

MAY 2026

PENNLINES

Road Tripping

Get Your Kicks on Route 6 (But Make Sure You Have Plenty of Time)

**BEHIND THE SCENES:
SUMMER STORMS,
PEAK DEMAND AND
THE POWER GRID**

HOW FAR DID IT GO?

**REMEDIES FOR
SPRING FEVER**

INSIDE!
NEW STATE
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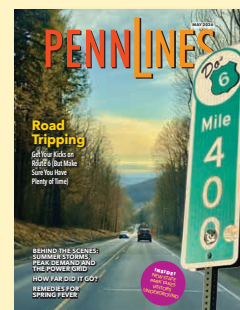
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Located near Route 6, this locomotive honors the Coudersport and Port Allegany Railroad, which used to run from Williamsport, Pa., to Buffalo, N.Y.



ON THE COVER
 Road tripping is easy when you have highways like Route 6 nearby. The scenic road – lined with attractions – stretches more than 400 miles across northern Pennsylvania.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE PA ROUTE 6 ALLIANCE

Grassroots Power

With Dozens of Energy Measures Under Consideration, Consumers Can Help Shape the Conversation



MATT LEONARD

THERE'S NO SHORTAGE OF ACTIVITY in Harrisburg right now. At last count, nearly 100 energy-related bills were under consideration in the General Assembly — proposals that touch everything from grid reliability and data centers to long-term planning and affordability.

That kind of volume tells you something: The decisions shaping the future of electricity in Pennsylvania are happening right now — and electric cooperatives won't be watching from the sidelines.

Advocacy has always been part of the job, not as a political exercise, but as a practical one. When policies directly affect reliability, costs, and the ability to serve rural communities, co-ops need to be in the room, whether that room is in Harrisburg or Washington, D.C.

This spring, cooperative leaders showed up at two important events.

In April, co-op directors and staff from Pennsylvania and New Jersey joined peers from across the country in Washington for the annual Legislative Conference, hosted by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. Directors and CEOs met with members of Congress and their staffs to talk through what's happening on the ground — pressure on the grid, rising costs, and the need for policies that work in rural areas.

This month, cooperatives did something similar right in our own backyard. Leaders attended the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association's (PREA) Legislative Event in Harrisburg. As they do every May, co-op officials sat down with state lawmakers and staff — more than 100 attended — to walk through the issues being considered in the Capitol, including many of the bills I mentioned earlier.

Despite the advent of technology, these face-to-face conversations still matter. They put real context behind policy proposals and help lawmakers understand how decisions made in Harrisburg and Washington play out in rural communities.

Advocacy, however, doesn't stop with CEOs, directors or staff; it works best when it's a unified, grassroots effort. That means consumer-members who are paying attention, asking questions, and staying connected to what's happening in their communities are vital to these conversations, too. The good news: It doesn't take much to get started.

Begin by learning about the issues. Energy policy can get complicated, but the stakes are simple. The decisions being made right now affect reliability, costs and the long-term strength of the grid. PREA's new, monthly podcast, **Inside the Lines**, is a good place to get educated because it breaks down those issues impacting cooperatives and the energy industry in a way that's clear and useful.

Podcast episodes — new ones are released the first Wednesday of every month — are available on Apple Music, Spotify or wherever you get your podcasts. And you can always go to prea.com/podcast to subscribe.

Then consider getting involved. **America's Electric Cooperatives PAC**, a nonpartisan political action committee for consumers in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, provides a way for cooperative members to support lawmakers who understand rural communities and their challenges. (Learn more by contacting PREA at 717-233-5704 or PAC@prea.com.)

With your support, we can make sure the cooperative perspective is part of the conversation — consistently and at the right moments.

Because in the end, advocacy works the same way cooperatives do: It's strongest when more people take part. 🗣️

MATT LEONARD, MANAGER, GOVERNMENT & REGULATORY AFFAIRS
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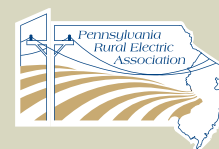
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JUST RELEASED!

Cache of 832 Last Year 1921 Morgan Silver Dollars Still Pristine As The Day They Were Struck



No coin captures the spirit of America quite like the Morgan Silver Dollar. Born from the Comstock Lode that supplied millions of ounces for its creation, this iconic coin circulated through a rapidly expanding nation, from frontier towns to the heart of American commerce. Even in the rugged days of the Wild West, Morgan Dollars were a trusted and widely used form of money, adding to their enduring legacy.

It's no wonder collectors and history enthusiasts alike eagerly seek them out—when they can find them.

Prized Last-Year Coins

Collectors love “lasts” as no collection is complete without the last coin struck. Last year coins are often hard to find and always in demand. Little did master engraver George T. Morgan know the legacy he was creating when he designed what has become known as “The King of Silver Dollars” but it came to an end 104 years ago with the last-year 1921 Morgan Silver Dollar, the most beloved coin in American history.

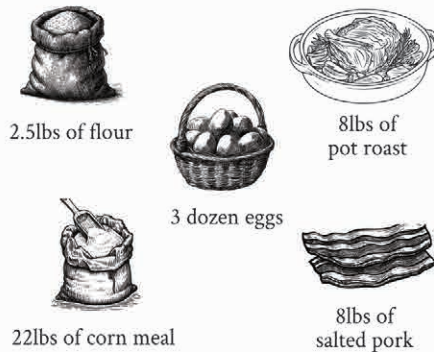
Public Release - Only 832 Coins Available

Rarcoa®, America's Oldest Coin Company, is announcing the public release of 832 of the very last year 1921 Morgan Silver Dollars, struck at the iconic Philadelphia Mint. Each coin today comes in Brilliant Uncirculated condition, pristine as the day they were struck!

Hold 104 Years of American History

Struck in 1921, each coin is one hundred and four years old. Could Charles Lindbergh have carried your coin in his pocket during his flight across the Atlantic? Or maybe your great-grandfather carried it while storming the beaches of Normandy during World War II before ending up in a small coin shop in Tuscaloosa, Oklahoma. Each coin has its own unique history and you can hold 104 years of American history when you buy yours today!

In 1921 this \$1 Could Buy:



A Miracle of Survival

Coin experts estimate that only 15%-20% of Morgans are still surviving today due to multiple mass-meltings over the years. The Pittman Act of 1918 melted over 270,000,000 coins, that's almost 50% of all coins produced at the time. Untold quantities were melted in the 1980s and 2000s when silver prices rose up to \$50 per ounce.

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This same 1921 Morgan Silver Dollar sells elsewhere for as much as \$239. But

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ONE TEAM

Living in the Harrisburg area, I've learned our capital city can be a divided place. Feelings run high here, and people have no problem showing their true colors. Whether it's the red pinstripes of the Philadelphia Phillies or the black and gold of the Pittsburgh Pirates, team pride is pretty evenly split here in the mid-state. And that goes for football, too.

Harrisburg's Capitol building is no stranger to division, a reflection of our national two-party system and the politics of the day. But in this arena, rural electric cooperatives have still found a way to play ball. That's because, when it comes to policy, we play for one team: the co-op team. America's Electric Cooperatives PAC, a political action committee, represents electric co-ops in that arena.

Working with legislators on both sides of the aisle, the PAC keeps the game plan simple: Keep our eyes on the member at the end of the line. When we do, the conversations stay focused on cooperative issues — reliability, affordability, and the community investments that help rural and small-town Pennsylvania thrive. We support leaders who support co-ops, regardless of party.

One way the PAC spotlights that teamwork is through its "Cooperative Legislator of the Year" award, recognizing elected officials who go above and beyond for co-op members here in the Commonwealth.

Last year, state Rep. Clint Owlett (R-Tioga) was named the inaugural honoree for advancing key priorities, including sponsoring the law that enables cooperatives to provide broadband service to their members.

This year, state Rep. Danilo Burgos (D-Philadelphia) is being recognized for his leadership as chair of the House Consumer Protection, Technology & Utilities Committee. He has worked closely with cooperatives on energy and utility legislation affecting rural communities. And he has shown up to listen, including convening a committee hearing at New Enterprise Rural Electric Cooperative. You can hear more from Rep. Burgos by tuning into this month's *Inside the Lines* podcast at prea.com/podcast.

For America's Electric Cooperatives PAC, supporting co-ops is about rooting for the home team: the members and communities we serve.

Of course, you can still raise the Jolly Roger or fly like an Eagle. No matter the season or the sport, we all enjoy wearing our team colors. Go Yankees!



