

FEBRUARY 2025

PENNLINES

Crazy Contests

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

THE LITTLE-KNOWN WAY TO START SEEDS

FIREPLACE EFFICIENCY: MAXIMIZE WARMTH AND MINIMIZE WASTE

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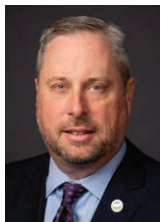


ON THE COVER
 Competitors race to saw
 through a log at the
 Pennsylvania Lumberjack
 Championships and
 Outdoor Show in
 Schellsburg, Bedford County.

PHOTO BY
 DARYL CONNOR
 THOMPSON

Business as Usual

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



STEVE BRAME

THE NEW YEAR ALWAYS BRINGS thoughts of change.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

STEVE BRAME

PRESIDENT & CEO

PENNSYLVANIA RURAL ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

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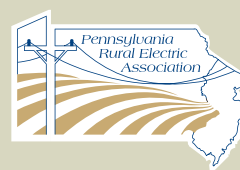
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Fish Oil Failure Shines Grim Light on America's Memory Crisis

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Dr. Sears recommends a different approach.

THE SECRET TO A LASTING MEMORY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

function most effectively.

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

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

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

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

MORE IMPRESSIVE RESULTS

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

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

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

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

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

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

WHERE TO FIND OMEGA REJUVENOL

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

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

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

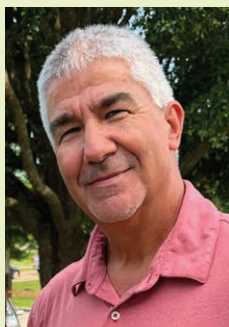
Call **1-800-694-8798** to secure your limited supply of **Omega Rejuvenol**. Readers of this publication immediately qualify for a steep discount, but supplies are limited. To take advantage of this great offer use Promo Code **PLOM225** when you call.

DEAR BILLY

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

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

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



BILLY GIBSON JR.

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

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

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

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

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Peter".

PETER A. FITZGERALD
EDITOR



EXTENSION.PSU.EDU

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

BUG BATTLE

World's smallest fly causing big problems in Chester County

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

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

A Penn State Extension article

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

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

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

WANTED: PAMPERED PETS FOR PENN LINES FEATURE



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

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

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

READY FOR REAL ID?

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

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

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

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

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

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

FARMING NEWS

Adams County to be home of new Agricultural Discovery Center

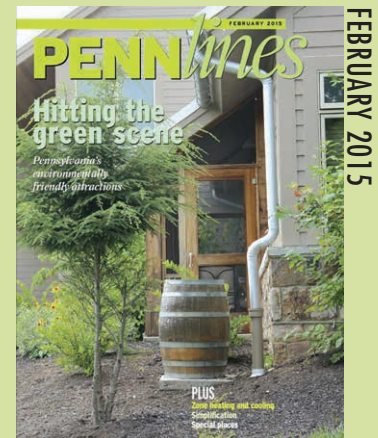
The future home of the \$26 million Pennsylvania Agricultural Discovery Center will be in Adams County although the specific location, which will be near Gettysburg, has not been announced.

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

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

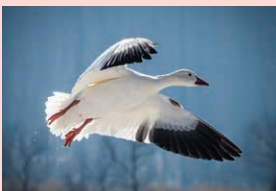
To learn more, go to discoverpaag.org.

TIME LINES



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

FEBRUARY



SEE SOME SNOW GEESE

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

SURPRISE SOMEONE

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



GET THE 'BEAR' FACTS

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

CELEBRATE PA!

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



COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG

Crazy Contests



DARYL CONNOR THOMPSON

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

MICHAEL T. CRAWFORD

Senior Technical Editor



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

AS A SPECIES, HUMANS ARE a competitive bunch.

