and should help to stabilize part of our annual operating expenses.

Q: With the electric rate caps coming off, what will that mean for us?

A: Northwestern REC and the other Pennsylvania electric cooperatives are not part of the investor-owned electric utility rate cap process we are hearing about. For example, Penelec, First Energy, will be removing its generation rate cap at the end of 2010. Our co-op's wholesale energy provider, Allegheny, owns about 70 percent of its generation needs and goes to the market for the other 30 percent. While Allegheny's market energy costs will be increasing our co-op's generation rates in 2011, we are working on plans to spread these costs out over several years to minimize the impact on our members' electric bills. We will keep members informed.

Q: Where does Northwestern stand on broadband over power lines (BPL)?

A: Northwestern has put this project on "hold" for now. We have concerns about the technology of BPL and have not been able to make the business model give us the answers we needed to proceed with this risky project in a fiscally responsible manner. We continue to monitor this technology, along with other broadband technologies, and will be an advocate for our membership in this area.

In closing, I want to thank our members and our helpers for attending and making this a great annual meeting! ☀

Michael D. Tirpak
General Manager & CEO

Another one for the record book

BY MARY MULLIGAN-HAINES
Communications/Marketing Manager

AUGUST 1 dawned brightly, with no hint of rain for the 73rd annual meeting of the Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative at the Crawford County Fairgrounds. Co-op members took the day, one of the few without rain this summer, to enjoy the activities planned for them and their families. Children's games were open for play, as well as member bingo for all ages, and members were invited to receive a complimentary LED flashlight, too.

For lunch, members received a complimentary chicken meal with all the fixings provided by KFC. KFC served 3,100 meals and registration workers announced there were 1,017 members registered. Congratulations for an all-time high number of attendees.

As for the business meeting, the members had the opportunity to listen to informational reports outlining the business of the cooperative. Three representatives of the board of directors were re-elected to new terms. Re-elected board members are Roger Follett, District 3; Kathryn Cooper-Winters, District 5; and Lanny Rodgers, District 10. William Jack Sheffer won the seat to serve the last year of Francis Surovick's term. Mr. Sheffer is a longtime member from the Edinboro area.

During the business meeting General Manager and CEO Mike Tirpak took the stage to discuss the current technology plan the cooperative is implementing and the impact that is going to have on the cooperative members. Tirpak also discussed renewable energy resources and the strength of the cooperative. In addition to the informational speeches, Youth Tour representative Laurie Shorts presented a short talk outlining the 2009 Washington, D.C., Youth Tour trip and her experiences.

Kathryn Cooper-Winters, board president, recognized retiring board member Francis Surovick for his service and dedication not only to Northwestern REC but to his entire community. Mr. Surovick served the cooperative as the representative from District 1 for 39 years. Mr. Surovick was unable to attend, but his



BY THE NUMBERS: Kim Docter, board treasurer, gives the treasurer's report.

wife, Marian, accepted the award. Mrs. Surovick's remarks covered the importance of service and the sense of family that being a part of Northwestern REC offers.

Guest speaker Russ Schetroma, an attorney from Culbertson, Weiss, Schetroma and Schug, PC, discussed the potential for Pennsylvania and its citizens from exploration and utilization of the Marcellus Shale.

Then, nearing the end of the meeting,

the much-anticipated announcement of the prize winners occurred. Diane Mook received a cash prize in the amount of \$677 from the 50/50 with the remainder benefiting Member to Member, Inc. Electricity bill credits of \$200 went to Wanda Boyer, Finleyville, and Lester Dupont, Utica.

The picnic had a fantastic turnout and we couldn't have had a better weather day. The 73rd annual meeting proved to be a true success that will receive prominence in the co-op record book. 🌞



SAND SEEKERS: Kati Hodge, co-op employee, helps a young seeker.



ENERGY ADVICE: Bruce Hough, right, provides energy information to a member.



LUNCH LINE SELECTIONS: Folks of all ages fairly flew through the lunch lines until they got stalled making a choice.