PETER A. FITZGERALD
EXECUTIVE EDITOR



PA.GOV

NEW DESIGNATION: Laurel Caverns State Park opened in April as Pennsylvania's 125th state park — as well as its first underground one. The last time the Commonwealth opened a new state park was in 2022.

GOING UNDERGROUND

Laurel Caverns becomes Pennsylvania's newest state park

Pennsylvania has a new state park — and you just might have to look a little harder to find it.

Located near Farmington in Fayette County, Laurel Caverns State Park opened in April. It's the state's 125th state park and the first underground one. With 4 miles of wide passages that extend as deep as 476 feet, Laurel Caverns is Pennsylvania's largest and deepest limestone cave. It also houses the largest bat shelter in the Northeast.

The property, which adjoins Forbes State Forest and State Game Lands 138, has been operated by the Laurel Caverns Conservancy since 1986 and attracted about 50,000 visitors annually.

Laurel Caverns is Pennsylvania's first new state park since 2022.

BACK TO BASICS

Hershey returning to classic recipes after recent Reese's backlash

The Hershey Company will return to its classic recipes for all Reese's products in 2027.

Historically, Reese's Peanut Butter Cups have been made with milk or dark chocolate and peanut butter. In recent years, however, some of the products, such as the mini Easter eggs, have been produced with a coating that contains less chocolate. Those products, the company said, will shift back to the classic recipe next year.

The change follows criticism from Brad Reese, whose grandfather, H.B. Reese, formed the candy company in 1919. In a letter to Hershey officials earlier this year, the grandson criticized the company's decision to use cheaper ingredients for some of its products.

Hershey acknowledged some recipe changes but said it was trying to meet consumer demand for innovation.

H.B. Reese invented Reese's Peanut Butter Cups in 1928, and his six sons sold the company to Hershey in 1963.

SAFETY FIRST

Officials warn public about spring wildfire risks

As spring arrives, the potential for wildfires in Pennsylvania increases dramatically, according to Penn State Extension officials, and many of those wildfires are unintentionally caused when homeowners burn accumulated lawn and garden waste.

The state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources reports Pennsylvania had 1,536 wildfires that burned 5,527 acres in 2025. The majority of those occurred in the spring and were caused by humans.

Extension officials note wildfires can be prevented. Composting instead of burning leaves, twigs, and other debris is safe and eventually provides nutrient-rich soil amendments for gardens. Officials also stress the public should

always consider the current relative humidity, moisture and wind speed before burning any time of the year.

ON THE HUNT

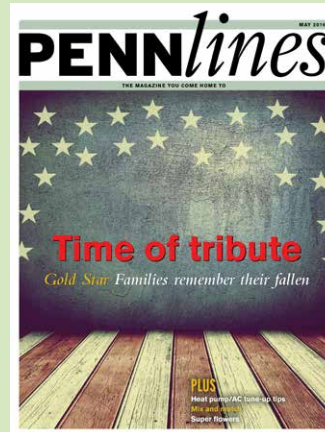
Deer harvest up over previous season

Pennsylvania hunters have reason to celebrate.

According to the Pennsylvania Game Commission, hunters harvested about 6% more deer in the past hunting season than they did the year before. Statewide, the deer harvest is estimated at 505,600 (185,310 antlered and 320,290 antlerless). The statewide 2024-2025 harvest, meanwhile, was estimated at 476,880 deer.

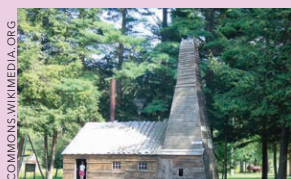
The 2025-2026 antlered deer harvest was about 9% higher than the most recent three-year average, and the antlerless harvest was about 17% higher. That was partly by design, state officials said, because deer are negatively impacting forest health, and the state offered additional antlerless licenses last season. 🍷

TIME LINES



MAY 2016

A decade ago, *Penn Lines* took time to tell the stories of cooperative members who lost loved ones in the line of military duty and, in turn, became Gold Star families. One father, whose son died in Baghdad in 2007, remembered seeing soldiers approaching the family's house and receiving the harrowing news. "You kinda know," he reflected. "It's everybody's nightmare when the military comes to the door."



COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG

MAKE A RUN FOR IT

The Drake Well Museum and Park in Titusville, Crawford County, will be abuzz on May 16 as runners gather for the annual Oil Creek Trail Races. With the 5-mile race set to kick off at 7 a.m. and the 13-mile race to begin at 8:30 a.m., runners will have the option to complete one or both races. For more details, visit drakewell.org.

JUST CRUISIN'

Summer will arrive early in Clearfield County when the 5th Annual Summer Festival and Car Cruz-in kicks off May 16 at Glen Richey Station 7, 86 Fire House Road, Glen Richey. Open from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m., the free event will feature food trucks, a basket raffle and a dime pitch, among other attractions. Learn more at visitclearfieldcounty.org.



VISITCLEARFIELDCOUNTY.COM

FACEBOOK.COM



SPRING PICKIN'

The sound of banjos will ring through the air May 28 to 31 at Lazy Brook Park in Tunkhannock, Wyoming County, as the 19th NEPA Bluegrass Festival kicks off. All attendees with a weekend ticket will also have access to free camping. For more, visit nepabluegrass.com.

GEARHEADS, REJOICE!

The Antique Automobile Club of America will be bringing the 2026 Eastern Spring Nationals Car Show to the Kovalchick Convention & Athletic Complex in Indiana, Pa., this month. Show day is May 30 and public admission is free. The best time for spectators is 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. For more information, go to visitindianacountypa.org and click on "Events."



ROAD TRIP



Venango Valley Inn



The Wellsboro Diner



PennDOT Roadside Sculpture Garden



Eastern-Most Tip of Route 6



Night and Day Coffee Café



The Pymatuning Spillway

RIPPING

Get Your Kicks on Route 6 (But Make Sure You Have Plenty of Time)

COLIN MCGUIRE

Senior Editor/Writer

Editor's note: In commemoration of Penn Lines' 60th anniversary, we sent one of our writers on a 30-plus-hour trip along Route 6, which winds through northern Pennsylvania and is one of the state's most famous highways. This is what he found.

403 miles. 31 hours. 2 days. 1 road.

Plus, an endless amount of beautiful byways, awe-inspiring scenery and picturesque paths.

There is a reason Pennsylvania's section of Route 6 has been referred to as one of America's most scenic drives, and in mid-March, I was determined to experience it. And so, 100 years after the road was first approved by the American Association of State Highway Officials, I hopped in my car, headed west and set my sights on Crawford County.

It was there that I would dip a toe into Ohio before traveling the Commonwealth from west to east via Route 6 only. No Waze. No Google Maps. Not even an atlas. Just some periodic signs that reminded me I wasn't on Interstate 80, where drivers were presumably having more fun as they gleefully exceeded the speed limit — a practice nearly impossible on some stretches of the rural path I chose (but more on that later).

My intention was to focus on the areas along the road served by some of our rural electric cooperatives — five, in all.

So many questions swirled. How long would it take? I didn't know. Would I meet any people along the way? Hopefully. How many "Route 6 Bars & Grills" would I pass? My guess was a few dozen. And perhaps most pressing: Why did my car's dashboard light up like the Fourth of July after I turned the key at the easternmost tip of Ohio?

DAY 1

It was a few minutes before 9 a.m., the morning after St. Patrick's Day. While some Pennsylvanians might have been shaking off the fog of the green beer they had consumed the night before, I was doing my best to shake off the fear of being stranded somewhere along the Commonwealth's most famous road.

"Need inspection," my dashboard read as colors I didn't know existed popped up beside the command. I paused. I was about to begin a cross-state journey and couldn't comprehend my vehicle's issue; so, like any other red-blooded adult, I ignored the message, hoped for the best and set off for my first stop along Route 6: **The Pymatuning Spillway.**

Near Linesville, about a mile or two off Route 6 proper and only a handful of miles into Pennsylvania from Ohio, the spillway sits in territory served by Northwestern Rural



Electric Cooperative (REC), which is based in Cambridge Springs, Crawford County. The spillway is also a quirky little place “where the ducks walk on fish,” says Amber Till, the co-op’s director of communications.

To be fair, she wasn’t wrong — there are so many carp at the site, the ducks can literally walk on them. On my visit, I didn’t catch this, but there were ducks aplenty, and they were happy to converse despite temperatures being cold enough to make me want to migrate South. All frigid realities aside, the scene was breathtaking and peaceful, serene, and truly a perfect way to begin this kind of trip.

