

OCTOBER 2024

PENNLINES

Ghosts Among Us

The Eerie Allure of
Abandoned Towns

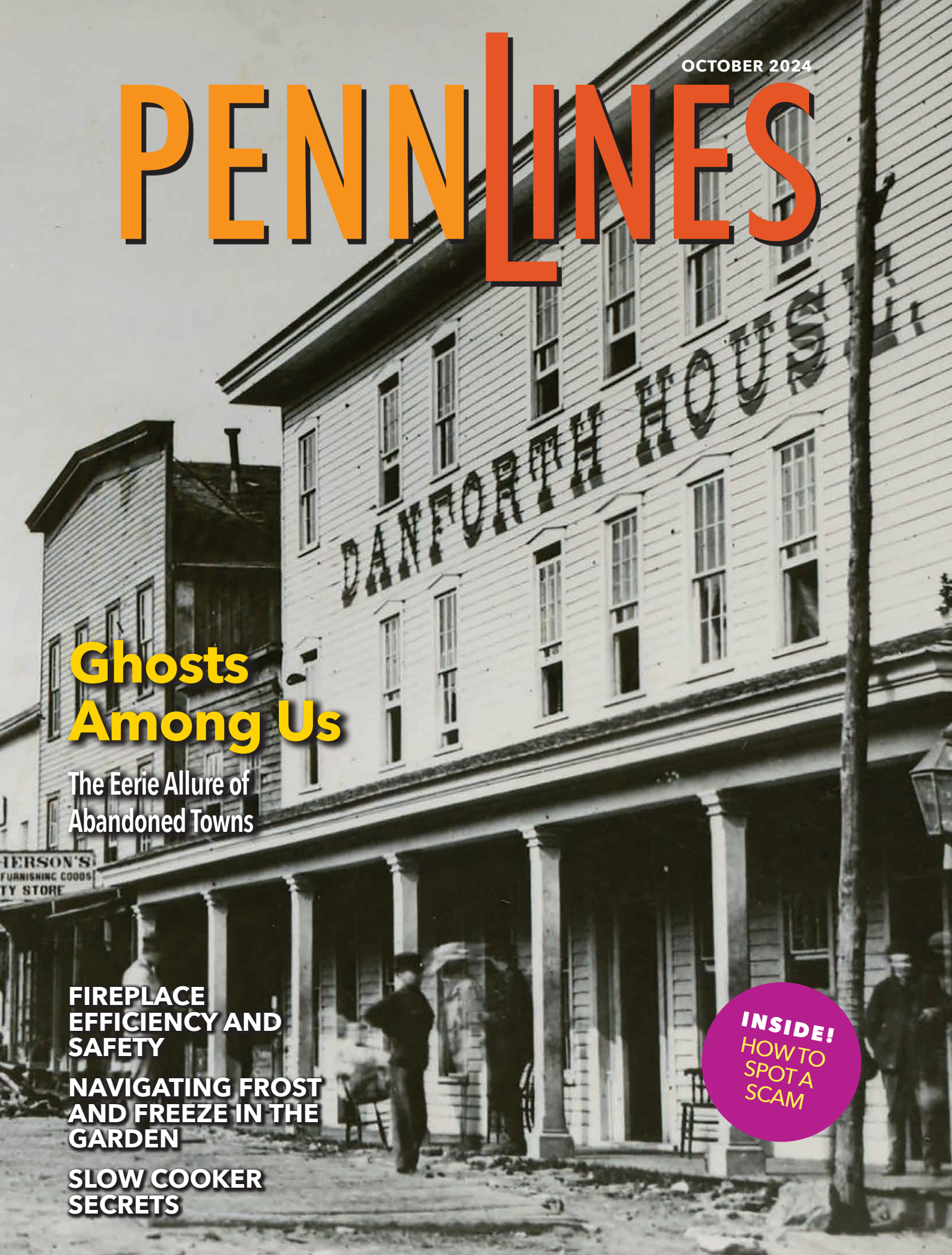
**FIREPLACE
EFFICIENCY AND
SAFETY**

**NAVIGATING FROST
AND FREEZE IN THE
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**SLOW COOKER
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JEFF FETZER

4 **FIRST WORD** The Solar Solution

Co-ops can help consumers shine a light on whether solar is right for them

6 **KEEPING CURRENT** Nature News, Taking a Dip, Penn State Bound? and More

8 **FEATURE** Ghosts Among Us

The eerie allure of abandoned towns

14 **SMART CIRCUITS** Maintain Chimney for Fireplace Efficiency and Fire Safety

Don't get burned this fall. Call in a professional

16 **COMMUNITY CORNER**

We shine a spotlight on Pennsylvania's rural electric cooperatives and the people who make them special

16A **COOPERATIVE CONNECTION** Information and advice from your local electric cooperative

18 **RURAL ROOTS** Making Reading a Family Tradition

Books bring everyone together

20 **FEATURE** PREA Announces Scholarship Winners

Support helps co-op students continue their education

22 **COOPERATIVE KITCHEN** Slow Cooker Secrets

All you've got to do for a delicious meal is set it – and forget it

23 **POWER PLANTS** How to Navigate Frost and Freeze

Chilly temps don't have to spell the end of your garden just yet

24 **FEATURE** The Art of Deception

How to spot – and avoid – utility scams

27 **ENERGY MATTERS** Energy Innovation Creates New Career Opportunities

Do you have what it takes to shape tomorrow's energy landscape?

28 **CLASSIFIEDS**

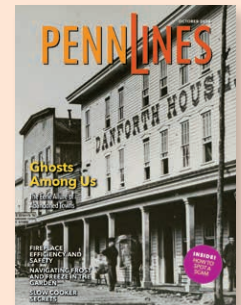
30 **PUNCH LINES** Ottoman Lady

Something just doesn't fit here

31 **RURAL REFLECTIONS** A Certain Point of View

Looking at life through a different lens

A GHOSTLY REMINDER: At its peak in the 1870s, the Village of Barclay in Bradford County boasted a population of more than 2,000 residents. Now, the souls in its cemetery are all that remain.



ON THE COVER

Once a grand symbol of Pithole City's oil boom, the Danforth House Hotel catered to the fortune-seekers flocking to the short-lived Venango County community. Just a few years later, the 140-room luxury hotel was sold for firewood for \$16 as the oil dried up and the city faded into history.

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The Solar Solution



MATT LEONARD

WITH SO MUCH ATTENTION IN Washington on clean energy, we frequently get questions about rooftop solar from consumers looking to save money and protect the environment. And our response is always the same: Approach the decision with lots of thought and plenty of research. And talk to your co-op.

While solar can be a smart investment, navigating the process without guidance from your cooperative can lead to frustration and even financial loss. This is why reaching out to your cooperative is essential. Their staff will offer unbiased information and insights tailored to your needs, helping you steer clear of misleading claims.

Deceptive practices

While there are reputable companies doing solar installations, some bad actors have taken advantage of the growing interest in solar. They will make exaggerated promises, claiming that installing panels will eliminate your electric bill (it doesn't) or you'll be eligible for free solar panels or tax-rebate checks. Unfortunately, these too-good-to-be-true deals often turn out to be just that.

In fact, the U.S. Treasury Department recently warned about the rise of solar scams, saying that homeowners have been tricked into contracts with misleading cost savings and aggressive sales tactics. (Note: If you think you've already been scammed, consider filing a complaint with the Pa. Attorney General's Office, attorneygeneral.gov/submit-a-complaint/scams-complaint/, or the Federal Trade Commission, ReportFraud.FTC.gov.)

Your trusted energy adviser

Before making any solar decisions, your first step should be to contact your electric co-op, your trusted energy adviser. They understand local energy needs and have firsthand knowledge of solar systems that have worked — or failed — for other members.

Keep in mind, too, that all cooperatives in Pennsylvania require interconnection agreements before you install solar. These agreements ensure your solar system integrates safely with the grid and clarify any rates or fees associated with grid-tied systems.

Red flags

If you're working with a solar company, take precautions against the following:

- 1. Too-good-to-be-true promises** — Be skeptical if a salesperson says you'll have no electric bill or that panels are "free." These are major red flags because the truth is, most homeowners still need to buy power from the grid at night and when their panels aren't producing enough electricity. Also, while there are government programs that subsidize the purchase of panels, none provide them for free.
- 2. Rushed contracts** — Don't sign any contracts on the spot. Take time to review the fine print, verify the company's licensing and check reviews. Ask your co-op for advice if something seems off.
- 3. Lack of transparency** — If a contractor is vague about who will maintain the system or what happens if it malfunctions, be wary. Maintenance is crucial for ensuring your solar panels remain productive over time.

A collaborative approach

For many homeowners, solar panels offer a way to save money and support clean energy goals, but it's essential to do your homework. By working closely with your electric cooperative, you can avoid common pitfalls and make an informed decision about solar energy.