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

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

Packing away the pounds

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

Owner Bryan Speck, Bad Boyz Bistro, Bedford

leftovers for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

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

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

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

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

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

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

DARYL CONNOR THOMPSON



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

Continued on page 12

Continued from page 11

Making the cut

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The thrill of the (rattlesnake!) hunt

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

Of the numerous hunts



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

PHOTO COURTESY OF WADE GRAHAM

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

But the competition makes it that much sweeter.

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

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



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

**Bill Wheeler,
rattlesnake hunt coordinator**

Local Lore

Bedford Rural Electric Cooperative

The Lost Boys

"It's 10 p.m. Do you know where your children are?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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



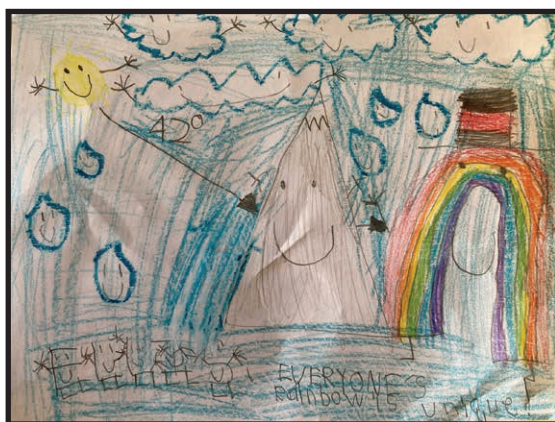
UNKNOWN NEWSPAPER PHOTO FROM 1910. PUBLIC DOMAIN

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

Rainbow Spotting

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

Ellis Greenawalt, age 6, Bedford Rural Electric Cooperative



CALLING ALL KIDS, ages 5 to 17:

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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.

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Emily Sonntag, Editor

Understanding Factors that Impact Your Energy Bills



RYAN MELLER

FEBRUARY BRINGS SOME OF THE coldest weather of the year, and as our home heating systems work harder and longer to keep us warm, we typically see higher energy bills. A few key factors affect electricity prices, but there are a few ways you can make a meaningful impact on home energy savings, too.

When you receive your monthly bill from Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative (REC), we provide a summary of how much electricity you used during the billing cycle. You can see when your electricity use may have spiked, such as on a particularly chilly day or when relatives were visiting.

Fuel prices

Northwestern REC purchases electricity from our power generation partner, Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc. (Allegheny), at a wholesale cost. We then deliver that power to our local communities.

The generation and transmission of electricity contribute significantly to the cost of providing electric service to homes and businesses. Moreover, the cost of fuels like natural gas, which are used to generate electricity, fluctuates with supply and demand. While these fluctuations can impact the overall cost of electricity, we work closely with Allegheny to stabilize rates for our members.

Extreme weather

While we cannot control the weather, we can review weather patterns and forecasts to prepare for extreme cold or heat, when we know the demand for electricity will increase. In these situations, prices can also spike.

Infrastructure and equipment

To cover the costs associated with providing electricity to your home or business, Northwestern REC members pay a monthly service availability charge. This flat monthly fee ensures the cost of equipment, materials, labor and daily operations are covered for all members in the cooperative's service territory.

To ensure the reliable service you expect and deserve, we must maintain the local grid, including power lines, substations, and other essential equipment.

Energy policies and regulations

Federal energy policies and regulations can have a profound impact on electricity costs. As energy generation shifts to the use of more renewable sources and stricter regulations are imposed on traditional, always-available fuel sources, such as natural gas and nuclear plants, costly upgrades and technologies must be constructed and deployed. These additional costs are ultimately passed on to consumers.

U.S. power consumption is expected to double by 2050. Across the country, electric cooperatives are working with members of Congress to advocate for smart energy policies that reliably power our communities.

Continued on page 14D

NEW INSULATION CAN WRAP YOUR BUDGET IN SAVINGS

Ensuring your home is properly insulated can improve energy efficiency and make it more comfortable. Insulation acts like a cozy coat that reduces heat loss during winter months and a protective layer that reduces heat gain during summer months.

Many older homes have less insulation than newer homes, but even newer homes can benefit from additional insulation. While it is not the least expensive efficiency improvement, adding insulation and air sealing to your home can provide the biggest bang for your buck in energy savings and overall comfort.