Naturally, it was all downhill from there.

Amber also suggested I try **Twin Pies**, which looked like a lovely bakery in downtown Linesville. The problem? Upon arrival, I was greeted by an ominous sign: “Closed for the Season.”

Oh. OK.

My next stop was the **PennDOT Road Sign Sculpture Garden** in Meadville. The photos I found online looked neat — tons of odd road signs all coming together to form an intriguing display of junkyard art. The problem? I couldn’t figure out how to access it.

So, after driving past it three or four times, I set off to find the **Rural Electrification historical marker**, a piece of co-op history slightly off Route 6, east of state Route 86. The marker was about as imperative a stop as any on the trip because it honors Northwestern REC. The cooperative is not only celebrating its 90th anniversary this year, but it was also Pennsylvania’s very first rural electric cooperative.

Before long, it was time for lunch. Enter the **Venango Valley Inn**, which is along Route 6 in Venango. Legend has it that at one point, George Washington traveled through the area and changed a local river named “Wenango,” to “French Creek.”

Steeped in history, the restaurant also serves as a de facto museum that patrons can explore before or after their meals. Framed photos depicting century-old scenes, as well as entire rooms dedicated to recreating the feel of the 1800s sit right down the hall from the main dining area.

Me? I just wanted a steak salad and some truffle fries. And Old Hickory as my witness, those truffle fries were worth every mile I traveled to that point.

Back on the road, my hope was to stop at the **Union City Historical Museum** ... until I was met with those magical words again — no, not “Need inspection.” Instead, I found another “Closed for the Season” sign.

It wasn’t until I made it to Corry that things finally — perhaps mercifully — started to look up.

A true artist

Meet Scott Dow. He is, in his purest form, an artist. He’s been a furniture designer, a painter, and for at least the last 16 years, a wood carver. Scott has a gallery right on Route 6 in Corry and, much to my surprise and delight, he has no problem welcoming strangers who pull into his parking lot with a smile on a random Wednesday afternoon.

“It gets lonely out here,” he tells me with a grin. “So, come on in. I’ll show you what I’m working on.”

What was he working on? Wildly elaborate designs woven into tables and other pieces of wood. Snakes. Skulls. You name it. His most high-profile customer is one of the most listened-to podcasters in the world, Joe Rogan, for whom he’s crafted three signature pieces. It took Scott more than 15 years to start making money from his art, but

IN THE BEGINNING: Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative, the first of its kind in Pennsylvania, is recognized near Meadville with a historical marker celebrating the placement of the first co-op pole in 1936.





CARVING IT UP: Artist Scott Dow, who has a woodworking shop along Route 6 in Corry, has some famous clients, including podcaster Joe Rogan.

now that he's reached that point, he's determined to never betray his artistic passion.

"I work six days a week here," he says, "even if my wife thinks it's seven. I just love being in here and creating."

After we said our pleasantries and I bid him adieu, it was off to the portion of Route 6 served by Warren Electric Cooperative. Among the stops directly along the route were the **Warren County Fairgrounds** and the **Warren County Visitors Center**. Maybe most important for my purposes, it's also home to the first 100-mile marker of the route.

Little did I know that on Day 2, I'd go on to see three more of those.

DAY 2

Here's the thing about driving the duration of Route 6: It's a grind. And the truth is that to even have a shot at doing it in some enjoyable, family-friendly manner, you need to have somewhat of a perfect storm come together. You need ample time. Also, it's wise to visit during a weather-friendly time of year. You must be nimble, too, and shouldn't be in a hurry.

But we have a magazine to put out, darn it, so it wasn't like I could spend weeks out there doing this thing.

As a result, Day 2 started early. My first stop was near Mount Jewett to see the **Kinzua Bridge**, a much-photographed railroad viaduct, half of which was wiped out by a tornado in 2003. When it was constructed in 1882, the bridge was one of the tallest in the world. Today, the site features the dramatic **Kinzua Skywalk**, which is closed

until 2027 for renovations. The visitor center, trails and picnic areas at **Kinzua Bridge State Park**, however, remain open to visitors.

After a pitstop there, I drove through many more scenic areas. Potter, Tioga and Bradford counties — various parts of which are covered by Claverack REC, Sullivan County REC and Tri-County REC — have much to offer.

I stopped by the **Coudersport Arboretum**, a community park that some have called a "serene journey through time." The scenic views in Galeton, known for its booming 19th-century lumber industry, were so gorgeous that I found it imperative to park the car and snap a few photos. My dashboard was still a rainbow of problems, but thankfully that didn't impede my ability to drive the rest of the route.

The amount of fun to be had and things to be done on Route 6 felt infinite as I whisked deeper into the wilderness. I made note of when I passed the 200-mile marker on Day 2: It was noon.

"OK," I thought. "I think I can do this. It's only 200 more miles to the end of the road, and it's also only noon. I'll stop for lunch and I'll never look back."

Right.

The lunch in that fail-safe plan happened at the **Wellsboro Diner**, which first opened its doors in 1939 as Schanacker's Diner and looks as though it hasn't changed a bit in almost 90 years of existence.

Like any traditional diner, it had the counter service and the pies and the milkshakes and the booths and the hamburgers and, of course, the people. A woman named Kathy, a patron at the counter with a plate full of breakfast, was the star of the show. She talked so much and so often to so many people that the cook had to remind her that her food was getting cold — twice.

"None of those cookies are any good," she deadpans to me as I'm ready to leave and wonder aloud if I should try one of the restaurant's giant sweets.

"I'm joking," she clarifies with a laugh, and it almost feels like we should hug before I step out the door.

But in fact, we do not. I'm on a mission now. There is no time for hugs for my focus is squarely on tackling the hardest stretch yet.

Completing the route

The act of driving on Route 6 deserves its own story. Shoot, its own magazine. It's impossible to find a rhythm. One minute, you are stuck in a line of cars because the person at the front is going 30 mph in a 55 mph zone. The next, a truck runs up and passes you on a double-lined section of the road that winds like a phantom thread.

This proved to be an issue as I encountered the final portion of Route 6. Two hundred miles, in theory, could be driven in three-and-a-half hours. It was only 1:15 p.m. when I left Wellsboro. It was 5:56 p.m. when I crossed the Delaware River and arrived in Port Jervis, N.Y., marking the end of my journey.

One day, I promised myself, I'll return to these places — I have to, right? There's traveling Route 6, and then there's *traveling* Route 6. If nothing else, I learned the latter, which requires time, is the far better option.

Still, as I found a hotel — and an absolutely excellent gas-station dinner at a place called **Dandy's** in Towanda — I knew there was one thing left for me to experience in the morning.

DAY 3

On my way home, I revisited Mansfield to catch up with Casey Wood, who handles communications for two co-ops, Claverack REC and Tri-County REC, and who showed me

around. One of Mansfield's claims to fame is that it hosted the first-ever nighttime football game in 1892 at Smythe Park.

That was a small but powerful moment in history, and Melissa Underwood, executive director of the Mansfield Chamber of Commerce, knows full well how much rural electrification has meant to her community. Her father, Randy Colton, is a Tri-County REC member.

"My dad is very hard to please," Underwood says between serving customers at **Night and Day Coffee Café** in Mansfield. "But a Tri-County employee reached out to him and explained the work they had to do around his house. Remember: My dad is not someone who really likes people.

"But he called me to express how appreciative he was that the employee came out and explained things to him," she adds, smiling. "There was a personal touch to it that was such a big deal to my dad. He said, 'They take care of you.'"

Hearing these words made me understand the allure of Route 6 beyond its scenery. There's a camaraderie among all the small towns and big counties that line up along it. The road's own "personal touch" is found in its diners, trails, watering holes, grocery stores and gas stations. It's a geographical gateway to a world of charm, and its people are its soul.

I'm reminded of this when I speak with Steve McCloskey, the retired sports information director for Commonwealth University – Mansfield, who is also known as "Mr. Mansfield" around town.

"It's not sexy," he says about Mansfield, "but the people who came from here have gone on to do some incredible things. Just think: They started here." They include Tom McMillen, a former NBA star, Rhodes Scholar, and U.S.

congressman; Herb Goodall, a professional baseball player; and Theodore F. Randolph, who became the 22nd governor of New Jersey and a U.S. senator.

Then, it hits me: They also started along the long and winding road that is Route 6 — 403 miles of beautiful byways, awe-inspiring scenery and picturesque paths.