Your co-op is there to guide you through the process, ensuring you get the full picture — not just the sales pitch. Solar energy is an exciting prospect, but careful planning and communication are key to making it a successful part of your energy future. 🌞

MATT LEONARD

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Introducing the lightest folding power chair in the world

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Mobility issues affect over 1 in 5 Americans. These individuals, and their loved ones, know how decreased mobility can result in loss of independence, pain and falling hazards. They are often stuck at home, missing out on a variety of activities, in a vicious cycle that diminishes their quality of life. In the past, mobility devices like scooters and power chairs were too heavy and bulky to transport easily. Now, carbon fiber material invented for the aerospace program has been used to create the ultimate mobility device. It's called the Journey Air Elite ... and there's nothing else like it on earth.

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KEEPING YOUR BALANCE

Electric cooperative lineworkers understand the importance of maintaining three points of contact when climbing a utility pole. The practice simply means that three out of four limbs are in contact with the pole at all times while climbing. It's a safety rule that helps keep lineworkers stable and balanced as they move up and down to do their work.

I've been fortunate to have three points of contact in navigating life's ups and downs: my wife and two kids. They've certainly steadied my path. Now, with a high school graduate off forging his own path, I know I must brace for a change.



Statistically, most of the time we have with our kids (about 90%) happens before they turn 18. After that, they begin to make their way out of the nest. It can be a disorienting time for parents.

Having our son leave home this past month reminded me of when I went off to college. I remember being surprised at how emotional it was for my parents. Too caught up in my own excitement, I didn't fully appreciate what they were going through at the time. I sure do now, though.

They say it goes by fast. And, man, they are right. How those 18 years went by so quickly is a wonder to me. But he and I have been tied to the pages of *Penn Lines* from the start. The day after he was born, I interviewed for a position that brought me to this electric cooperative magazine. Not only that, the job also brought me home to Pennsylvania after some years away in the U.S. Army.

This October, as we celebrate National Co-op Month, I'm especially grateful for the opportunity to tell the electric cooperative story in Pennsylvania. It has allowed us to raise our family here, to make our nest in the place where I grew up and called home.

Sure, it's a bit different without our son at home now. I miss our runs together. I even miss his singing in the shower. But that is part of life, and I am excited for what the future holds for him.

Of course, it's still nice to get a text or video call. Maintaining those points of contact is important. It helps us keep our balance.

PETER A. FITZGERALD
EDITOR



A NEW CONCERN: State officials report a new invasive insect, the box tree moth, has been discovered in Erie County. The moth feeds on boxwoods and, now that it's here, poses a threat to Pennsylvania's nursery and landscape industry, officials say.

NATURE NEWS

New invasive insect found in Pennsylvania

A new invasive insect species has been discovered in western Pennsylvania.

The box tree moth was found at two cemeteries in Erie County. This discovery is the first time the insect has been spotted in Pennsylvania. Highly destructive, the moth feeds on boxwoods, which are frequently used as topiaries and hedges.

While the insect doesn't pose a threat to humans or the food supply, state Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding said it does threaten "livelihoods in our nursery and landscape industry, as well as the parks and gardens that enrich our communities and feed tourism dollars into our economy."

The moth spreads primarily through shipping and sales of infected boxwoods. The insect also has been found in Delaware, Massachusetts, Michigan, New York, Ohio and Ontario, Canada.

The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture has issued a quarantine to help businesses and homeowners recognize the insect, learn how to control it, and keep it from spreading. For more information on how to identify and treat the insect, and safely remove and destroy infested materials, go to agriculture.pa.gov. Homeowners

may also contact their local Penn State Extension office for treatment information.

Also, if you suspect the insect is feeding on your boxwoods, report it to badbug@pa.gov or 888-253-7189.

All the buzz: Volunteers uncover new bees

Multiple new species of bees have been documented in Pennsylvania thanks to the work of 26 trained community scientists, who participated in a monitoring program coordinated by Penn State University.

Between August 2021 and December 2022, the participants, many of them Master Gardeners, collected 9,062 bees. Master Gardeners are volunteers who receive basic training in a broad range of horticultural topics through Penn State Extension and serve as ambassadors in their communities.

The goal of the study was to document bee biodiversity and its abundance. New species of bees that were discovered in the state include *andrena duplicata* (mining bee), *nomada banksiav* (cuckoo bee) and *hylaeus punctatus* (punctate masked bee).

"More than 80% of flowering plants rely on pollinators like bees to reproduce," state Agriculture Secretary

Russell Redding said. “Apples, peaches, berries, pumpkins, grapes and many other high-value Pennsylvania crops depend on bees, as does our \$4.1 billion nursery and landscaping industry. The data in this report illustrates the value of citizen science in making sure we can protect pollinators and produce food in the future.”

TAKING A DIP

Rural, urban populations trending downward in Pa.

Based on county population estimates released by the U.S. Census Bureau, the Commonwealth’s rural and urban populations both declined between 2020 and 2023, the Center for Rural Pennsylvania reports.

In 2023, an estimated 3.36 million people lived in rural Pennsylvania, a 0.7% decrease from 2020, and an estimated 9.6 million people lived in urban Pennsylvania, a 0.2% decrease from 2020.

With a few exceptions, counties in eastern Pennsylvania saw modest population increases (0.2% on average), while those in the western part of the state showed population decreases (1.5% on average).

The three fastest growing counties

in the Commonwealth were Pike at 5%, Cumberland at 4% and Chester at 3%. The three counties with the steepest decreases were Forest at 7%, and Greene and Clearfield at 4%.

The population declines are being attributed to declining birth rates and increasing death rates, the center said.

PENN STATE BOUND?

PennDOT providing traffic information to ease game-day travel

Recognizing the popularity of Penn State football games, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation is including travel information for every home game on its 511PA app and website.

Travel information will be available beginning the Thursday before each home game through the Monday after the game.

The page monitors traffic conditions on primary travel routes to State College and provides travel time and alerts for each route and stadium parking zone. Users will be able to see incidents, construction, weather forecasts and traffic speeds. The page also includes the 2024 Beaver Stadium parking map. 🗺️

TIME LINES



OCTOBER 2014

A decade ago, as *Penn Lines* readers were preparing for the upcoming elections, another noteworthy event was happening: National Co-op Month. *Penn Lines* celebrated by highlighting the extensive expertise and training of those who keep the lights on at your rural electric cooperative. Then, as today, many co-op lineworkers in Pennsylvania and New Jersey attend training offered through the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association’s Job Training & Safety program. And at the co-op, they work alongside many other skilled staffers to provide the members-first service that’s the foundation of the cooperative business model.

OCTOBER



FIND FALL FUN

It’s sweater weather, and that means lots of fall events to help you savor the season. The 2024 Apple Fest, slated Oct. 5 and 6 in Hickory, Washington County, is just the start. Go to visitpa.com/events for a list of activities for your fall festival road trip.

GO FULL THROTTLE

Have fun and help raise money for a handful of community organizations at the Biketober Fest 2024 on Oct. 12 at the Kane Family Drive-In, McKean County. Live music, mini-golf and cornhole tournaments, and food trucks are planned. Admission is \$5. Learn more at facebook.com/events/s/biketober-fest-2024.



WOOD YOU BELIEVE IT?

Sullivan County is the place to be Oct. 12 and 13 for the 43rd Annual Lumberjack/Chainsaw Carving Competition at the Forksville Fairgrounds. The family-friendly event also features crafts, food, a quilt show and sale, and activities for the kids. Learn more at sullivancountypachamber.com.

PICK UP SOME POTTERY

If you love pottery, you’ll love the Indiana County, Pa., Potters Tour, Oct. 19 and 20. This self-guided tour features a number of artists showcased at seven potteries. For a map and more information, visit potterstour.com.



GHOSTS Among Us

The Eerie Allure of
Abandoned Towns

JEFF FETZER

Penn Lines Contributor





MODERN-DAY GHOST TOWN: A pair of goats wander the empty streets of Yellow Dog Village, Armstrong County's modern-day ghost town. The 30-acre village, abandoned in the early 2000s, is being transformed into a tourist attraction that can be explored for a fee.

JEFF FETZER

A raven, overhead but unseen, croaks out a guttural greeting as darkness descends on the scattered tombstones atop Barclay Mountain.

The lone visitor to the ancient burial site on a cool August eve slips a notepad into his shirt pocket and sits down on a stump, awaiting nightfall and any shadows it may stir. As an orange-hued gibbous moon peaks through an opening in the pines along the western bounds of the cemetery, the only sound to break the stillness is a steady chorus of crickets. Within the graveyard itself, there is only silence — where the dead rest in peace.

But it wasn't always so tranquil here.