The most common areas to insulate are attics, ceilings, crawlspaces, unconditioned basements, exterior and interior walls, floors, and ductwork in unconditioned spaces.

The amount and effectiveness rating of insulation required for each area varies by climate, but many websites provide easy-to-follow recommendations. Visit energy.gov/insulation to learn about recommended R-values for specific areas of the home based on climate zones.

It is important to understand how insulation effectiveness is measured. Insulation is rated by R-value, which indicates the material's resistance to conductive heat flow. The higher the R-value, the greater the insulation effectiveness. The R-value you will need depends on factors like climate, type of heating and cooling system, and the area of your home you plan to insulate.

Insulation is offered in a wide range of materials – from bulky fiberglass rolls to cellulose materials made from recycled paper products. If you are considering installing additional insulation, talk to an expert who can offer guidance on the right materials for your budget, climate and comfort needs.

Investing in proper insulation for your home not only enhances comfort but also reduces your energy consumption.

Understanding the Role of a Board Member at Northwestern REC: A Guide for Cooperative Members

CLARISSA SCHNEIDER, EXECUTIVE ADMINISTRATOR

EACH YEAR, MEMBERS OF NORTHWESTERN Rural Electric Cooperative (REC), elect representatives to help guide the organization and ensure its continued success. The cooperative's governance is structured around a 10-member board of directors, and each district in the cooperative is represented by one director.

Board responsibilities

The board of directors is the governing body of the cooperative, and its members have important responsibilities, including managing the business affairs of the co-op, making policy decisions, and overseeing the long-term direction of the organization. While the directors have significant authority, they are bound by the cooperative's bylaws, articles of incorporation, and relevant laws that ensure members' best interests are represented.

The 10 Northwestern REC districts

Northwestern REC serves a wide area, which is divided into 10 districts. Each district is represented by one director, ensuring every part of the cooperative has direct representation in the decision-making process.

Here are the 10 districts:

- ▶ **District 1:** Conneaut, Elk Creek, Franklin, Girard, and Springfield townships, and Cranesville and Platea boroughs in Erie County; and City of Conneaut and parts of Monroe Township in Ashtabula County, Ohio
- ▶ **District 2:** LeBoeuf, McKean, Washington, and Waterford townships, and Edinboro and Mill Village boroughs in Erie County
- ▶ **District 3:** Amity, Concord, Union, and Wayne townships, and Elgin and Union City boroughs in Erie County; and Spring Creek Township in Warren County
- ▶ **District 4:** Beaver, Conneautville, Pine, Sadsbury, Spring, Summerhill, and Summit townships, and Conneautville Borough in Crawford County; and Pierpont and parts of Monroe and Richmond townships in Ashtabula County, Ohio
- ▶ **District 5:** Cambridge, Cussewago, Hayfield, Venango, and Woodcock townships, and Saegertown and Woodcock boroughs in Crawford County
- ▶ **District 6:** Athens, Bloomfield, Richmond and Rockdale townships in Crawford County
- ▶ **District 7:** Oil Creek, Rome, Sparta, Steuben, and Troy townships, and Centerville Borough in Crawford County; and Eldred and Southwest townships in Warren County
- ▶ **District 8:** East Fallowfield, Fairfield, Greenwood, Union, and Vernon townships in Crawford County; and Andover, Kinsman, Williamsfield, and parts of Richmond townships in Ashtabula County, Ohio
- ▶ **District 9:** East Fairfield, East Mead, Randolph, and West Mead townships, and Blooming Valley Borough in Crawford County
- ▶ **District 10:** Wayne Township in Crawford County; French Creek Township in Mercer County; and Canal, Cherrytree, Jackson, Oakland, and Plum townships in Venango County

Election and tenure of directors

Board members are elected to represent their respective districts for a three-year term. Elections occur late May, early June and the results will be announced at Annual Meeting on August 2, 2025. The election process is open and democratic, and each member has the right to vote.