I smile.

"Thank you for that," I say to McCloskey before heading back down the road.

"You're welcome," he responds. "But don't forget: It's true." 🍷

HISTORY IN THE MAKING: Steve McCloskey, known as "Mr. Mansfield," reflects on the community — one of many along Route 6 — and its accomplishments at The History Center on Main Street.





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Local Lore

Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative

An Underground Railroad through Crawford County

Most people know John Brown as one of American history's most famous abolitionists. He fought in the border war in Kansas and attempted to initiate a slave revolt in the southern states, which most historians say was one of the primary causes of the Civil War. What most people may not know, however, is that Brown spent most of his 20s in Crawford County, currently served by Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative (REC).

Arriving in 1826, he bought land, built a house, developed a farm and even started a tannery while living in northwestern Pennsylvania. Calling Richmond Township his home, he was a clerk at a small church and then became the township's first-ever postmaster.

In the *Centennial Edition Tribune-Republican*, which chronicles the history of Crawford County, author G.B. Delamater noted Brown's importance to the community when he wrote, "John Brown ... was a pioneer citizen of Crawford County, and for many years aided in its settlement and improvement during an important period of its history."

Brown lived in Crawford County longer than he would live anywhere else. In a barn on his property, he reportedly kept a secret room that hid escaping slaves. His operation became so successful, in fact, that his farm became an important stop on the Underground Railroad, helping some 2,500 enslaved people as they traveled to Canada.

Brown eventually led a slave rebellion in Harpers Ferry, Va. (now West Virginia), but was outmatched by Gen. Robert E. Lee. After defeat, the abolitionist was executed by hanging at the age of 59.

So, while most Americans know Brown for his anti-slavery stance, it



SETTING THE STAGE: John Brown, one of America's most famous abolitionists, called Crawford County his home while in his 20s. He would later attempt a slave rebellion in Harpers Ferry, Va. (now West Virginia).

was his time in Crawford County that helped set the stage for what would be some of the most radical moments in North American history. 📍



Main Office: Cambridge Springs, Pa.
Consumer-members served: 19,541
Website: northwesternrec.coop

HEY KIDS! EMAIL YOUR ART

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

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

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



A Spring Sunset

This month's artwork comes from Rebecca Shields, daughter of Charlie and Shela Shields, members of DuBois-based United Electric Cooperative. Rebecca's scene depicts a sunset as seen from her family's backyard. According to her parents, she loves painting pictures whenever she gets the chance. Thank you, Rebecca, for sharing your artwork with us!

Rebecca Shields, age 7, United Electric Cooperative

Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative Association, Inc.

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Power Your Life with Electrical Safety



RYAN MELLER

AT NORTHWESTERN RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE (REC), we observe Electrical Safety Month each May and promote safe practices year-round. The Electrical Safety Foundation International reports thousands of people in the U.S. suffer serious, often preventable, injuries from electrical accidents at home. As professionals working with electricity every day, we recognize these dangers.

As CEO, my top priority is the safety of our employees, members and the public. Northwestern REC conducts safety demonstrations throughout the year at local schools and community events to raise awareness. These demonstrations cover emergency situations, including how to respond when you're in a car accident involving utility poles and downed power lines. They also highlight the dangers of pad-mounted transformers and explain the risks of overloading circuits.

Our mobile hotline demonstration, featuring live electrical lines and voltage, provides an interactive way to learn about electrical safety at our headquarters or at your facility. Participants acquire a better understanding of how distribution lines and equipment work, along with essential do's and don'ts near power lines.

We also offer a tabletop demonstration designed to teach children about electrical safety. If you are interested in scheduling a demonstration for your school, organization, or workplace, please contact our office by phone or email, or visit northwesternrec.com to learn how to request a session. We encourage all members to take advantage of these useful resources, but we also provide this demonstration for non-members as well.

Because electricity is essential to daily life, here are some useful safety tips to help protect you and your loved ones from electrical hazards:

- ▶ **Avoid overloading circuits:** Plugging too many devices into one outlet or circuit can damage electronics, overheat wiring, or cause a fire. Circuit breakers and fuses offer protection, but neither is guaranteed.
- ▶ **Beware of frayed wires:** Power cords can wear or become damaged over time. If you notice fraying or cuts, replace the cord immediately. Handling damaged cords can cause electric shock.
- ▶ **Don't ignore warning signs:** Frequent flickering lights, warm or discolored outlets, or unusual odors may indicate electrical problems. If you notice any of these signs, turn off the power at the breaker panel, if it is safe to do so, and avoid using the affected outlets or equipment. If you detect smoke or smell smoke, evacuate the area immediately and call 911. If circuit breakers trip or fuses blow often, contact a qualified electrician. You can also call Northwestern REC for further guidance or assistance.
- ▶ **Use extension cords safely:** Never connect extension cords together; this creates a fire hazard. Stay within the recommended wattage and use extension cords only for temporary needs. If you require more outlets, contact an electrician.

At Northwestern REC, we are dedicated to delivering dependable energy and protecting our community from electrical hazards at all times. If you notice a potential safety concern, have questions about electrical safety, or need to report a hazard, please contact us right away. Our team is here to help and can be reached at 800-352-0014, by emailing info@northwesternrec.com, or by visiting northwesternrec.com. Your proactive communication helps keep everyone safe. 📧

Cooperatively yours,

RYAN MELLER
PRESIDENT & CEO

Get Your Tickets for the Member-to-Member, Inc. Meat Raffle

EMILY SONNTAG, MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST

MEMBER-TO-MEMBER, INC. WAS ESTABLISHED BY Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) in 1985 to help members manage their electric bills. As the cost of living rises, keeping up with expenses can be difficult. At Northwestern REC, our members are never alone in facing these challenges.

As a cooperative, we are owned by those we serve and operate according to seven fundamental principles, which reflect our commitment to honesty, transparency, equity, inclusiveness, and service to our community.

Because our co-op revenue stays right here in northwestern Pennsylvania, we're able to support local scholarships, charitable giving, and the Rural Electric Youth Tour, an annual trip to Washington, D.C., for cooperative teens. We strive to be a positive force in our community, and our members make it possible for us to do what we love most: light our communities.

Each year, as we plan our meat raffle, a key fundraiser for our Member-to-Member fund, we remain committed to the time-tested principles of the cooperative business model and spirit. Community care is at the heart of everything we do, and this raffle is no exception.

The outpouring of support and enthusiasm over the past two years has exceeded our expectations. We would like to personally thank everyone who has purchased meat raffle tickets and supported this wonderful program.

All meat prizes will be purchased at the 4-H auction during the Crawford County Fair this summer. This auction benefits the outstanding young people participating in America's largest youth development organization, and the cooperative is proud to support them.

If you or someone you know participates in the 4-H auction at the fair, please let them know that we will be purchasing meat and suggest they use a 4-H buyer letter.

Prizes:

- ▶ **Grand prize:** A large freezer stocked with half a cow and half a pig.
- ▶ **Second prize:** A small freezer stocked with a quarter cow and half a pig.
- ▶ **Third prize:** A small freezer stocked with a quarter cow and half a pig.

All freezers are brand new and would make the perfect addition to your home. Plus, we will deliver the freezer and meat to the lucky winners within a 60-mile radius of the co-op, all courtesy of Northwestern REC.

Ticket details:

Tickets are just \$10 each, and you can purchase them at our headquarters, from participating employees, and online. Or, simply scan the QR code at left to get your tickets today! The winners will be drawn **Friday, Sept. 11**, and notified by phone. 📞

FROM THE FARM TO YOUR FORK

M2M
Member-to-Member, Inc.

MEAT RAFFLE

Date of Drawing: Friday, Sept. 11, 2026

GRAND PRIZE:	Large Freezer with ½ cow & ½ pig
SECOND PRIZE:	Small Freezer with ¼ cow & ½ pig
THIRD PRIZE:	Small Freezer with ¼ cow & ½ pig

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SCAN TO PURCHASE MEAT RAFFLE TICKETS!

Northwestern REC Awarded \$4.7 Million to Strengthen Electric Grid

AMBER TILL, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

NORTHWESTERN RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE (REC) has been awarded nearly \$4.7 million to improve its electric grid and resiliency through the 2026 Pennsylvania Grid Resilience Grants (PA GRG). The project will help prevent power outages and provide more reliability for emergency services, businesses, and households.