Throughout the latter half of the 1800s, Barclay Mountain hummed with the sounds of labor, life, and death — the clanging of pickaxes, the rumble of horse-drawn coal carts, the chugging and hissing of steam engines, the chatter of school children playing at the village picnic grounds, and the tolling of church bells to mark the passing of a miner or, more often, a miner's child.

At the time, big coal and railroad companies began building company towns on this remote mountain in southwestern Bradford County: Carbon Run, Fall Creek,

Foot of Plane, Long Valley, and Barclay, the largest of the five. By the early 1900s, after five decades of continuous mining, most of the coal had been removed from the mountain. With profits dwindling, companies pulled up stakes, and the villages and settlements were largely abandoned. The miners and their families, mostly immigrants, moved on, and the buildings they lived in, learned in, and worshipped in were either dismantled and repurposed, lost to fire, or overtaken by the elements. A century later, all that remained were remnants of stone foundations and grave markers buried in the underbrush.

We call these abandoned places ghost towns, and Pennsylvania, due to its abundance of natural resources — like coal, oil, and timber — and the boom-and-bust nature of those industries, is full of them.

'Unsettling and intriguing'

According to the Center for Rural Pennsylvania in Harrisburg, there are at least 110 ghost towns in the Commonwealth, the most of any state in the Northeast. Experts say while a number of western states can boast more than Pennsylvania, few, if any, can claim the diversity found here.

"The western states, with the Gold Rush, were all mining towns," says David Richards, an author and historian from Gettysburg. "But in Pennsylvania, you have ghost towns that were lumber towns, coal towns, iron towns, oil towns ... so you have a much broader spectrum."

Others were also founded around religion, like Beulah in Cambria County and Celestia in Sullivan County. French Azilum, a planned settlement in Bradford County, was built in 1793 for refugees fleeing the French Revolution, and Ole Bull's Colony, or Oleana, a community of several hundred Norwegians in Potter County, was built in 1852 and abandoned a year later.

While little remains physically, these desolate haunts continue to captivate the imagination of those who visit them purposefully or stumble upon their crumbling remains by happenstance.

While hiking on the Appalachian Trail in Lebanon County in 2003, Susan Hutchison Tassin of Gettysburg came upon the ruins of a ghost town known as Rausch Gap. The deserted coal mining and railroading community existed from 1828 to 1910 and, at its peak, had more than 1,000 residents.

"It really lit a fire under me," says Tassin, a school psychologist. "How did a town this big just disappear?"

As Tassin told friends about her discovery, she soon realized others shared her interest.

"People are fascinated by abandoned places," Tassin says.

"They give us a sense of our own transience. Stumbling upon an old town can be both unsettling and intriguing. It's fascinating to wonder if our own town may one day be gone and discovered by others as they are hiking in the woods."

A history buff and native of Williamsport, Tassin decided she wanted to help put the Commonwealth's ghost towns on the map. Her guidebook, "Pennsylvania Ghost Towns: Uncovering the Hidden Past," was published in 2007 and provides a brief history of 46 such towns, along with information about what remains of each today and directions to the sites. The book is available on Amazon.

"My hope is that in writing this book, these sites will survive," she writes in the forward. "Many are in danger of disappearing forever, and a few already have. Perhaps this book will help a few of these towns live on, if only in memory."

Tassin isn't alone in her efforts to preserve and commemorate the history of some of the state's ghost towns. The Ghost Town Trail in Indiana and Cambria counties is a 46-mile-long rail-trail that takes hikers and bikers through eight extinct coal mining villages. The largest of those, Wehrum, was once home to 230 houses, a hotel, company store, jail and bank. According to Wikipedia, Indiana County, where REA Energy Cooperative is based, has more ghost towns than any other county in the state.

Yellow Dog Village: a walk down memory lane

In neighboring Armstrong County, a portion of which is served by REA Energy, the public can get a close-up view of a deteriorating modern-day ghost town. For a fee, Latif Yeniceri, owner of Yellow Dog Village near the town of Worthington, allows visitors to enter his 30-acre property to wander the streets and tour the dilapidated 1920s-era homes of an abandoned limestone mining town.

Billed as "a charming and spooky little ghost town," Yellow Dog Village was established by the Pittsburgh Limestone Corp. to provide housing for workers and their families. The village takes its name from the "yellow dog contracts" that miners signed to prevent them from joining unions in exchange for job security and housing.

The mining company shut down operations in the 1950s, but many residents remained in the village until contaminated drinking supplies forced them to evacuate in the early 2000s.

Yeniceri lived in Pittsburgh before buying the property in 2021, and says he and wife, Maysa, were hoping to escape the city when they bought the quiet, rural village. They now live in one of the houses, which requires them to have potable water delivered. The couple, however, is hoping a new well will yield drinkable water for them and future residents.

**"It really lit
a fire under
me. How
did a town
this big just
disappear?"**

Yeniceri plans to repair several of the houses and rent them to tenants. He also wants to turn the “old manager’s house” into a vacation rental for tourists who want to stay in an authentic ghost town. Currently, he’s converting the former chapel into a visitor center.

To help fund his dream, Yeniceri began offering tours of Yellow Dog Village last year. Open houses are held on designated weekends throughout the year, and self-guided tours are offered year-round by appointment. After paying a \$30 admission fee and signing a waiver, a visitor can roam the streets and explore the abandoned dwellings.

Wallpaper and peeling paint hang from the walls, ceiling fan blades droop from their motor housings, and the moss-covered carpets and weathered hardwood floors are littered with items their last occupants didn’t deem worthy of hauling away — furniture and old photos, books and boots, children’s toys and television sets, appliances and even a piano with a 1970s-era wedding album resting on top.

“The new generation needs to see this, to see how lucky they are,” Yeniceri says. “That’s why I want to protect it. The families here were living under very tough conditions, where they could barely find food to eat. They didn’t have a kitchen with running water. They were barely surviving.”

In many of these communities, workers were just trying to survive and provide for their families. But the thousands of dreamers, schemers, speculators and laborers who flocked to the state’s largest ghost town, Pithole City in Venango County, in 1865 were looking to strike it rich in the country’s fledgling oil industry.

Pithole City: 15,000 people, 15 months and gone

Six years earlier, the Drake Well, the nation’s first commercial oil well, began pumping out black gold after its discovery along Oil Creek, about 12 miles away from what would become Pithole City.

“After the oil industry started here at the Drake Well site in August of 1859, everybody wanted to come to northwestern Pennsylvania to find their fortune in oil,” says Sarah Goodman, educator for the Drake Well Museum in Titusville.

In January 1864, speculator Isaiah Frazier leased two tracts of land, totaling 35 acres, along Pithole Creek and began prospecting for oil. In January 1865, the Frazier Well struck oil.

“The amount of oil that came out of that well was astonishing,” Goodman says. “And so that made everybody flock to the Pithole area to start drilling for oil to become super wealthy.”

Almost overnight, the site was transformed into a booming city, and by the end of 1865, Pithole City was bustling with more than 15,000 residents.

“Everything just exploded,” Goodman says. “They built



GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN: Bradford County historian Malin D. Martin stands amidst the weathered marble tombstones of Barclay Cemetery, one of the last visible traces of the once-thriving mountaintop coal mining town of Barclay in Franklin Township. Thanks to Martin and others, the cemetery is being restored and maintained.

over 50 hotels, churches, theaters, boarding houses, pool halls, all the businesses you can think of ... jewelry shops, bakeries, flower shops ... all within a few months. And one of the neatest things is that there were grand theaters, like the Murphy Theatre, that rivaled those in New York.”

Goodman says Pithole City was more akin to a Wild West gold mining town than the subsistence-level coal and lumber towns found elsewhere in the state in the mid- to late 1800s. “This was the Deadwood of its day,” Goodman says, referring to the famous South Dakota gold rush town that was home to Wyatt Earp, Wild Bill Hickok and Calamity Jane in the 1870s.

But the city that rose to prominence in such a rush fell just as quickly thanks to the oil market crash in the spring of 1866 and a series of fires that took out blocks of the town.

“The actual town of Pithole only lasted 15 months,” Goodman says, “so almost as quickly as the town came up, it disappeared.”

In 1961, about 90 acres of the original Pithole City was donated to the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, which built a visitor center overlooking the former boomtown.

The visitor center, served by Warren Electric Cooperative, is open weekends during the summer, but the grounds,

which feature mowed paths, markers where the city streets once were, and signs denoting former building locations, can be walked year-round.

Goodman says the site draws 15,000 visitors a year, largely owing to the mystique of a town that boomed and busted so explosively.

The allure of Masten

Far fewer make the journey to Masten, a remote Lycoming County ghost town, but David Richards has been exploring the ruins of the long-gone lumber town since his first visit at the age of 17 in 1974.

Richards, a licensed Gettysburg Battlefield tour guide, grew up in Picture Rocks in eastern Lycoming County and developed a passion for local history at a young age.

