

# Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

**Claverack REC**

570-265-2167  
1-800-326-9799

Email: [mail@claverack.com](mailto:mail@claverack.com)

Website: <http://www.claverack.com>

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**Brian Zeidner, Director, Member Services**

**Office Hours**

Monday through Friday

7:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Jeff Fetzer, CCC, Local Pages Editor

## From the President & CEO



### Thankful for community support

By Bobbi Kilmer

“FEELING gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it.” In the spirit of this quote by author William Arthur Ward, I’d like to express my gratitude for your membership in our electric cooperative. Because of you, we are able to make our communities better places to live.

It’s important to let our members know just what an impact you have on our co-op and the greater community, likely in ways you may not even realize.

As part of the cooperative business model, one of our core principles is “Concern for Community.” While our priority is always to provide safe, reliable and affordable energy to our consumer-members, we also embrace our role as a catalyst for good for the communities we serve.

We know many of our members are involved in community-based organizations, churches, civic clubs, and associations that reflect our rural roots. Your contributions to these groups make our area a better place.

We support efforts to improve our communities by partnering with groups like the Bradford County Conservation District on “Green Energy Career Day.” We provide electrical safety programs to hundreds of students each year, support local vocational education programs and award college scholarships.


As we strive to support our local communities with our time and money, we would also like to thank our consumer-members for their show of support for the cooperative. When you attend co-op events such as the annual

meeting, you make our co-op stronger simply by being informed about your co-op and timely issues related to the industry. You are also showing support to our leadership and employees.

When you alert us to problems or provide suggestions via email or directly to our employees, you help us improve operations, resulting in better service to the larger co-op membership.

Because we are locally governed by community members, we are able to get a first-hand perspective on community priorities, which enables us to make more informed decisions on long-term investments. We are thankful our co-op board members carve out time to attend important training sessions, participate in planning meetings and keep abreast of industry trends. This investment in time results in informed advisers who serve the co-op’s interests in a way that our members expect and deserve.

On a more personal note, we appreciate the countless acts of kindness our lineworkers and other employees receive when they are working in severe weather and dangerous conditions. We are also thankful for your patience as we work to restore your power.

Claverack was originally established 81 years ago to bring electricity to our area when no one else would. The cooperative is a reflection of our local communities and our evolving needs. Together, let’s continue making our corner of the world a better place. We can’t do it without you, and for that, we’re thankful for your membership. Wishing you a very happy holiday season! 

*Festival of Lights returns to Stone Hedge*

# On course to make holidays bright

By Jeff Fetzer

CLAVERACK member Karen Force admits she didn't know much about golf when she and her fiancé, William Ruark, purchased Stone Hedge Golf Course near Tunkhannock in December 2016.

But she was well aware that golf courses, at least those in northern Pennsylvania, struggle to bring in revenue during the winter.

As she pondered ways to beckon customers to the course during the cold-weather months, the proverbial lightbulb went off — actually thousands of tiny LED bulbs in strands of red and green and white — as the Tunkhannock woman envisioned the Stone Hedge back nine bedecked in an array of dazzling light displays celebrating the Christmas season.

Force's vision for a drive-through holiday light spectacular, which she dubbed The Festival of Lights at Stone Hedge, danced to life on Black Friday last year and quickly became the hit of the season in northeastern Pennsylvania. From the day after Thanksgiving through New Year's Eve, thousands



**CREATIVE FORCE:** Claverack member Karen Force, co-owner of Stone Hedge Golf Course, stands next to a pile of light balls she and friends crafted that will be incorporated into a light display depicting an avalanche at Stone Hedge Golf Course. The avalanche is one of the many displays set up along the two-mile Festival of Lights drive-through loop at the Tunkhannock golf course during the holiday season.

made the pilgrimage to Stone Hedge, which is served by Claverack, to drive around a two-mile loop on the golf course and view scores of colorful

light displays ranging from a golfing Santa Claus and creatures of the sea to the Statue of Liberty, a Nativity scene and just about everything in between.

Last year's display featured 16,000 strings of LED Christmas lights that Force, a crew of volunteers and Stone Hedge employees used to trim trees, decorate fairways and craft custom light displays, such as the magnificent multi-colored tunnel of light that served as a gateway to the

golf course light exhibit. In addition, the course was adorned with dozens of custom-crafted and stock lighting displays purchased for the festival from the Holiday Light Store, a family business in Raleigh, N.C.

The creative force behind the Festival of Lights, which opened for its second season on Nov. 23, Force designs the layout of the two-mile-long light show and also conjures up many of the various themes, characters and objects that visitors encounter lighting the way. Force says she provides clip art examples of her design concepts to the Holiday Light Store, which transforms her ideas into a frame festooned with LED lights.

She notes that two tractor-trailer loads of new display items have been added for this year's Festival of Lights, which will operate daily, except for Christmas Eve, through Dec. 31. Characters from the Peanuts cartoon, heavy equipment and an outer space exhibit



**GRAND ENTRANCE:** The entrance to the Festival of Lights at Stone Hedge as it appeared in 2017. While Claverack provides electricity to the golf course clubhouse, the drive-through light display, which covers a two-mile loop on the golf course's back nine, is powered by three large diesel generators.



complete with a UFO are among the new offerings for this year's display.

"We want to keep it interesting, so it will be different every year," Force explains.

She says she came up with the idea for the Festival of Lights after touring a similar holiday light display while vacationing in Charleston, S.C., about six years ago.

Although that display was not sited on a golf course, Force suggested to Stone Hedge co-owner and longtime partner Ruark that the golf course grounds would be ideal for a drive-through holiday display.