“Now more than ever we need to build infrastructure that keeps our power grid reliable and mitigates challenges, such as climate-change-driven weather events, population growth, and aging infrastructure,” says Jessica Shirley, Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection secretary. “The Grid Resilience Grants provide important funding that brings more energy jobs, more investment in our communities, and a more resilient and reliable electric grid to Pennsylvanians.”

The grant funds will allow Northwestern REC to build two high-voltage distribution lines connecting three substations: Edinboro, Edinboro West and Saegertown. Once complete, the project will allow Northwestern REC to route electricity between these substations during outages, a process called backfeeding. More than 4,000 members are connected to these three substations, which experience power-supply-related outages.

Once the project is complete, Northwestern REC will be able to send power between the intertied substations, reducing power-supply-related outages by up to 85%. The

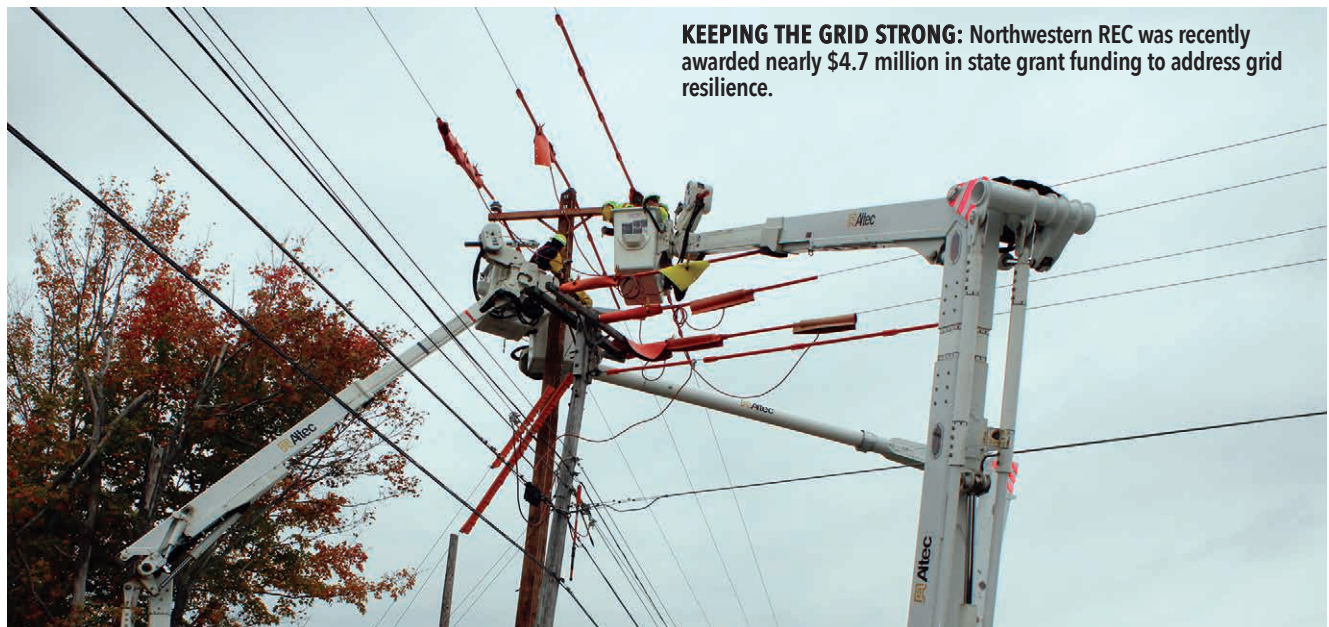
ability to backfeed will not only reduce the number of outages, but also the duration of outages experienced by members served by these substations.

This is the second PA GRG awarded to Northwestern REC. The first, nearly \$870,000 in 2023, helped underwrite a similar project connecting the cooperative’s Oil Creek and Centerville substations. That project is currently under construction.

“Northwestern REC is grateful to the Pennsylvania DEP for its continued support of grid resiliency in northwestern Pennsylvania,” Northwestern REC President and CEO Dr. Ryan Meller says. “These projects have been part of our work plan for several years. Due to the cost of construction, they were out of reach. These grants make it possible to harden our grid without putting the full cost of the project on the rural communities in our service territory.”

The PA GRG program is funded under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act Grid Resilience State/Tribal Formula Grant Program. This year’s \$10 million PA GRG awards will leverage a total of \$3 million in awardee cost share.

This is PA GRG’s second round of funded projects. All awards are pending the U.S. Department of Energy’s confirmation. [↗](#)

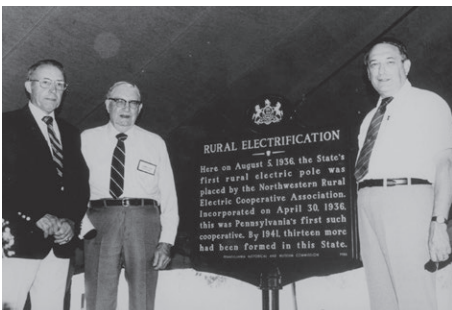
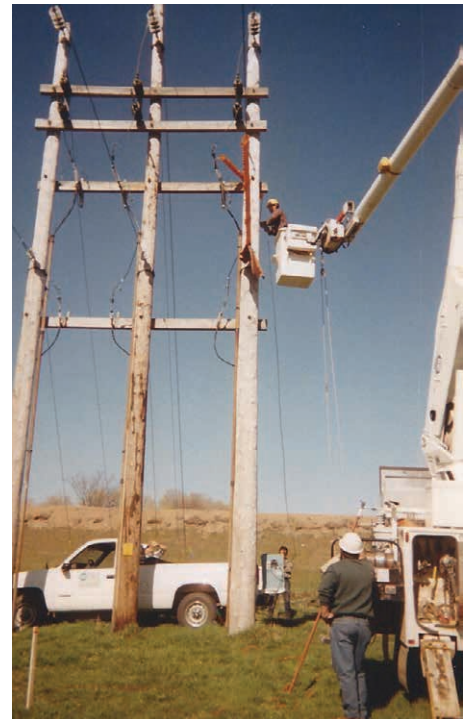
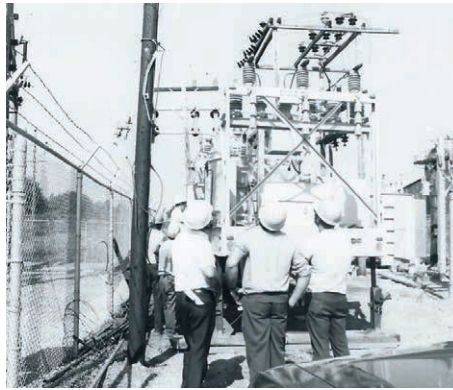


KEEPING THE GRID STRONG: Northwestern REC was recently awarded nearly \$4.7 million in state grant funding to address grid resilience.

90 Years of Cooperation: A Look Back

As we continue to celebrate 90 years of cooperation at Northwestern REC, we wanted to share some historic photos of work in the field. We hope you enjoy this glimpse into the past!

(Editor's note: The line work photos below were in compliance with safety standards at the time they were taken.)



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Behind the Scenes: Summer Storms, Peak Demand and the Power Grid

MICHAEL T. CRAWFORD, SENIOR TECHNICAL EDITOR

SUMMER CREATES HEAVY DEMAND on the electric grid. Air conditioners run longer and storms grow more intense, pushing the system harder than almost any other time of year.

Maintaining reliability during peak demand depends on transmission and distribution systems working together.

Electric cooperatives maintain distribution lines that deliver energy from substations to homes, farms and businesses across rural Pennsylvania. Transmission lines, meanwhile, carry large volumes of electricity from power plants to those substations, often crossing multiple utility territories. The distinction matters most when demand spikes or storms roll through.

“A transmission outage during extreme conditions is essentially a worst-case scenario,” says Chad Thoman, manager of engineering — electrical at Gettysburg-based Adams Electric Cooperative. “We can invest heavily in our distribution system, but if transmission goes down, none of that matters.”

Minimizing transmission failures

A single transmission outage can affect multiple substations and limit a cooperative’s ability to reroute power. Though less frequent, transmission failures can take longer to resolve and affect more members.

Transmission infrastructure is expensive. High-voltage power lines, for example, can cost more than \$1 million per mile. As plans for new generation and new demand unfold, more transmission infrastructure must be built and upgraded. Transmission owners recover costs through charges that ultimately show up on electric bills.



INVESTING IN RELIABILITY: Michael Kovachick, Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc. power delivery engineer, examines transmission lines for potential upgrades to improve reliability.

Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc. (Allegheny), the wholesale power provider for rural electric cooperatives in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, balances reliability and affordability by limiting its transmission infrastructure ownership to approximately 45 miles of line, which interconnects its generation sources to the grid. By comparison, distribution cooperatives in Pennsylvania collectively maintain nearly 29,000 miles of line.

“Building and maintaining transmission lines is costly,” explains Rich Geosits, Allegheny manager, power delivery. “Owning only what’s necessary for our generation and using existing infrastructure whenever possible helps keep costs down for member cooperatives.”

Based on information provided by local cooperatives, Allegheny works with other transmission owners and operators, including FirstEnergy, to proactively address potential weak spots in their systems. This allows Allegheny to recommend

infrastructure investments that will improve reliability to its member distribution cooperatives.

“We look closely at outage frequency, duration and how easily we can backfeed from adjacent substations,” Thoman says. “Every outage tells us something about where the system needs to be stronger.”

Chuck Anna, Allegheny principal engineer, planning & delivery services, explains that Allegheny coordinates with transmission owners to recommend improvements upstream from delivery points, where Allegheny’s wholesale energy is transferred to local distribution cooperatives. These investments give operators flexibility during high-stress conditions, which can reduce outage durations and limit the number of consumer-members affected.

Allegheny also coordinates mutual aid when equipment is damaged — usually by wind, snow, or ice — by reaching out to other cooperatives across the Commonwealth and in neighboring states.

“This is where rubber meets the road,” Geosits says. “You can put all the money you want into a system, but it’s boots on the ground — cooperation among cooperatives — that gets electricity back on.”

As summer unfolds, behind-the-scenes coordination helps ensure electricity keeps flowing safely without placing unnecessary costs on consumer-members. 📍

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

HOW FAR DID IT GO?



Penn Lines Reader Takes Magazine on a Nearly 7,000-Mile Journey to Japan

KELLY M. LUVISON
PENN LINES CONTRIBUTOR

WE'VE ALL HEARD THE OLD SAYING: If a tree falls in the forest and no one is around to hear it, does it actually make a sound?

So, if a friendly little magazine circulating around rural Pennsylvania for the past six decades makes its way to Denmark, Russia, West Africa, or perhaps Japan, does anyone really take notice?

You bet! Particularly if that periodical happens to be *Penn Lines*, and the copies in question are part of a special anniversary contest that asked readers to submit photos of their journeys with the magazine. As *Penn Lines* turns 60 this year, readers made it infinitely clear that the magazine is a special part of their lives — at home and abroad — as more than 60 made their play for the most well-traveled issue.

And the winner is ...

Enter Julia Hoffman — from 6,991 miles away.

Julia is a third-year student at the University of Pittsburgh who, at this moment, has a keepsake copy of *Penn Lines* tucked away in her room at

THOUSANDS OF MILES AWAY: Julia Hoffman, a University of Pittsburgh student who's studying in Japan, won a \$50 gift card for taking *Penn Lines* on the longest journey — in this case, nearly 7,000 miles away from home. Her parents, Beth and John, live in Cambria County and are members of REA Energy Cooperative.

Konan University in Japan, where she is about to complete a nine-month program of study.

For this Central Cambria High School grad, Japan is her fourth adventure in international studies, which also included a tour of Senegal, West Africa. Julia also happens to be studying abroad thanks in part to a scholarship she earned three years ago from the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association (PREA), the statewide advocate for the 14 rural electric cooperatives in Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

Continued on next page



Continued from page 17

“I just love different cultures and languages,” says Julia, who will turn 21 this month.

She has kept the October 2023 issue of *Penn Lines* close at hand on her academic travels as part of her curriculum vitae. That particular issue featured an article about her and the other PREA scholarship recipients.

With a youthful chuckle during a recent Zoom connection from the Japanese city of Kebo, Julia promised that the \$50 gift card — her prize for taking the magazine the longest distance — will also be going toward her college and travel expenses, not the more indulgent Japanese treats of sushi, sake or sashimi. One of about 40 American students at the university — a half-dozen from Pitt — she takes two-and-a-half hours of Japanese language instruction every day on top of her other college classes and says she doesn’t have much time for extracurriculars.

Julia is double majoring in linguistics and Japanese at Konan. Her dream job would be working for a foreign embassy — abroad or in the states — perhaps as a foreign services officer.

“That would be a long-term goal,” she says, indicating

that teaching English to young students in Japan will likely be her first objective after college. Interestingly enough, Julia’s gravitational pull toward Japanese was piqued during middle school with exposure to anime, the hugely popular genre of Japanese animation.

“I told myself back then I was going to learn Japanese someday,” she says, giving herself a solid five out of 10 today when it comes to mastery of the language, but she’s working hard on getting to a seven.

‘It was always around’

Back home, *Penn Lines* and REA Energy Cooperative, which serves her hometown of Mineral Point in Cambria County, have been part of the Hoffman family’s life for a long time.

“My Mom and Dad read the magazine a lot, and they know other people who do, like in our church. It was always around,” Julia says. “It did take me by surprise when I got the email that my photo had won. It was nice.”

Julia’s mother, Beth, says the anniversary contest wasn’t the first or only thing she and her husband, John, have passed along to their kids from the magazine. They also encouraged Julia to apply for the PREA scholarship.

“Even though we’ve lived out in the country [for nearly 35 years], we’ve always embraced other cultures,” says Beth, a professor of mathematics at Pitt-Johnstown. John is an instructor at Conemaugh Health Systems in Johnstown.

Beth says the family has hosted internationally themed parties at their home to foster broader thinking among their children and family. Their elder son speaks Arabic, and as of this writing, he and his wife were planning to visit Japan this month.

Where else did *Penn Lines* travel?

The Hoffmans’ interest in foreign cultures and far-away places clearly is not unique among *Penn Lines* readers. Some other travels and travelers worth noting include:

- ▶ T.C. Miller, a Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) member, who packed “The Line Wives” issue of *Penn Lines* (April 2025) on a recent trip to North Carolina. There, he took the magazine to Blue Ridge Energy in Sparta, one of the rural electric cooperatives that found itself in the vortex of Hurricane Helene. Other North Carolina contest entrants included Barry Bateman of

A PRESIDENTIAL VISIT: Readers took copies of *Penn Lines* all over the world for a chance to win our most well-traveled magazine contest. Here, Aidan Long, forefront, poses with his brother, Kaleb, at the Millard Fillmore house in East Aurora, New York. Aidan chose this issue because it featured Kaleb, a Youth Tour student who represented Tri-County Rural Electric Cooperative.



Valley REC, who took his copy to Wilmington, and Tri-County REC's Jamie Colaneri, who visited Corolla.

- ▶ One young reader, Aidan Long, took the September 2025 issue, featuring a photo of his brother, Kaleb, a Tri-County REC Youth Tour student, to East Aurora, New York. There, the family visited the home of Millard Fillmore, the 13th U.S. president. Meanwhile, Edward and Susan Davis of Sullivan County REC brought their copy of *Penn Lines* to New York's 1000 Islands along the St. Lawrence Seaway.
- ▶ Alaska was widely represented, too. From Seward, Thom and Valerie Lintner of Huntingdon entered the contest by way of Valley REC. From Denali, entries were received from Lisa Wood of Tri-County REC, Katie Miller of Adams Electric, and Dale and Sue Kryszinski of United Electric. Laurie McCanna of Warren Electric showcased her favorite *Penn Lines* issue while visiting Wiseman. From Whittier, Chris Klouser of United Electric had a hat in the ring for the most-traveled *Penn Lines*, as did Janet Roeber of Claverack REC.
- ▶ Other long-distance entrants from the continental U.S. included cooperative members who traveled to

Scottsdale, Arizona; San Francisco, San Diego, Palo Alto, and Redwood National Park, California; Capitol Reef National Park in Utah; Rangeley, Maine; Dallas, Texas; Las Vegas, Nevada; Jackson, Wyoming; and Seattle, Washington.