"My interest in Masten started after reading Tom Taber's book, 'Ghost Lumber Towns of Central Pennsylvania,' around 1971," he says. "I had never heard of Masten ... so there's a ghost town in Lycoming County? Really? And the more I read about it, the more fascinating it all became. I had to come see this place."

Over the years, he says he has made "countless" hiking and camping expeditions to the remote mountain boomtown, which existed from 1906 to 1930 and had a population of around 1,000 at its peak. The town's last permanent residents left in 1941, and Masten is now part of Loyalsock State Forest. A few of the community's original homes, converted into hunting camps served by Sullivan County Rural Electric Cooperative, remain.

Richards, a collector of historic postcards, has amassed hundreds of photographs from

Masten's heyday. The images are showcased in his book, "Masten: Lumber Giant," which delves into the town's history and its founder, Charles W. Sones. He has also written five other books on the history of north-central Pennsylvania.

"There isn't a lot to see today," he says during a recent visit to the ghost town. "That's almost the charm of it. There is nothing left. Mother Nature's reclaimed it, and it's returned to the wilderness from which it was born."

On a walk, Richards points out where the town's two mills were located as well as the clothes pin factory that employed many of the community's women. While driving, he pulls over to view what's left of an old dam. He can also pinpoint the town's baseball field, school and company store.

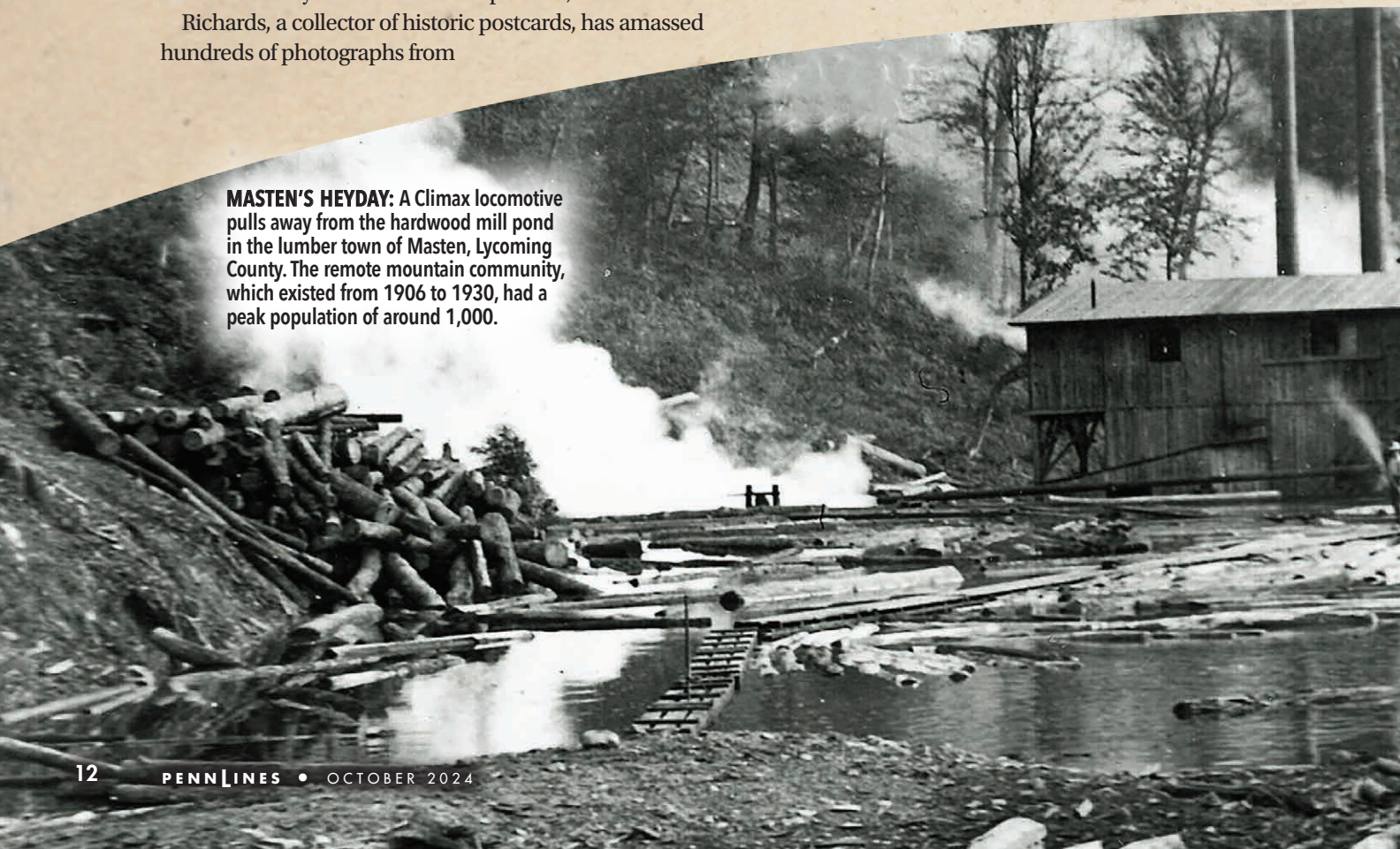
Richards knows his way around a town that was long gone by the time he entered the world.

"You can drive through Masten today and not even know it was there," he says. "To me, I think it is important to preserve that history while you still can. Why write the book? It was a hole in the wall of history that needed filled."

A return to Barclay

That same sense of historic preservation is what motivated Malin D. Martin of Athens, Pa., to spend nearly three decades researching the coal-mining communities of Barclay Mountain in neighboring Bradford County. Every week, he makes the nearly hour-long drive from his home

MASTEN'S HEYDAY: A Climax locomotive pulls away from the hardwood mill pond in the lumber town of Masten, Lycoming County. The remote mountain community, which existed from 1906 to 1930, had a peak population of around 1,000.



to the remote ghost town of Barclay to help resurrect and maintain the cemetery, which hasn't had a body buried in it since the 1880s.

At its peak in the 1870s, the Village of Barclay boasted a population of more than 2,000 residents. Today, what remains is located in modern-day Franklin Township, which is serviced by Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative.

Inhabited largely by immigrant families from Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and Nova Scotia, the mining community had a mile-long Main Street lined with homes, three schools, a blacksmith shop, post office, sawmill, company store, doctor's office, skating rink, saloon and three churches.

Abandoned when the big coal companies pulled up stakes around the turn of the 20th century, Barclay has since been swallowed up by the forest. The marble grave markers in the cemetery are the most visible reminder of its former existence.

"I originally started to write a book about the history of Powell (a Bradford County tannery town) in 1987," Martin says. "I worked on that until 1995, when I was sort of arm twisted into researching Barclay Mountain because ... there was a lack of good information about mining up here. It kind of snowballed a bit from there."

After spending 27 years interviewing those with ties to the mountain and its mining history, researching coal production records and census data, and reviewing old newspapers and historical reference books, Martin wrote

an extensive history of the town, "Barclay Mountain Coal Mining — Its Towns & People," which was published in 2022. The initial run of 500 copies sold out in less than a year.

Coinciding with his work to shine a light on the mining town, Martin and several other volunteers began restoring and maintaining Barclay Cemetery, located on State Game Lands 12, in 2006. One of the mountain's few year-round residents, Claverack member Rich Santangelo mows the cemetery grass during the summer months, and Martin clears the weeds.