\$15 Electric Bill Credit

Gary W. Hallabaugh
Virginia Petruso
Gary L. Peterson
Donald Steigerwald
Mike Grimm
Joseph Kaye
James Hudacky
Richard Kalicky
Judy Minetti
Rulin Snyder
Edwin Grove
James Kennedy
Eugene Caldwell
Kenneth Burge
Patricia A. Catalano
Dale Finney
Dan Knickerboker
Kenneth Carr
Robert W. Harper
Wayne Allen
L. E. Blair
Lee Payne
Russell Davis
Joseph N. Russell
Eileen Swan
Audley Stevens
Ken Kebort

\$25 Electric Bill Credit

Vernon Grange
Joyce Burns
Robert Stark
Joan Galentine
Nancy Burlingame
James Karns
Melvin Patterson
Pete Sander, II
Helen Ingraham
David Black
John Kline
Thomas S. Gillette
Fred Coulson
Morris Waid
Lynn Hunt
Walter Jankowiak
Lawrence Didion
Lee Armour
Gerald J. Brown
Pat O'Hara
Todd Lowry
Raymond Hool

Snake Oil

BY TOM TATE
Energy Advisor, Sussex REC

FIDUCIARY RESPONSIBILITY (look that up, Mr. Madoff) compels me to address an area of modern-day “snake oil peddling” to ensure the health and well-being of your pocketbooks. But first, a little history of the term “snake oil” is in order. According to Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Snake_oil):

The **snake oil peddler** became a stock character in Western movies: a travelling “doctor” with dubious credentials, selling some medicine (such as snake oil) with boisterous marketing hype, often supported by pseudo-scientific evidence, typically bogus. To enhance sales, an accomplice in the crowd (a “shill”) would often “attest” the value of the product in an effort to provoke buying enthusiasm. The “doctor” would prudently leave town before his customers realized that they had been cheated. This practice is also called “grifting” and its practitioners “grifters.”

The practice of selling dubious remedies for real (or imagined) ailments still occurs today, albeit with some updated marketing techniques. Claims of cures for chronic diseases (for example, diabetes mellitus), for which there are reputedly only symptomatic treatments available from mainstream medicine, are especially common. The term “snake oil peddling” is used as a derogatory term to describe such practices.

The snake oil I reference has to do




with outlandish energy saving claims. We have been regaled with Amish fireplaces and quartz heaters selling for hundreds of dollars. These do heat, but you can achieve the same results with a \$45, 1,500-watt heater from any big box store. More recently, a pretty version of what I affectionately call the “swamp cooler” has made an appearance. Using a fan and two gel ice blocks, you are supposed to be able to cool yourself and shut off your air conditioner. Yes, it will cool but, again, rather than spend hundreds of dollars, buy some ice and blow a floor fan over it. These folks just never quit and they are indeed masters of the marketing pitch.

Probably harder to decipher are the black boxes that claim to work all sorts of magic on your electric power. These will correct phase angle imbalances, clip peaks, make motor-driven appliances (refrigerators/freezers) more efficient, store energy, clean up incoming energy (eliminate harmonics, for example), and generally reduce your overall energy

cost 10 to 25 percent. With these snake oil folks, you have no chance to see what is inside the black box or, for most people, to assess and verify claims. Well, let me fill this gap with a succinct analysis, “Hogwash!” First of all, residential and small business electric loads simply cannot benefit from most of the proffered features due to the laws of physics. When it comes to storing energy...well, unless they are tapping an inter-dimensional plane for storage, that small box has no place to store even an AAA battery’s worth of power.

An emerging area of snake oil sales pitches promises free/low cost renewable energy. I came across an advertisement claiming to have plans that allow you to build a solar panel that will power your home with parts available at your local hardware store for less than \$100. For a limited time, these plans were marked down from \$90 to \$45. Such a deal I have for you. If you order within the next 15 minutes, they’ll throw in the Brooklyn Bridge!

To avoid legal challenges, I will refrain from naming names but as of this writing, none of these devices will provide the promised savings. Tough economic times spawn all manner of snake oil offers. Call us with any questions and we’ll do our best to get you information about the product or service. To paraphrase an old saying, “Buy in haste, repent in leisure.” Buyer’s remorse is an ugly thing. 

Things to do at www.northwesternrec.coop:

- ▶ Check your bill and pay online.
- ▶ Add community events to the calendar.
- ▶ Sign up to receive peak alerts by text on your cell phone.
- ▶ Use the Home Energy Advisor to check your energy use.
- ▶ Use the Home Energy Advisor to learn about efficiency.
- ▶ Learn about affordable electric heat options.
- ▶ Check out the FAQs for answers to popular questions.