- ▶ Off-shore entries arrived from co-op travelers to Maui, Hawaii; Half Moon Cay, Coco Bay, and Nassau in the Bahamas; and St. Croix in the U.S. Virgin Islands. The Caribbean island of Bonaire in the Leeward Antilles was also represented; two co-op families took *Penn Lines* there.
- ▶ Contest entrants who traveled to Italy included Kelly Finan, a Claverack REC member who visited Pompeii, and Concetta Schirra, another Claverack REC member who spent time in Termini. We also received three entries from readers who visited Rome: Kathleen Pino and William Harker, both of REA Energy, and Debra Ritter of Tri-County REC.
- ▶ One-off entries for the most well-traveled *Penn Lines* also came from readers who visited Poland, France, the Netherlands, Canada, England, Bosnia, Spain, Germany, Antigua, Ireland and the British West Indies. 🌐

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Select the Best Quiet Bathroom Vent Fan for Your Home

JAMES DULLEY

DEAR JIM: My bathroom vent fan sounds like a rocket at takeoff and doesn't exhaust humidity well. When selecting a new one, what features should I consider? — *Jeffrey H.*

DEAR JEFFREY: The noise level, controls and moisture-removal speed are the most important characteristics to consider when selecting a bathroom vent fan. The controls, coupled with the maximum air flow rate, determine the overall efficiency of the fan. If the fan is too noisy, you likely won't use it as often, which can result in problems, such as mold and mildew growth or bathroom damage.

Before rushing to get a new fan, you may be able to improve the function and lower the noise level of your old one. A thorough cleaning of the inside, especially the blade surfaces, can increase air flow and decrease noise.

First, switch off the circuit breaker to the vent fan. Unscrew the grill and the motor mounting screws to get full access. Clean every surface you can reach with an alcohol wipe, including as far up as possible into the duct.

Even if the motor bearings are a little worn, cleaning may bring the fan back into balance and reduce air flow resistance. You can also get a fan rebuilding kit with a new motor and blade. This will bring it back to its original efficiency and sound level, but it won't be as good as a brand new one.

The sound level of a vent fan is rated in "sones" and listed on the packaging. The quietest fans are 0.3 sone, but you can barely hear anything under 1.0 sone. A small fan is typically quieter than a large one of equal quality.

The Home Ventilating Institute recommends 1.1 cubic feet per minute

(cfm) of air flow for each square foot of bathroom floor area. When installing a multi-speed fan, make sure the maximum air flow rating meets this standard.

Also, there are differences in the efficiencies of bathroom vent fan designs. To be Energy Star®-certified, a small fan must vent at least 1.4 cfm/watt-used and a large fan must be twice that efficient.

Although the above fan efficiency is somewhat important, the type of fan control has a much greater impact on your electric bills. If a fan runs longer than necessary, it obviously wastes electricity and draws out excessive conditioned air. If the fan runs too little or is too small, excess moisture builds up indoors. This can make the air conditioner run longer, affect your comfort, exacerbate allergies, and damage windows and building materials.

A combination motion-sensing and moisture-level-sensing control with a multi-speed fan motor and an LED light is by far the best. If the moisture level is not excessively high, the motion sensor will start when you enter the bathroom and stop when you leave it. Most models allow you to adjust the stop delay.

After a shower, the moisture sensor keeps the fan running after you leave the room until the level drops. The best sensors detect a rapid rise in moisture and automatically switch the fan to high speed. It goes back to a quieter low speed and then stops.

Another super-quiet option is an efficient in-line vent located in the attic. Ducts from the powerful fan can run to two separate inlet grills, such as one over the sink and one over the bathtub. It is compatible with any type of sensor and control. 📞

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



LITTLE FAN, BIG SAVINGS: A recessed light-and-vent fan installed in a shower stall combines efficient ventilation with convenient lighting.

BROAN

Sleep Can Wait Until June

STEVE PIATT

THEY START IN LATE WINTER: the dreams that devolve into nightmares, as they do every year.

Turkeys are gobbling on the roost, and I am hunting them. Their thunderous gobbles continue, but I can't get a sound out of any of my calls — mouth calls, box calls, pot calls. I frantically dig more calls out of my vest, more than I would ever carry into the woods, and none of them work.

I have come to accept this overnight disruption as a product of my obsession with turkeys and turkey hunting. After 50 years, it's unlikely to change.

The nightmares simply signal the beginning of an exhaustive pursuit: pre-season scouting, calling practice and weeks of rising in what most would consider the middle of the night.

I wake without an alarm clock, typically after tossing and turning as I second-guess my setup plan for the morning, consumed by the possibility that not a single longbeard will play the game and come to my calling.

For all practical purposes, I don't sleep during the month of May. Even nighttime qualifies more as a series of naps. I endure by grabbing a mid-morning doze at the base of a big oak tree; a post-hunt snooze in the cab of my pickup, warmed by the sun; and make an afternoon bedroom visit, usually accompanied by our two Labs. The cumulative effect, combined with plenty of coffee and the knowledge of an unfilled tag, allows me to stagger through the season.

Warren Zevon sings, "I'll sleep when I'm dead," but I'll stop short of that; I'll just play catch-up in June. Even then, the transition is difficult, as I will continue to wake around 3:30



STEVE PIATT

SCOUTING EFFORT: A mob of gobblers wander through Steve Piatt's property, providing vital reconnaissance ahead of the hunt.

every morning after the season ends.

It's a small price to pay for a passion that, thankfully, still burns when so many hunters my age have lost that fire.

May is about much more than vocal longbeards. While I am hopeful the sunrise brings a gobble, I still relish the spring mornings that bring many other sights and sounds. There will almost assuredly be deer, and it's entirely possible I will literally stumble upon a newborn fawn, its spotted coat the perfect camouflage in the sunlight.

Coyotes will howl and sometimes offer me a quick glimpse. A skunk may emerge from a hollow log as I sit at the base of a tree, and I'll watch in amusement as it stretches, yawns, and ambles down the hill to start its day. Raccoons, porcupines, foxes — all are possibilities. On one occasion, I spotted a cautious bobcat that had slipped in on my decoys as I called.

And there are more birds to be excited about than just turkeys. Great-horned and barred owls will sound off in the darkness, sometimes

triggering a gobble that assists me in my own efforts. And the morning symphony of cardinals, crows, blue jays, chickadees, warblers and countless other songbirds never gets old — unless it's so loud it makes hearing a distant gobble a challenge.

When I step from shelter to cover ground, the walk itself is often rewarding enough, even if the birds aren't gobbling. There's gold in these hills in the form of morel mushrooms (perhaps the most sought-after fungi). It's not unusual to find a shed antler or two, courtesy of a buck that survived the fall hunting season.

And then, just like that, it's over. Paula and I return our shotguns to their safe. I store my arsenal of turkey calls and bring my camouflage clothing to the laundry room.

It's time for a nap. 🛌

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.

Remedies for Spring Fever

ANNE M. KIRCHNER

PHOTOS BY ANNE M. KIRCHNER



ARE YOU FEELING RESTLESS, ENERGIZED AND EXCITED? You might be suffering from spring fever. Consider relieving your symptoms with a counseling session in the kitchen. Spring cooking welcomes opportunities to use light, simple ingredients.

Start with a tasty pizza showcasing shaved asparagus. When paired with bacon and green onions, a symphony of flavor begins. Prepare Chicken Piccata for a savory entrée — the classic lemon butter sauce with capers awakens the senses. And for your first outdoor meal, make a berry dessert. A combo of chocolate and strawberries will release your creative seasonal impulses. 🍷

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

SHAVED ASPARAGUS BACON PIZZA

- ½ pound asparagus
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, divided
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 1 8- to 10-ounce ball pizza dough
- 1 cup grated mozzarella
- 6 slices bacon, cooked and crumbled
- ¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 green onion, chopped

Preheat oven to 450 degrees. Lay the asparagus on a cutting board. Hold the woody end to stabilize the spear. Using a vegetable peeler, shave the asparagus into long, thin ribbons. Some ribbons will be very thin, others thick. Place the ribbons in a bowl and season with 1 tablespoon olive oil, salt, and pepper. Roll out the pizza dough and press into a greased pizza pan. Brush the dough with 1 tablespoon olive oil. Top the pizza with mozzarella, the asparagus ribbons, bacon and Parmesan. Bake for 10 to 15 minutes. Garnish with green onions. *Makes 3 to 4 servings.*



CHICKEN PICCATA

- 4 (4-ounce) chicken breasts
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- ⅓ cup all-purpose flour
- 5 tablespoons butter, divided
- ¾ cup white wine or chicken broth
- Zest of 1 lemon
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons capers, drained
- Chopped parsley for garnish

Season the chicken with salt and pepper then dredge in flour. Add 3 tablespoons butter to a skillet and melt over medium heat. Cook the chicken for 5 minutes on each side until golden brown. Transfer the chicken to a plate. Using the same skillet, melt the remaining butter on medium-low heat. Scrape any browned chicken bits into the butter. Add white wine or chicken broth, lemon zest, lemon juice, and capers. Bring the sauce to a bubble and add the chicken. Cook for 5 minutes or until the sauce reduces. Garnish with parsley. *Makes 4 servings.*



CHOCOLATE STRAWBERRY DELIGHT

- ¾ cup butter, divided
- 2 ½ cups chocolate wafer cookie crumbs
- 8 ounces fresh strawberries, hulled and halved
- 8 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 1 cup powdered sugar
- 8 ounces whipped cream

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Melt ¼ cup butter and combine with cookie crumbs. Press 2 cups of crumb mixture into a 9-by-9-inch pan. Bake for 8 to 10 minutes, then cool on a wire rack. Place the strawberries in a food processor and pulse into small chunks. Pour strawberries into a strainer to drain excess liquid. Beat the cream cheese with ½ cup softened butter. Add the powdered sugar and mix until creamy. Add ½ cup strawberries to the cream cheese mixture and spread over the crust. Fold the remaining strawberries into the whipped cream and spread on top of the cream cheese mixture. Sprinkle ½ cup cookie crumbs on top. Refrigerate 6 to 8 hours. *Makes 9 to 12 servings.*

Who's Dining at Your Backyard AYCE Buffet?