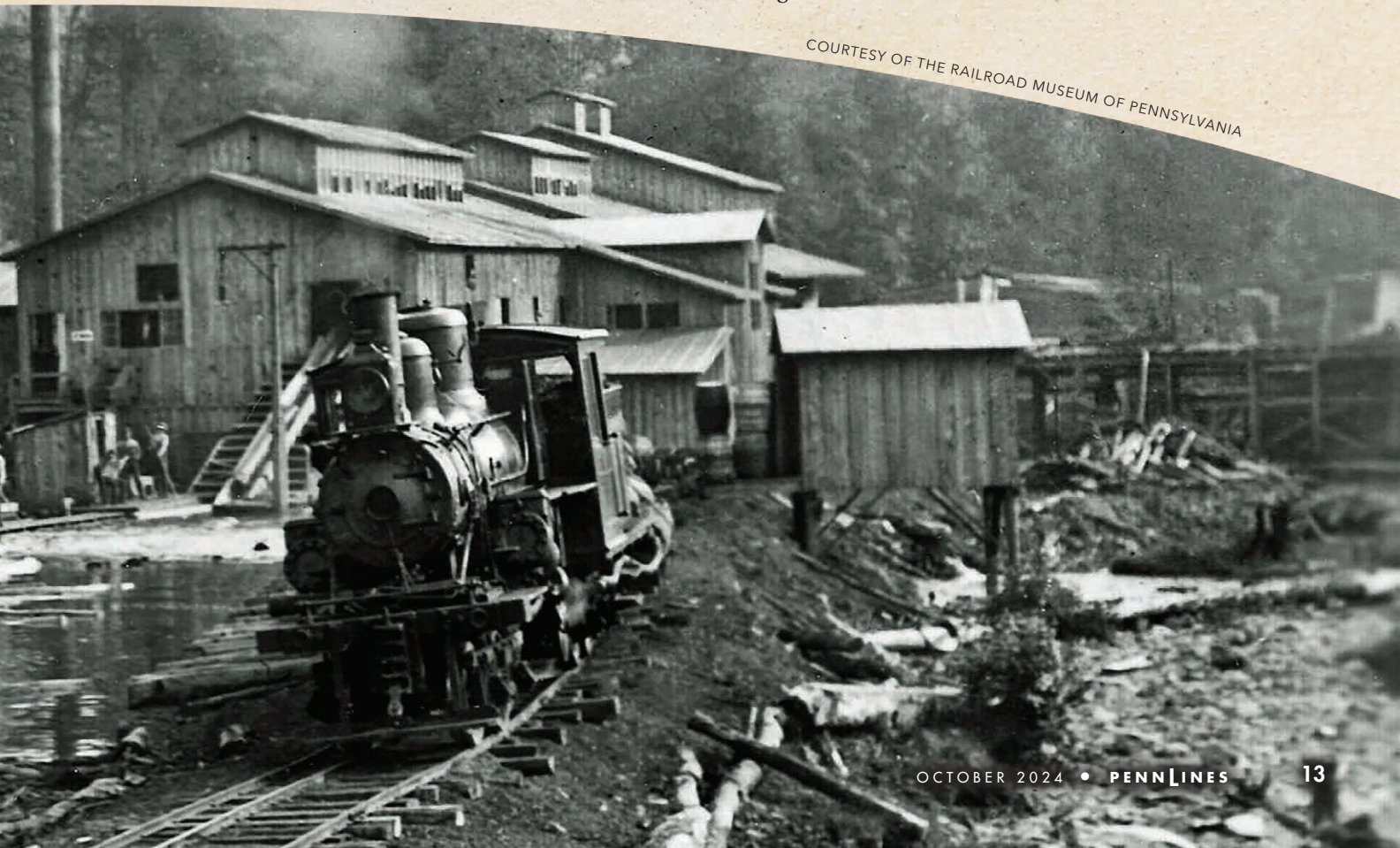
Thanks to the volunteers' diligence, most of the site's gravestones, dating from the 1860s to 1880s, have been refurbished and repositioned. Now, only a handful await restoration and a return to their rightful resting places.

"We are doing this out of a sense of preserving the past, honoring those who came before us, and we have a genuine interest in this area and wanting to preserve what is here," Martin says.

Their work has paid off. The now well-maintained cemetery has become a popular draw for visitors, he says. "This is unquestionably the most visited cemetery in Bradford County."

But in the twilight of a clear August day, there's just a solitary soul in the cemetery, taking notes and photographs and waiting for the moon to rise to enhance the mood. Startled by a raven cawing overhead, he can't help but think, was it croaking "Nevermore?" Or, perhaps, "Never forgotten?" 🐦

COURTESY OF THE RAILROAD MUSEUM OF PENNSYLVANIA



Maintain Chimney for Fireplace Efficiency and Fire Safety

JAMES DULLEY

DEAR JIM: I plan to use my fireplace more to lower my utility bills. I see some deteriorated spots on the outside of the chimney, and it has not been cleaned recently. What type of maintenance items can I do myself?
— *Michael H.*

DEAR MICHAEL: If your chimney has not been cleaned recently, have a professional chimney sweep clean and inspect it before the first use this season. House fires due to chimney issues occur in tens of thousands of homes each year, claiming many lives and costing hundreds of millions of dollars in damage.

Although the deteriorated spots on the brick chimney need to be addressed, problems inside the chimney are the greatest risk. Creosote buildup, which is flammable when it gets hot, is the primary problem.

However, when creosote does catch on fire inside the chimney, it is not always obvious from indoors. One telltale sign is a sudden increase in the draft up the chimney from the intense heat, but this still is easy to miss.

The intense heat may cause the tiles that protect the chimney to crack and come loose. Heat from this and subsequent fires will penetrate the brick and set your house on fire. If you are lucky, the loose tiles will block the chimney, and the back-drafting smoke will alert you.



READY FOR WINTER?: As chilly days and nights become more frequent, families will light up the fireplace to stay warm and cozy. Before the first use this season, however, hire a professional to inspect and clean your chimney to avoid another kind of fire: a house fire.

When the chimney sweep cleans the chimney, puffed black creosote may mean there was a chimney fire. Once it is cleaned, a visual inspection of the chimney's entire length with a camera should be done to check the tiles and mortar.

Be leery of a sweep who does not do the camera inspection and claims you need a new liner or sealing procedure, which can cost thousands of dollars. An unscrupulous one claimed my own chimney needed a liner. A subsequent camera inspection by another company indicated the tiles and mortar were sound.

If you are handy and not afraid of heights, do-it-yourself products are available to make many repairs. Many companies that supply professional chimney sweeps also offer their products in smaller quantities for homeowners to use.

Also, keep in mind that while brick feels very hard, it is permeable to water. Over time, moisture can deteriorate the mortar, as you have

noticed. This is particularly bad in climates with freeze-thaw cycles over winter.

Inspect all the bad spots on the mortar using a chisel and hammer and remove all the loose mortar. Use cement-colored elastomers, which are rubber-like polymers, to fill the spots. Coat the entire chimney exterior with a liquid water repellent afterward.

If the mortar is bad, the chimney crown likely needs some repairs. Chip away any loose cement and fill in the pits with an elastomeric crown repair. Some are formulated specifically to cure in freezing temperatures.

The metal flashing between the roof and chimney is the final area to seal. If it is badly rusted, replace it with new flashing. Most often, brushing on a thick coating of flexible flashing compound is an adequate fix. 🛠️

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

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— Robert F., Richardson, TX

We know you. You're not interested in everyday, run-of-the-mill, common cutlery. You want something with a story, a unique feature that you can brag about. We've got just the thing for you. Our *Mighty Conifer Knife* is a unique tool with a Damascus steel blade and a handle crafted from an enhanced and stabilized natural pinecone. While our competitors are charging hundreds for similar knives, we're offering the Mighty Conifer for **JUST \$99!** That's what we call our **Stauer Impossible Price.**

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Local Lore

United Electric Cooperative

The (Legend of) Gold in Them Hills

Buried riches might seem like the stuff of movies, but you don't need to look farther than western Pennsylvania for a real-life treasure hunt. In Elk State Forest, less than an hour from DuBois-based United Electric Cooperative, legend has it that a lost cache of gold bars lies hidden near the rural community of Dents Run.

According to the tale, Union soldiers were secretly escorting gold bars from San Francisco to the U.S. Mint in Philadelphia during the Civil War. Along the way, the soldiers — and the gold — disappeared. Over time, the story morphed into a campfire legend with varying details. Some say there were 26 gold bars, others claim 52, each weighing between 40 to 50 pounds and valued in total at more than \$1.5 million. Theories abound, too, with some suggesting the soldiers were ambushed by bandits,



LOST LEGEND: During the Civil War, a cache of gold bars went missing somewhere around Dents Run, a remote wooded valley in Elk County, when Union soldiers were ambushed by ... somebody. The specifics, like the photos of a 1,000-page FBI report, are fuzzy, but it hasn't stopped treasure hunters and locals from speculating that \$1.5 million in gold is – or was – buried in Elk State Forest.

Confederate sympathizers, or even Copperheads — an anti-war faction within the Union.

The federal government and others have tried repeatedly to find the gold. In March 2018, a treasure-hunting outfit, calling itself Finders Keepers, believed it was on to something. Its case was so compelling the FBI

conducted a geological survey that showed signs of gold-like metal near Dents Run. However, when it came time to dig, the FBI barred Finders Keepers from the area. To this day, the agency contends it found nothing, but the treasure hunters remain skeptical — and the plot twists continue.

If this tale of lost treasure has piqued your interest, check out “The Legend of the Dents Run Lost Gold Shipment,” written by James P. Burke and published by the Mt. Zion Historical Society. To order, visit mtzionhistoricalsociety.org/store. The tale is also the topic of a documentary on Prime Video, YouTube videos and at least one Facebook page.



Main Office: DuBois, Pa.
Consumer-members served: 19,087
Website: unitedpa.com

Sweet Inspiration

“I drew this peach pie because I love peaches and baking, so I get to do what I love and get a really yummy pie. I also drew a jar of peaches. My mom cans peaches for us.”

Isaac Dotterer, age 12, of United Electric Cooperative

Not only did this month's drawing have our mouths watering, it reminded us of some of the delicacies prepared by our cooking columnist, Anne Kirchner, like her August recipe for Peach Coffee Cake. Isaac, do you think your mom could can some peaches for us, too?