In 2025, elections will be held for directors in **Districts 1, 2 and 4**. If you live in one of these districts, and satisfy the qualifications outlined in the cooperative's bylaws, you are eligible to seek nomination to the board. Candidate nominations will be accepted at the cooperative's nominating meetings, which will be held between March 5 and May 4. Nominating meeting dates, times, and locations will be announced in the *March Penn Lines*, posted on our social media pages, and shared on SmartHub. A letter will also be mailed to members beginning in March.

Qualifications for board members

To be eligible to serve as a director, a candidate must meet certain qualifications. These include being a member in good standing, maintaining a good credit history and living in the district they wish to represent. Additionally, candidates cannot be employees of a competing electric

service provider, have close family ties to current directors or employees, or have been convicted of a felony in the past five years. For more information on director qualifications, visit northwesternrec.com/our-bylaws.

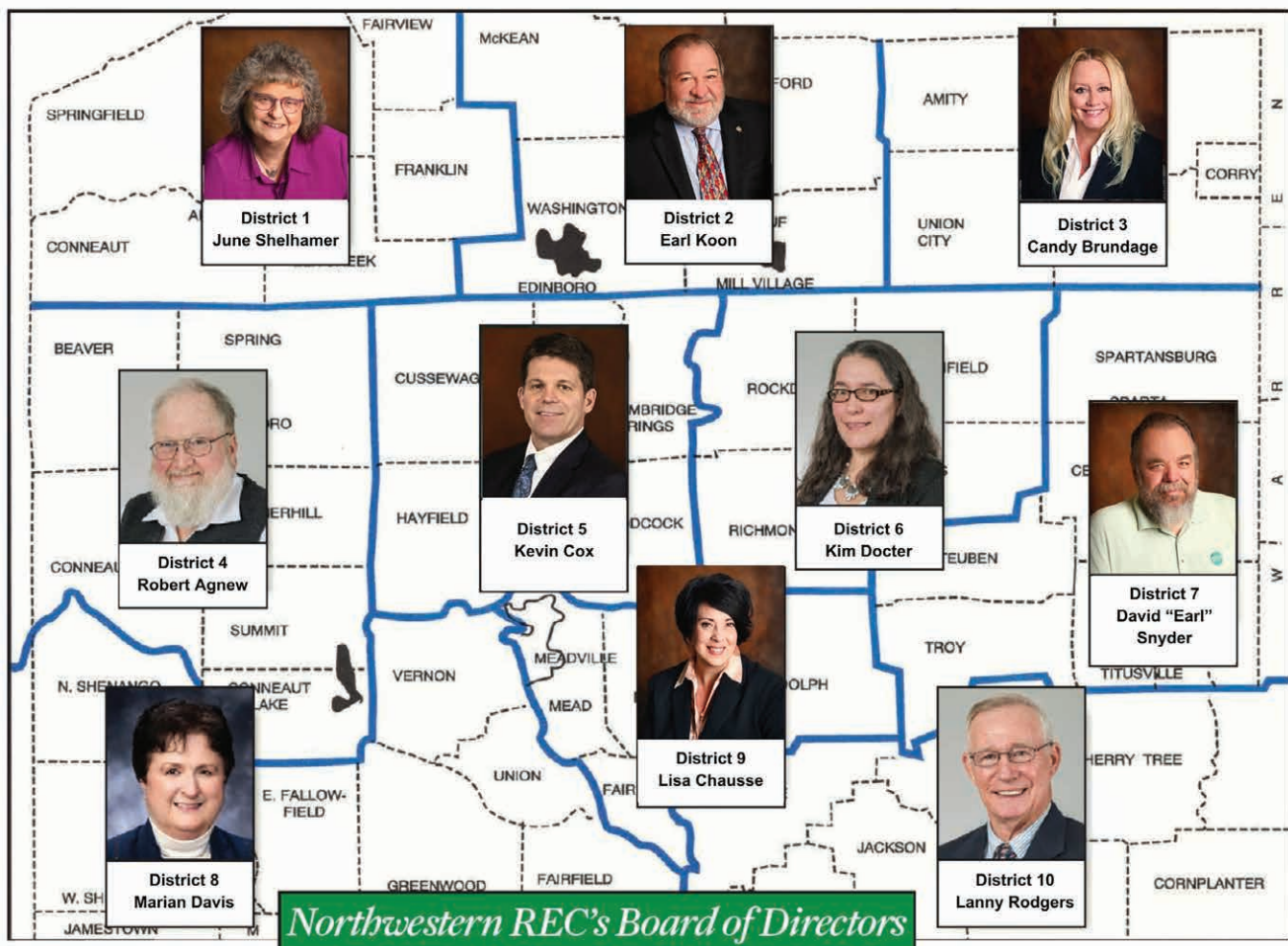
Your role as a member

As a member of the cooperative, you have the power to help shape the future of Northwestern REC by participating in the election of your cooperative's directors, who serve the best interests of all members and ensure the cooperative continues to provide reliable, affordable service.

The upcoming elections for Districts 1, 2, and 4 this year are a great opportunity for members in these districts to select a leader who will represent their community and contribute to the cooperative's success.

As the cooperative continues to grow and evolve, it remains vital that the voices of the members are heard through the election of dedicated and qualified directors. This is your chance to take an active role in the cooperative's future.

We encourage you to stay informed, attend the annual meeting and participate in the election process to ensure your district is well-represented at the board level. 🗳️



MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT & CEO

Continued from page 14A

You have control

While many of these external factors that impact electricity costs are out of our control, we all have the power to manage our energy use at home. The most effective way to lower use is through the thermostat. Since heating and cooling account for a major portion of home energy