MITCHELL KYD

SOMETIME IN FEBRUARY, my morning DJ brought the station's news director into the booth to share an update with listeners about a cat. After a snowstorm, a wary stranger appeared in her neighborhood, looking for food, a warm place to sleep and a little love. As those roving Romeos do, he was making his late-night rounds howling his baleful *Mer-ROWWWWW*, and on the chance he might later entice his future beloved to break her curfew, he would leave behind his scented calling card.

To her credit, the news director realized the cat needed a home but was unlikely to be adopted in his current state. Her intention was to entice him into a crate with the lure of food and get him to the vet. The mission: Separate him from his "trouble puffs," as she called them, so he could go from roving to relaxing and become a lazy lap cat. Apparently, it almost worked.

As of that morning's update, Romeo was still roaming. Instead of caging the tomcat, the news director stepped out her door to find a skunk inside the crate. When it comes to stray cats, no good deed goes unpunished. I know.

I started thinking about the many critters we've attracted to our backyard all-you-can-eat (AYCE) buffets. If you have gardens, fruit trees, or cornfields, you expect to catch some bunnies, bugs, and whitetails in the act, but there are occasional surprises.

One early morning, my son went to let his chickens out of the coop and saw the door had been closed but the run gate left open. Surprise! A porcupine greeted him in the run. With paws on the waterer, he was enjoying a long, leisurely drink in a way that said this wasn't his first rodeo. My son stayed calm while the giant rodent lapped unperturbed. He finished his drink, faced my son, put paws on the fence, and posed for a few glamour shots before ambling out the gate and into the woods.

Another time, I had a memorable night of coop-closing duty. Blossom the Warrior Rooster and all his girls were

already on the roost, and everyone seemed settled. There weren't any peeps or broody ladies at the time, so I was surprised to see one of the black hens sitting on the nest. I didn't venture in, but I used my phone flashlight to see which one. Curled comfortably in the box and staring back at me was a black rat snake looking very satisfied with himself.

I'm proud to say I have relocated my fair share of black snakes barehanded, but there was no chance of getting

control of this one anywhere close to the tail. I considered my options, then closed the door. He got in. He could get out. And by the look of the bulge in his middle, he was lazing his way through some serious digestive work. The chickens didn't seem to care, and they were safer with the door closed. An open door is an invite for a midnight AYCE buffet for any coyote, fox or weasel. I really couldn't blame the snake. He was eating eggs, for goodness sake! Even I know the



best thing to have for dinner is a bit of breakfast.

In my corporate life, I had a good boss I credit with making me a better writer. (Thank you, Bill!) I'm not sure where he grew up, but it certainly wasn't rural, and he lives in the same 'burb now as he did then. He was always amused by my country-girl perspectives and all my backwoods tales. When he reported something was coming into his yard and eating dropped fruit, he was mystified, annoyed, and more than a little concerned. Another rural-rooted co-worker and I had too much fun with that. We didn't tell him right away that his furry thief was only a groundhog, another giant rodent at another AYCE buffet. 🐿️

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

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Never Judge a Book by Its Cover

JOHN KASUN

PERIODICALLY ON SUNDAY, MY WIFE and I attend one of the numerous dinners offered by the various volunteer fire companies in our area. While each organization does things slightly differently, the dinners revolve around turkey, ham or a combination of the two. Occasionally, a Swiss steak dinner or chicken barbecue gets tossed in for a change of pace. Regardless of the entrée, there's always a great dessert selection.

We started to attend these dinners so my wife didn't have to make a large Sunday meal for just the two of us, and I didn't have to clean up a mountain of pots afterward. In return, we got a great meal and helped to support worthy organizations.

Over time, we began to recognize other couples who frequented the "dinner circuit," and soon we were meeting new people as well as old friends. These meetings always resulted in interesting conversations, but a few weeks ago, we met our most interesting companion to date — Dorla Shaw.

Dorla approached our table looking like a picture-perfect grandmother who you might expect to see on a Pillsbury angel food cake box. This attractive, petite lady was neatly dressed in immaculate casual jeans and a white lacy top. Her silver jewelry accented her curly, close-cropped grey hair, and her friendly smile was sparkling and inviting. We welcomed her to our table, and shortly thereafter, Dorla and my wife were deeply involved in conversation. I continued talking to a friend seated to my right when suddenly I thought I heard the word "motorcycle."

Now, with my failing hearing, I think I hear a lot of things, but this one stopped me cold. Turning in Dorla's direction I asked, "Did I hear you say you ride a motorcycle?"

"Yep, sure do," she replied. "As a matter of fact, I just got a new bike this spring."

I slowly pulled my jaw out of the mashed potatoes, trying to look casual as Dorla explained she bought her first

motorcycle in 1996 and had more than 162,000 miles on it. Recently, she got her hands on a new Honda Goldwing 1800 Trike, a favorite of older riders who have difficulty handling the weight of a two-wheeled motorcycle.

"I had to get a Trike," Dorla said, almost apologetically. "My legs are too short to reach the ground when I stop on a regular motorcycle."

"Dorla, forgive me, but how old are you?" I asked, not sure if I would get hit with a spoonful of noodles or possibly a bike chain.

With a smile wide enough to swallow a banana sideways, she replied, "I will be 88 years old on my next birthday."

"I didn't take you for a 'biker chick' when you sat down," I said with a laugh. "You have to tell me: Do you have any tattoos?"

"Of course," she said, laughing as she rolled up her short sleeves to expose small, delicate flowers on each shoulder. "I would get some more, but I am on blood thinners, and the doctor will not give his OK."

Over the next 30 minutes, we learned a lot about Dorla and life through her eyes. Her smile was not just skin deep; it went all the way to her soul. A

widow, she has an active social life. She cooks, bakes, cuts her own grass, plows her own snow and has a collection of unusual colored coffee pots. She has often driven more than 300 miles one way for a special pot for her collection. There is very little Dorla does not do, including cutting down trees with a bow saw because she says chainsaws are just too heavy.

Dorla apparently never heard the saying, "Act your age." She has been too busy living her life to the fullest and to the best of her ability every day. She offers a great lesson and an inspiration for us all. 🍷

JOHN KASUN, a life long 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.



With a Little Help from My Friends

AS THE WEATHER WARMS UP, it's worth remembering how important it can be to share these outdoor moments with those closest to you. Be it a furry friend or a crew of goats, it's always more fun to have company while navigating your day.

Have any friend photos you'd care to share? Submit them to our Rural Reflections contest. The best photos in each of five categories (animal, artistic, human, landscape and editor's choice) will run in the January 2027 issue and receive a \$75 cash prize. Runners-up will run in the February 2027 issue and receive \$25. See the entry information below 📧



ED AND CHRISTINE MCMALLEN • REA ENERGY



PATTY RENWICK • NORTHWESTERN REC



ANGELENE KOPIAK • CLAVERACK REC



ANGELA ROHER • VALLEY REC

How to enter

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

Remember, our publication deadlines require that we work ahead, so send your seasonal photos to us early. We need summer photos before mid-May, fall photos before mid-July and winter photos before mid-September. *Please note:* Starting this year, we will not be returning any physical photos mailed to our office. Therefore, if you mail a photo, please make sure it's a print, not an original.

ADDRESS CHANGES:

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



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