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

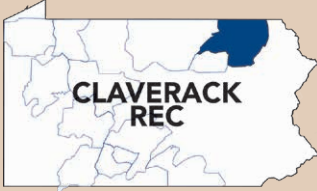
Each month, we'll feature the artwork of our young readers (or our readers' youngsters), inspired by something they've read in *Penn Lines*. Paints, pencils, crayons, clay, sand – any physical medium is OK! You may send digital photos of the creation to CommunityCorner@prea.com, but please: no digital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

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



Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives
serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

CLAVERACK REC

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Danise C. Fairchild, Zone 1
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Timothy T. Tewksbury, Zone 6
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Jennifer W. Jones, Chief Financial Officer
Brian F. Zeidner, Director, Member Services

OFFICE HOURS

Monday through Friday
7:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Casey M. Wood, VP, Communications
C&T Enterprises, Inc.



ENTERPRISES, INC.

C&T Enterprises, Inc. is a jointly owned subsidiary of Claverack (Wysox, Pa) and Tri-County (Mansfield, Pa) Rural Electric Cooperatives. C&T provides shared management and support services for the two parent electric cooperatives, the cooperatives' telecom affiliates of Revolution Broadband and Tri-Co Connections, and C&T's subsidiary utilities of Wellsboro Electric Co. (Wellsboro, Pa), Citizens' Electric Co. (Lewisburg, Pa), and Valley Energy (Sayre, Pa), a natural gas distribution company.

Making a Difference



STEVEN G. ALLABAUGH

AS I STOOD AT THE podium getting ready to deliver my address at our annual meeting this year, I was truly astounded by the number of members who were filling the seats. Not because our members aren't engaged with the cooperative — we always have interested members and great conversations — but because this year the weather threw us a little curve.


It was hot and humid ALL day. It was one of those summer days where you aren't even moving, yet the sweat is rolling off your brow. Nonetheless, nearly 1,350 members registered and interacted with us throughout the day at the Wyoming County Fair, and 300 joined us under a hot tent to hear about recent happenings at their cooperative and future plans.

Our theme this year was "Making a Difference." Board Chair Gary Hennip talked about how cooperatives are different than other types of businesses. Gary alluded to what it must have felt like back in the 1930s, when electric cooperatives were organizing around the nation and making a difference in the lives of rural Americans who, up to that point, had been left in the dark. Fast forward to today, and we are still striving to make a difference. Not only by continuing to provide safe, reliable and affordable electricity to our members who have depended on us for the past 87 years, but also by bringing critical new services like high-speed broadband to our rural area.

Our theme was on full display throughout the day as our employees were busy talking to members about the initiatives we are working on and answering their questions. During the business meeting, Gary and I discussed the progress we've made on our fiber-optic network, as well as our ongoing efforts to improve reliability. I spoke about rates and reported on the financial strength of the cooperative, including being able to return capital credits to members while continuing to support our community through our HOPE program and community donations.

Joshua Baublitz, our right-of-way (ROW) program manager, took the stage to discuss improvements to our ROW maintenance program and provide an update on the Accelerated Ash Removal Program. He also discussed threats to our forests and electric infrastructure from other invasive species, like the spotted lanternfly. Of course, no annual meeting is complete without director elections. Our cooperative attorney, Robert Chappel, announced the results, reporting that incumbent directors Gary Hennip, Robert Fearnley, and Timothy Tewksbury ran unopposed, and each was re-elected to serve a three-year term.

It was a great day with only one regret. I always end my presentation and open the floor for questions and comments from members. Joshua and I answered several about our alternative energy policy, our spray program, and the fiber build-out. Unfortunately, there was one comment I could not hear from the stage, and I was unable to acknowledge and share it at the time. After the meeting ended, I learned one of our consumer-members wanted to recognize that we were all able to enjoy a wonderful day of camaraderie because of the sacrifice of our veterans. As Veterans Day approaches, let's all take a moment to thank our veterans for our freedom — they have truly made a difference!

You can find detailed coverage of the annual meeting on the following pages of *Penn Lines* and a recording of the meeting is available on our website, claverack.com. 

STEVEN G. ALLABAUGH
PRESIDENT & CEO

Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative Celebrates 87th Annual Meeting: Making a Difference

CASEY WOOD, VICE PRESIDENT, COMMUNICATIONS

CLAVERACK RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE (REC) welcomed more than 2,200 members and guests to its 87th annual meeting Aug. 28 at the Wyoming County Fairgrounds in Meshoppen.

Chair's opening remarks

The meeting commenced with board Chair Gary Hennip noting how the annual meeting underscores the significance of teamwork in meeting the community's needs and making a difference in the lives of Claverack REC members.

Gary also highlighted the Youth Tour program, a nationwide initiative in which rural electric cooperatives sponsor high school juniors for an all-inclusive, weeklong trip to Washington, D.C. This program provides students with valuable insights into leadership, government and the cooperative business model. The 2024 Claverack REC Youth Tour delegation included Laina Beebe from Wyalusing Valley High School, Ryan Jones from Northeast Bradford High School and Marisa Wise from Achievement House Cyber Charter School.

In his report, Gary spoke about the importance of electric cooperatives, from their beginnings in the 1930s to today. He discussed the changes cooperatives have made in the lives of consumer-members by bringing electricity to their homes and farms in the early days and meeting today's needs by delivering new services such as high-speed broadband.

Claverack REC President & CEO Steve Allabaugh took the stage to discuss how the theme, "Making a Difference," reflected the collective commitment of everyone at Claverack REC — from employees to the board of directors — to improve the lives of members. Steve echoed Gary's remarks, stating the cooperative is striving to make a better life for all members.

Right-of-way (ROW) management

Steve also discussed Claverack REC's ROW management program, which plays a crucial role in enhancing reliability. By implementing targeted tree-removal strategies, the cooperative is taking steps to reduce outages. Steve highlighted the significant investment in tree removal, with total annual ROW spending increasing from \$1.5 million in 2015 to nearly \$6 million in 2024. This investment has yielded positive results, with a five-hour reduction in the average outage duration for members and a 25% decrease in lineworker overtime in 2023. Steve thanked members for their patience and understanding as the cooperative has tackled the challenges posed by invasive species, particularly the emerald ash borer. He noted the cooperative will complete the targeted ash tree removal work in 2024 and will eliminate the \$5 accelerated ash removal (AAR) charge on member bills.

Steve reported the cooperative used drones to inspect more than 450 miles of lines, allowing for proactive repairs and maintenance.

"Drone technology gives us a bird's eye view of the equipment and hardware high up on our poles and has helped us make proactive repairs before parts or equipment fail," he said.

The cooperative also tested more than 5,000 poles for structural integrity and replaced 200 of them. The electric distribution system was upgraded, including the construction of the new Herrick substation, which will replace the existing substation that has been in service since the 1960s. The new substation will incorporate state-of-the-art electronic controls connected to the fiber-optic network, providing enhanced visibility and control of its electrical equipment. The cooperative also installed electronically controlled equipment in the Evergreen substation and upgraded 13 miles of primary line during the year.

Joshua Baublitz, the cooperative's ROW program manager, provided additional details about reliability initiatives. He noted the cooperative removed more than 20,000 hazardous trees in the last year through the AAR program, with more than 32,000 taken down to date. Joshua expects that by the end of the program later this



ALL ABOUT EVE: From left, C&T Enterprises Network System Specialist Keith Stephens, Member Services Representative Maria Belcher and Engineering & Operations Assistant Liz Johnston show off "Eve the EV" during the cooperative's annual meeting Aug. 28 at the Wyoming County Fairgrounds in Meshoppen. Also shown as the face of the cooperative's new lineworker cutout is Grayson Bailey, C & T Computer Systems Specialist II.

year, nearly 40,000 trees will have been removed. Moreover, the integrated vegetation management program has impacted more than 1,700 miles of ROW and at least 6,500 acres via selective herbicide application, which targeted incompatible woody vegetation.

These statistics reflect a significant investment in improving system reliability and vegetation management, as well as a proactive approach to addressing challenges. Joshua also provided updates on the anticipated arrival of the spotted lanternfly and the potential threat of the hemlock woolly adelgid.

Fiber build-out continues

Turning to broadband service, Steve told consumers the program has been a success. “The construction of this fiber-optic network is advancing us toward our goal of ensuring all unserved and underserved Claverack REC members have access to real, high-speed broadband service,” Steve said.

The funded construction plans include nearly 1,600 miles of fiber-optic cable throughout Claverack REC’s service areas, and more than 600 miles have already been installed. Steve noted more than 700 members were using high-speed internet service provided by the cooperative’s broadband service, Revolution Broadband, by the end of 2023. Currently, nearly 1,800 homes and businesses are connected.