use, adjusting the thermostat to the lowest comfortable setting can help you save energy and money. Remember to service your heating and cooling system annually and replace dirty filters as needed.

Another way to reduce energy use is by taking advantage of off-peak periods when the demand for electricity is lower. Reserve energy-intensive chores for off-peak times, such as early in the morning or later in the evening. Be sure to seal air leaks around windows, doors and other areas where gaps are possible. This will help your heating and cooling system work less and improve the overall comfort of your home.

Northwestern REC is your local energy partner, and we are here to help. Visit northwesternrec.com and our social media accounts to learn about our energy efficiency programs designed to help you save. As always, we will continue working diligently to provide you with reliable power at an affordable cost. 🌱

Cooperatively yours,

RYAN MELLER
PRESIDENT & CEO

EFFECTIVE WAYS to Lower Home Energy Use

Outside factors, such as fuel and equipment costs and extreme weather, can impact electricity prices. But you have the power to control home energy consumption by taking proactive steps to reduce energy use.



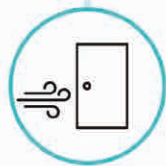
Thermostat Management

The thermostat is one of the best places to lower your energy use because heating and cooling account for a significant portion of home energy consumption. During winter months, adjust your thermostat to the lowest comfortable setting to reduce energy use. The U.S. Department of Energy recommends 68 degrees or lower.



Utilize Off-Peak Energy Times

Plan energy-intensive chores and tasks, such as running the dishwasher or washing clothing, during off-peak energy hours, when the demand for electricity is lower. Off-peak times are early in the morning or late evenings. By scheduling these activities during off-peak periods, you can help keep rates lower, reduce demand and relieve pressure on the grid.



Seal Your Home

According to Energy Star®, about 20% of heated or cooled air that moves through a home is lost due to lack of proper insulation and air leaks. Ensure your home has sufficient insulation levels and seal air leaks around windows and doors with caulk and weatherstripping. This is a simple, effective way to lower energy use and improve indoor comfort.



Maintain Equipment

The health of your heating and cooling system is essential for comfort and can greatly impact energy bills. Maintain your system by regularly replacing dirty filters and scheduling annual inspections for maintenance and necessary repairs.