"There's no revenue for the golf course in winter, and people get laid off," she says, "So I said, 'Why don't we see if we could do a festival of lights right here.'"

Ruark, an entrepreneur who owns Meshoppen Stone among other enterprises, embraced Force's idea and agreed to prepare the course for the light show and handle parking and logistics.

"I'm going to be 62, and he's going to be 60," Force quips. "Did we need more to do? No. But it turned out to be a lot of fun."



And a lot of work. Force notes that a number of mature trees growing along the cart path had to be removed so that the path could be widened to accommodate passenger vehicles.

Set up of the light displays began in October last year and ended the day before Thanksgiving — two days before the grand unveiling of the Festival of Lights.

Force, who coordinates the set up along the drive-through loop, takes a hands-on approach to the Festival of Lights. She helps string lights and



**TUNNEL OF LIGHT:** A colorful archway, constructed using an old greenhouse as a frame and 800 strands of LED lights, served as the gateway to the 2017 Festival of Lights display at Stone Hedge. The nightly festival, which features over 16,000 strands of energy-efficient LED bulbs and scores of additional fabricated light displays, is open daily, except for Christmas Eve, through Dec. 31.

spends countless hours creating items to add to the display, like the huge Christmas tree that greeted visitors to the clubhouse last year. Force says she works at least eight hours a day, six days a week from early October through Thanksgiving, preparing the Christmas display.

"I have a rotating group of five girlfriends, all 55 and over, who come out and help me," Force says. "The grounds guys wrap all the trees and string all the light displays over the paths. It's hard work setting up, but it's a lot of fun to see it come together. It's probably one of the most satisfying

things I've ever done."

She wasn't so sure about that, however, after the Festival of Lights initially opened last year.

"The first couple of nights, we had 30 or 40 cars come through," she recalls. "I was crying. I was scared, because we had spent a fortune on this.

"It was definitely a risk, no doubt about it," she adds. "We said last year, 'Go big or go home.' Everybody loves Christmas lights. You give them something magnificent, which is what this is, and usually it will be successful."

She was right. The festival quickly became the talk of the town — and the Facebook community. Force notes that more than 200 people gave glowing reviews, none with less than a 5-star rating, to the Festival of Lights on the event's Facebook page last year.

"It became a family event," Force  
*(continues on page 12d)*



**Festival of Lights**

*(continued from page 12c)*

says. “We had people coming from as far as Bloomsburg, and some people came two or three times last year.”



There are signs that the Festival of Lights will be a crowd pleaser again this year; by early November, more than 15,000 Facebook visitors have indicated they were interested in attending the light show this holiday season.

“It’s just joyful for everyone,” Force says. “That’s the only word I can use to describe it, and we would like to thank the community and all of our employees for their support.”

Force notes that the festival has enabled Stone Hedge to keep much of its workforce employed through the winter now. The grounds crew will spend January and February tearing down the light displays, rolling up miles of light strands and wires, and moving them into storage. By the time they are done, it will be time to begin preparing for the upcoming golf season.

Admission to tour the light display is \$25 per vehicle, and each purchaser is given a ticket for a free s’more, which can be made in a pavilion next to the golf course parking lot. Hot dogs, hamburgers and hot chocolate are available nightly, and several outside vendors will be on hand during the weekends. Free pictures with Santa Claus are available each night, and children’s train rides are available for \$3 per child.

The Festival of Lights is open daily from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. Sunday through Thursday, and 5 p.m. to 10 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays through New Year’s Eve. The display will be closed on Christmas Eve.

For more information, call 570-836-5108 or visit the Festival of Lights at Stone Hedge Golf Course page on Facebook. 🌞

**Operation Round-Up**

**MEMBERS HELPING MEMBERS**

With today’s higher energy costs, more and more cooperative families struggle to keep up with their energy bills.

You can help some of your neighbors in need by participating in Claverack’s Operation Round-Up program.



This voluntary program allows you to assist members of the cooperative who are experiencing difficulties paying their electric bills. Participating in the program is inexpensive – less than \$1 a month – and allows you to help make a difference in a neighbor’s life.

**CONTRIBUTING IS EASY**

The concept is simple. Claverack rounds up your monthly electric bill to the next dollar amount. The difference between the round-up amount and your actual bill amount goes into our member assistance fund.

For example, if your electric bill is \$100.32, then you would pay \$101. The extra 68 cents goes into our member assistance fund for needy families of the cooperative.

In addition to being a great way to help neighbors in need, participating in the program can also make balancing your checkbook easier.

**A FEW PENNIES CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

Each year, hundreds of Claverack members receive energy assistance in the form of government money. That financing is often targeted in congressional budget cuts; so help for needy families is never certain. That’s why we began Operation Round-Up – to help more members.

**BE A GOOD NEIGHBOR**

If you would like to help others, Operation Round-Up is an easy way to do so. An average yearly donation is about \$6. And if you change your mind and decide to quit, just call the office and ask to stop.

The choice is yours. Sign up today to start helping others by calling us at 1-800-326-9799. You can also sign up through our website, [www.claverack.com](http://www.claverack.com), by clicking on Operation Round-Up under the “Your Bill” drop-down menu at the top of the screen.

**Season’s Greetings from all of us at Claverack**

**PRESIDENT AND CEO:**

Bobbi Kilmer

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**Holiday closings**  
Claverack’s offices will be closed for the holidays on the following days:  
**Monday, Dec. 24, and Tuesday, Dec. 25 — Christmas**  
**Tuesday, Jan. 1 — New Year’s**