Steve shared that Claverack Communications, LLC was awarded \$4.8 million in April from the Federal Broadband Infrastructure Program administered through the Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority. This funding will help serve an additional 1,300 Claverack REC members who were not included in the original project-funded areas. In July, Claverack was awarded \$2.1 million through the Pennsylvania Grid Resilience Grant Program, administered by the state Department of Environmental Protection. In addition to providing funding to continue to improve our ROW program, this grant will enable the cooperative to install more than 50 smart reclosers and other devices on our electrical grid and interconnect them with our new fiber-optic network.

Steve also provided a peek into two new features that will be added to the Revolution WiFi app at no additional cost to consumers. ProtectIQ delivers advanced security features to safeguard networks from online threats, while ExperienceIQ offers parental controls to manage a family’s internet activity. He noted more information about these enhancements will be released in the coming weeks.

Rates

In January 2023, Claverack REC saw a significant rate increase driven by higher generation costs, inflation and increased ROW maintenance costs. While the cost of electrical materials and equipment remains at record highs, Steve reported the rampant inflation Claverack REC was experiencing has eased. He also noted ROW



DEMOCRATIC CONTROL: Claverack REC President & CEO Steve Allabaugh, left, congratulates recently re-elected members to the cooperative’s board of directors. Also shown, from left, are: Board Secretary/Treasurer Timothy Tewksbury, Robert Fearnley, and Chair Gary Hennip.

maintenance costs will return to normal levels as the AAR effort concludes. While two of the three drivers of higher rates have moderated, Steve noted generation costs may be subject to some additional price increases. This is due primarily to increased demand for electricity as the nation is losing baseload generation and facing insufficient electric transmission capacity.

Any impact on rates due to increased generation costs will be shared with the members as soon as they are known.

Community engagement and financial strength

Claverack REC’s positive financial performance in 2023 enabled the retirement of \$1.2 million in patronage capital. The cooperative’s strong financial position underscores its stability and ability to continue providing high-quality services to members.

In 2023, Claverack REC provided nearly \$60,000 to 62 charitable organizations that provide critical services to those in need throughout our service territory. This was made possible through the cooperative’s Member/Community Support Program, which is funded by unclaimed capital credits.

Board of director elections

Lastly, cooperative attorney Robert Chappel announced the results of director elections for Zones 4, 5 and 6. Incumbent directors Gary Hennip, Robert Fearnley and Timothy Tewksbury were re-elected to another three-year term.

More information and annual report

Steve encouraged guests to visit claverack.com to access the 2023 annual report, which contains audited financial statements and summaries of various initiatives and activities carried out by the cooperative. 📖



HAPPY NATIONAL CO-OP MONTH

October is National Co-op Month, which celebrates all cooperatives and their continued dedication to serving local communities.

As a member of Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative (REC), you are part of a trusted and proven business model that prioritizes democratic member control, economic participation, and community outreach. Cooperatives like ours hold true to a shared set of principles, which guide our actions as well as those of others across the nation. Claverack REC is honored to be a member-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperative, embodying the cooperative difference.

We are dedicated to serving the rural areas we call home, making a commitment to you, our members, and the communities we serve. This National Co-op Month take pride in being a member of your cooperative and help us celebrate our rich history.



GOING AWAY FOR THE WINTER?

Claverack REC offers members who will be away from home for an extended period – including “snowbirds” who migrate to warmer climates for the winter – two convenient and timely ways to receive their electric bills while they are gone.

Online billing

Claverack REC’s SmartHub program gives members the ability to receive and pay electric bills online or through the SmartHub mobile app for smartphones and tablets. With SmartHub, members receive an email notification when a new bill is generated. They can then pay their bill electronically using a checking account, MasterCard, Visa or debit card. SmartHub participants also have access to their account information 24 hours a day, seven days a week. For an overview of all the available features and setup instructions, visit claverack.com/smarthub-101.

Seasonal Address Program

The cooperative’s Seasonal Address Program allows members to receive their electric bills at an alternate mailing address. Signing up for the program is easy. Call our billing department and provide your alternate address along with the dates you expect to be away. During this period, correspondence will be mailed directly to the seasonal address, eliminating the need for the postal service to forward it. For more information about the Seasonal Address Program or SmartHub, contact the Claverack REC office at 800-326-9799.

SCARE AWAY CYBER THREATS THIS HALLOWEEN

October is Cybersecurity Awareness Month! What better time to ensure ghosts and goblins aren’t finding their way into your digital life?

Here are a few ways to stay safe online:

- **Update passwords and make them complex** – The best passwords are 12+ characters and contain a combination of letters, numbers, and symbols.
- **Use secure Wi-Fi** – When in a candy store or pumpkin patch, use your mobile hotspot or VPN (Virtual Private Network) vs. the free (unsecured) Wi-Fi network.
- **Think before you click** – Fraudulent links are one of the most common ways cybercriminals can gain access to sensitive information.
- **Scan your network** – Use the Revolution WiFi app to view connected devices and see who’s been accessing your network.



Every internet package includes ProtectIQ, giving you an extra layer of security to keep the online ghosts and goblins at bay. Call or visit us online for the best “no tricks, all treats” internet experience.

REVOLUTION

570-268-1349 • REVOLUTIONBROADBAND.NET

GENERATOR Safety

When you have lost power, a portable generator can temporarily provide needed electricity. However, it may present serious hazards if not used properly. **Follow these tips to ensure everyone's safety:**

- Select a generator that can provide the amount of power you expect to need.
- **Read all instructions** before using.
- Always operate the generator on a **stable, dry surface**.
- Set up your generator in a **well-ventilated** area outside the home—out and away from your garage, doors, windows, and vents into the home. Generators produce **DEADLY** carbon monoxide.

- Use a **heavy-duty extension cord** to connect appliances to the outlets on the generator.
- **NEVER plug a portable generator into your home.** This can cause electricity to feed back through your home onto the utility's system. This "**backfeed**" can be **deadly** for line workers and anyone near downed power lines.
- Always allow the generator to **cool before refueling**.

Learn more about generator and storm safety at **SafeElectricity.org**.

 Safe
Electricity.org



Making Reading a Family Tradition

ABIGAIL ZIEGER

PARENTS KNOW THAT READING IS important. It's a necessary life skill to function well in school, work and society. It's a wonderful hobby that opens your imagination to new places, characters and perspectives. What's more, research shows reading can strengthen your brain, encourages empathy and critical thinking, increases your vocabulary and comprehension, and even lowers blood pressure, heart rate, and stress. What's not to love?

However, we live in a time when we have access to everything from social connections to shopping and entertainment, all within a little device in our pockets. It's far too easy to bypass reading for more instantaneous sources of information and entertainment. Even though I was an avid reader as a child, I am much more likely to reach for my phone than a book these days.

I want my children to have a love for reading. But how can I do that when even I — a mom, a teacher and longtime lover of adventure novels — have to consciously think about choosing a book over the ever-present internet? To counter the tendency to ignore our beautiful books, our family has incorporated some intentional practices over the years to make reading a part of our everyday lives.

Unless we have an unusually late night, we always read together before bed. Even when my children were infants, I would read them picture books every night. As they got older, we introduced classic children's chapter books, like "The Mouse and the Motorcycle" and "Charlotte's Web." Eventually, our reading picks turned into lengthier books that touched on more complex themes, like "The War That Saved My Life," "Ugly," and "Esperanza Rising." My teenager has a particular fondness for dystopian novels.

Reading aloud is wonderful, but don't discount audiobooks. This is a great tool for books that feel too massive to read aloud. We listened to the entirety of "The Lord of the Rings" this way — twice! It's also good for times when you can't actively hold a book in your hands. We often turn on

an audiobook when on a road trip or during a long, dull afternoon at home.

Another tradition is regular trips to the library. Sometimes, it happens once a week; sometimes, it's only once a month. However, I have found that putting all of us in an environment where we are surrounded by books is both calming and inspiring. My kids almost always flock to the computers in the children's areas at first — but eventually leave to wander the aisles. I often find them smack dab in the middle of the floor surrounded by a pile of books that they've been leafing through. We always leave with a new collection to keep in our library bin at home.

I also try to keep interesting reading material laying

around. If all our books are on a shelf or tucked away in a bin, we are less likely to go pick them up and peruse them. But if I place favorite stories on the kids' pillows, set a visual encyclopedia at the end of the couch, or even just leave a newspaper on the kitchen table, then we see them there, remember them, and pick them up more often.

Finally, I try to remember that if I want my kids to be readers, I must be a reader, too. I use the same tips for myself that I do for my kids: reading aloud, listening

to an audiobook while folding laundry, picking something up at the library for myself and leaving my books in convenient places where I am likely to pick them up.