WE LOVE OUR COMMUNITY

EMILY SONNTAG, COMMUNICATIONS
& MARKETING SPECIALIST

Eleanor Roosevelt once said, "Since you get more joy out of giving joy to others, you should put a good deal of thought into the happiness that you are able to give." This quote reflects the special bond and obligation that ties Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) to the community we serve. With Valentine's Day approaching, we cannot think of a better time to express how much we love this community and serving you, the members of the co-op.

When we helped to bring electricity to rural Pennsylvania, the quality of life improved for all. Through the years, Northwestern REC has been at the forefront of tackling challenges that have arisen. And we want to continue to help meet the long-term needs of our community to ensure it thrives – because just like you, we live here, too.

While our top priority is to provide safe, reliable and affordable energy, equally important is our mission to enrich the lives of our members. This focus on benefitting the larger community is central to the way we operate as a cooperative. Northwestern REC knows that electricity is a critical need for modern-day life, but it takes more than poles and power lines to make a community.

Over time, our co-op has evolved to meet the changing needs of our community, thereby improving the quality of life for everyone. And that can mean many different things. It can mean programs for Pennsylvania's youth, such as educational scholarships or the Rural Electric Cooperative Youth Tour. This is a wonderful opportunity for our community's brightest youth to go to Washington, D.C., for a week-long event and experience democracy in action. In addition, the cooperative organizes food drives, donates to and sponsors local businesses and events, provides teacher grants and sponsors the Member-to-Member Inc. fund that helps members who are struggling to pay their electric bills.

Ever since 1936, when Northwestern REC was incorporated, our community-focused programs have helped to educate our youth, aided those in need to keep the lights on, fed hungry families, and supported local entrepreneurship. The truth is, however, that we could not have done any of this without you, our amazing members. You empower Northwestern REC through your membership and through your participation in and support of these programs.

As a local business, we are proud to power your life and bring valuable assets to our community. And we hope you will continue to share your thoughts with us as we plan for the future. The energy landscape is undergoing dramatic change fueled by evolving technology and consumer desires for more options. While the larger environment in which we operate is constantly changing, one thing remains the same, and that's our dedication to our community and members.

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

SCOTT FLOOD

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A changing industry

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

Co-ops have long emphasized

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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



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Cooking up Some Basic Skills

ABIGAIL ZIEGER

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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


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



fun, the more positive our kitchen experiences become.

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


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




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IT'S CONTEST TIME!

Take PENN|LINES on a Road Trip

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

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

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

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

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

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

DEADLINE: Friday, Oct. 31

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



Celebrate Sweet Sensations

ANNE M. KIRCHNER

PHOTOS BY ANNE M. KIRCHNER



APPLE SKILLET BREAD

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

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



BAKED BRIE WITH ROASTED TOMATOES

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

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



FLOURLESS CHOCOLATE CAKE

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

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

The Little-Known Way to Start Seeds

GEORGE WEIGEL

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

little watering or other care involved.

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

Here's how to winter-sow:

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

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

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

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

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

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

the seeds will sprout.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Fireplace Efficiency: Maximize Warmth and Minimize Waste

MIRANDA BOUTELLE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MARK GILLILAND, PIONEER UTILITY RESOURCES



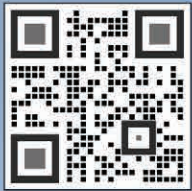
EFFICIENCY MATTERS: If your two- and four-legged family members enjoy curling up in front of the fire, be sure to lock in comfort and savings by efficiently operating the fireplace in your home.

SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

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

ATTENTION HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS:

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



ATTENTION FORMER YOUTH TOUR STUDENTS:

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

REQUIREMENTS & DATES TO REMEMBER:

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



QUESTIONS:

Steph Okuniewski, *Member Engagement Specialist*
Stephanie_Okuniewski@prea.com
717.982.1455

ISSUE MONTH AD DEADLINE

April 2025
May 2025
June 2025

February 14
March 14
April 15

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

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

CLASSIFIED AD SUBMISSION/RATES:

ELECTRIC CO-OP MEMBERS:

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

NON-MEMBERS:

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

SPECIAL HEADINGS:

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

PAYMENT:

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

SEND COMPLETED AD COPY AND PAYMENT TO:

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:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <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 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gifts & Collectibles | <input type="checkbox"/> Tools & Equipment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Livestock & Pets | <input type="checkbox"/> Travel & Tourism |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Miscellaneous | <input type="checkbox"/> Wanted to Buy |

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING

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AROUND THE HOUSE

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MARK'S TREE SERVICE. Licensed, insured. Removals, trimming, stump grinding. Serving: York, Hanover, Southern York, Northern Baltimore County. Since 1980. Free estimates. Mark Eric Fix, 717-891-2735.

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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.

BORDER COLLIES

BORDER COLLIE PUPS. Registered. Black and white, red and white and merles from agility and herding bloodlines. Troy, Pa. Call 570-364-8278. Text 570-485-9423.

BUILDING SUPPLIES

STEEL ROOFING AND SIDING. Over 30 years in business. Several profiles cut to length. 29- and 26-gauge best quality residential roofing – 40-year warranty. Also, seconds, heavy gauges, accessories, etc. Installation available. Located northwestern Pennsylvania. 814-398-4052.

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KEYSTONE COIN & BULLION is buying and selling gold, silver, U.S. coins and currency. Collections, estates, gold and silver jewelry, sterling silver flatware, etc. We pay in CASH. Call us today! Christine or Matt at 814-631-6914. Visit us online or follow us on Facebook! www.keystonecoinbullion.com.

CONSULTING FORESTRY SERVICES

RAYSTOWN FORESTRY CONSULTING. Timber sales, appraisals, wildlife habitat management. Dedicated to sustainable harvests for present and future generations to enjoy. 45 years experience. 814-448-0040 or 814-448-2405.

GIFTS & COLLECTIBLES

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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

GARY & SONS, INC. HEATING AND COOLING – Save money on fuel oil, propane, or your electric bill without sacrificing comfort – add a heat pump! It works with your system or alone. Call Gary & Sons, Inc. for a FREE estimate: 814-205-6804 or garysinc.com. A Lennox Premier Dealer and Mitsubishi Diamond Elite Contractor. Gary & Sons is located in Falls Creek, Pa. PA192811.

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.

LIVESTOCK & PETS

THREE BEAUTIFUL HEIFERS for sale. Ten and 11 months old. Father is a Scottish Highlander. Mothers are Dexters and Belted Galloway. \$1,500 each or \$4,000 for all three. Can send pictures. Will deliver for a fee. Text or leave message: 814-553-4402.

MEATS

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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MISCELLANEOUS

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.

SNOWPLOW FOR QUAD/FOUR-WHEELER. New, never used. Cost \$600, sell for \$400. Call 724-237-6133.

HONDA EM4000SX GENERATOR. 21-foot power cord, 30-amp meter base. Used six hours. Phone 570-433-0411.

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2009 NISSAN SENTRA. 137,000 miles, good condition, with battery. Four extra tires and rims. \$2,500 or best offer. 814-251-9448.

1985 CHEVY PICKUP WITH POWER ANGLE SNOWPLOW! Great neighborhood truck (no inspection, rust). See at 127 Northwoods Lane, Sigel, PA 15860. \$2,620. Call 878-224-8077.

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TREES AND SHRUBS for all your landscaping needs. Rare, unusual, amazing. Bloomfield Nursery, 167 Sproul Mountain Road, Roaring Spring, PA 16673. 814-224-4508.

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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.

FAYETTE COUNTY - 3.5 ACRES with 4,768-square-foot building, \$189,000. Cambria County - 18.2 acres, mostly fields, gas well, with option to purchase gas rights, \$119,000. Indiana County - 198.3 acres, sale pending, \$519,000. Clearfield County - 502 acres, wooded, streams, very remote, \$1,499,000. www.timberlandrealty.net. Ron Westover: 724-422-5525, 716-962-9935.

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

RENT THREE-SEASON ONE-ROOM CABIN. Endless Mountains, Pa. No solicitors. Please call 856-589-4925.

RECIPES & FOOD

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.

TIMESHARE CANCELLATION

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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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JEEP 1940s WILLYS or Ford Army-type jeep. Rusty, broken down in field, any condition considered. 570-395-4127. Email: ironriderIII@yahoo.com.

ESTATE LIQUIDATOR LOOKING TO BUY quality antiques, old guns, knives, ammunition. Unique kitchen, household, barn and farm items. Plus, any old and unusual items. Call 814-438-2407. Email richc101.5@gmail.com.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

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

Source: energy.gov



The Paper Terminator

JOHN KASUN

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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



SANDRA BLACK • CLAVERACK REC



DEBBIE KNECHT • TRI-COUNTY REC



ANGELA BIESECKER • VALLEY REC

More Favorite Photos

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

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

SAM EFFLAND • VALLEY REC



How to enter

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

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

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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Minimum purchase of 4

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"My overall experience was great. I love the window, and from sales to scheduling, the experience was very good. The installers are highly skilled professionals and I would recommend Renewal by Andersen to all my contacts."

LYNN F. | RENEWAL BY ANDERSEN CUSTOMER

More 5-Star Reviews



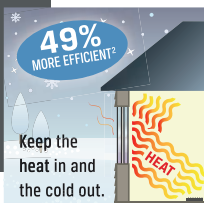
Than Other Leading Full-Service Window Replacement Companies²



Nation's Best Warranty[†]

KEEP THE HEAT IN AND THE COLD AIR OUT!

Solving your window problems and having a comfortable home is easy and enjoyable when you choose Renewal by Andersen. Take advantage of this great offer to save money on your window project – and help save on high energy bills for years to come!



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¹**DETAILS OF OFFER:** Offer expires 3/31/2025. Not valid with other offers or prior purchases. Buy one (1) window or entry/patio door, get one (1) window or entry/patio door 40% off, and 12 months no money down, no monthly payments, no interest when you purchase four (4) or more windows or entry/patio doors between 2/12/2025 and 3/31/2025. 40% off windows and entry/patio doors are less than or equal to lowest cost window or entry/patio door in the order. Additional \$200 off your purchase, minimum purchase of four (4) required, taken after initial discount(s), when you purchase by 3/31/2025. Subject to credit approval. 12-month Promo Period: while no payments are due, interest accrues but is waived if the loan is paid in full before the Promo Period expires. Any unpaid balance owed after the Promo Period, plus accrued interest, will be paid in installments based on the terms disclosed in the customer's loan agreement. Financing is provided by various financial institutions without regard to age, race, color, religion, national origin, gender, or familial status. Savings comparison based on purchase of a single unit at list price. Available at participating locations and offer applies throughout the service area. See your local Renewal by Andersen location for details. Some Renewal by Andersen locations are independently owned and operated. License numbers available at renewalbyandersen.com/license. ²It is the only warranty among top selling window companies that meets all of the following requirements: easy to understand terms, unrestricted transferability, installation coverage, labor coverage, geographically unrestricted, coverage for exterior color, insect screens and hardware, and no maintenance requirement. Visit renewalbyandersen.com/nationsbest for details. ³Review aggregator survey of 5-star reviews among leading national full-service window replacement companies. January 2024 Reputation.com. ⁴Values are based on comparison of Renewal by Andersen[®] double-hung window U-Factor to the U-Factor for clear dual-pane glass nonmetal frame default values from the 2006, 2009, 2012, 2015, and 2018 International Energy Conservation Code "Glazed Fenestration" Default Tables. ⁵Based on testing of 10 double-hung units per ASTM E2068 20 years after installation ⁶Renewal by Andersen[®] and all other marks where denoted are trademarks of Andersen Corporation. © 2025 Andersen Corporation. All rights reserved. RBA14201 ⁷Using U.S. and imported parts.