Becoming a family of readers is a process. It will never be as easy for our kids as it was for those of us who grew up without the internet in our homes. However, with small steps and consistency, it is possible to make reading a part of the family culture. So go ahead, pick up a book and browse through it with your kids today — you never know what you might discover. 📖

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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PREA announces scholarship winners

Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association Scholarships in Memory of William F. Matson

Nine PREA Scholarships in Memory of William F. Matson were recently awarded to outstanding students whose homes are served by rural electric cooperatives in Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

Selection for the annual scholarship is based on academic excellence, community involvement and cooperative membership. The scholarship is named for William F. Matson, who served 22 years as president of PREA and Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc., until his death in June 1986.

The recipients are Allison Albin, Adams Electric Cooperative; Isabella Hillegass, Bedford Rural Electric Cooperative (REC); Bryanna Mong, Central Electric Cooperative; Cathryn Reynolds, Sophia Sampson, and Baylee Smith, Northwestern REC; Sadie Palfrey, REA Energy Cooperative; Joshua Wagner, Somerset REC; and Addie Barnett, Valley REC.



Allison Albin, daughter of Joseph and Jodi Albin of Dover, was valedictorian of her graduating class at Dover High School.

Allison will be attending West Virginia University, majoring in aerospace engineering. In high school, she was secretary of Student Council, historian of the National Honor Society, captain of Mini-THON and an Eagle Ambassador. Allison was also the captain of the varsity swim team and a member of the varsity cross country and track and field teams. She participated in the Hugh O'Brien Leadership Program and the Rotary Youth Leadership Awards.



Isabella Hillegass, daughter of Todd and Heidi Hillegass of New Paris, is a graduate of Chestnut Ridge High School. Isabella will be

attending Juniata College, majoring in pre-med and biology. In high school, she was the president of the National Honor Society and a member of the Future Business Leaders of America, Student Council, and the Junior and Senior Executive Committee. Isabella served as captain of the volleyball and basketball teams and was a member of the homecoming court. She also was a member of Our Mother of Sorrows Youth Group and participated in its Philadelphia mission trip. She volunteers at the St. Vincent DePaul soup kitchen and thrift store and works at the Jean Bonnet Tavern in Bedford as a waitress.



Bryanna Mong, daughter of Bryan and Megan Mong of Knox, is a graduate of Keystone Junior/Senior High School. She will be attending Thiel College, majoring in elementary and special education. In high school, Bryanna was treasurer of the Class of 2024, the Keystone Youth Educators Association, and the Life Skills Class. She also was vice president of the Senior High Student Government and the National Honor Society and was co-captain of the varsity volleyball team. In addition to participating in musicals and Select Ensemble, Bryanna was involved with the Grace Youth Missions Team, where she participated in four trips, the Grace "Engage" Youth Group and the Grace Youth Praise Team.



Cathryn Reynolds, daughter of David and Jessica Reynolds of Union City, is a graduate of Union City High School. Cathryn will be attending Mercyhurst University as a dual major in early childhood education and special education. In high school, Cathryn participated in volleyball, basketball and softball. She served as Student

Council secretary and National Honor Society vice president in her senior year. She also was the junior and senior class president and a volunteer in the Union City Elementary Life Skills Class. In addition, Cathryn was involved in the Yearbook Committee, was president of the Girls' Varsity Club and participated in Talent Search.



Sophia Sampson, daughter of Shawn and Jennifer Sampson of Centerville, was the valedictorian of her graduating class at Titusville High School. Sophia will be attending Penn State University, majoring in nursing. In high school, Sophia earned 12 varsity letters and was captain of the cross country, swim and track and field teams. She was also recognized as the "Most Outstanding Athlete" in swimming and track and field. Sophia volunteered with many organizations while in high school, including serving as president of the student United Way, the student representative and grant writer for the Titusville Shade Tree Commission, and a student poll worker. She also helped children at the Shriners Children's Hospital. Sophia was class president and a member of the National Honor Society; an ER registration clerk at Titusville Hospital; and a lifeguard and swim instructor at the YMCA.



Baylee Smith, daughter of Jeff and Denise Munn of Corry, is a graduate of Corry Area High School. Baylee will be attending Duquesne University, majoring in biological sciences. She intends to become a physician assistant and participate in Duquesne's pre-med program. In high school, Baylee was the captain and goalie for the girls' varsity soccer team and served as the treasurer for the senior class and

the National Honor Society. Baylee is a youth soccer coach, helps at the local food pantry and participates in local food drives. She was awarded the National Rural and Small-Town Recognition Award for Outstanding Academic Achievement.



Sadie Palfrey,

daughter of Frank and Suzanne Palfrey of Indiana, Pa., was home-schooled. She will be attending the University

of Tennessee at Martin, majoring in natural resource management. In high school, Sadie was involved with the Envirothon program and, along with her award-winning team, was a frequent competitor in state Envirothon contests. Sadie also participated in multiple 4-H clubs and was the inaugural president of the Indiana County Youth 4-H Council. In 2023, Sadie earned the title of the 2023 4-H Air Rifle National Champion. She is also a member of several precision rifle teams, and in 2023, was named the Pennsylvania State 3-Position Outdoor Women's Champion. She has also earned several gold medals in state and national rifle contests. At the University of Tennessee, Sadie will compete on its Division 1 rifle team and is training to compete with Team USA at the Olympics.



Joshua Wagner, son of James and Rebecca Wagner of Rockwood, is a graduate of Rockwood High School.

Joshua will be attending

Robert Morris University, majoring in actuarial science. In high school, Joshua participated in the National Honor Society, the National French Honor Society and the National Spanish Honor Society. He was also active in the concert band, and the varsity baseball and basketball teams. In addition, Joshua participated in the Backpack Program, which collected food and other supplies for families in need, and works part-time at CVS.



Addie Barnett,

daughter of Megan Barnett of Three Springs, is a graduate of Southern Huntingdon County High School. Addie

will be attending the University of Kentucky, where she will be majoring in animal science, while following a pre-law track. In high school, Addie participated in the National Honor Society and served as Student Council president and class secretary. The school district's superintendent also chose her to represent the student body at school board meetings. Additionally, Addie served as cheer captain, participated in track and various clubs, and was captain of CHAMP, the largest philanthropic organization in the county, which raised more than \$38,000 this year to support local families in need. Addie was active in 4-H and the Western PA Youth Rodeo Association and, as a competitor in the Pennsylvania High School Rodeo Association, qualified for the National High School Rodeo finals in Rock Springs, Wyo. Addie will be a member of the University of Kentucky Rodeo Team with her horse, Mo.

Jody Loudenslager Memorial Scholarship

Two students who were selected to participate in past NRECA Youth Tours have been named recipients of the Jody Loudenslager Memorial Scholarship. They are David Kunselman of United Electric and Karly Diebold of Valley REC.

The scholarship is named in honor of Jody Loudenslager, a 1995 PREA Youth Tour student from Trout Run, Pa., who was among 230 passengers who died in July 1996, when TWA Flight 800 exploded shortly after take-off from New York.



David Kunselman,

son of Gregory and Rebecca Kunselman of DuBois, is a graduate of Punxsutawney Area High School. David

is attending Penn State DuBois, where he is majoring in biology and kinesiology. In high school, he was the president of the Science Club, vice president of the National Honor Society, and a member of the Bible and foreign language clubs. An award-winning athlete, David was a member of the cross country, wrestling, and indoor and outdoor track and field teams. Outside of school, he is active in Boy Scouts, where he achieved the rank of Eagle Scout and the Vigil Honor. David plans to attend medical school to become a physician, specializing in sports medicine.



Karly Diebold,

daughter of Ken and Cheryl Diebold of Altoona, graduated from Tyrone Area High School and is a student

at Juniata College. She is a chemistry major, with a minor in biology. Karly serves as the Student Government chief of staff and the Catholic Council president and is a member of the Juniata College Chapter of the National Society of Leadership and Success. She is also a resident assistant, chemistry peer tutor, an undergraduate researcher in the inorganic chemistry lab, and a member of the Chemistry and Biochemistry Club and the American Chemical Society. 📖

GET READY

2025 Youth Tour will be held **June 16-21** in Washington, D.C. Please contact your local rural electric cooperative for additional information.



Slow Cooker Secrets

ANNE M. KIRCHNER

AS LEAVES BEGIN TO DROP from the trees, it is comforting to know there are many options for making a simple, hearty meal. Fall is the season I use my slow cooker the most. I appreciate the ease of adding a few ingredients to the crock, turning on the heat and walking away for 4 to 6 hours. The best reward is the aroma that fills my kitchen.

Slow cookers are inexpensive and easy to use. The appliances use limited electricity, emit less heat and are easy to clean. My slow cooker secrets include a rich and hearty marinara sauce. Pesto chicken and potatoes are flavorful and filling. Cinnamon apple baked beans put a twist on tradition, which results in the perfect barbecue side. 🍷

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

PHOTOS BY ANNE M. KIRCHNER



SLOW COOKER MARINARA SAUCE

- ½ pound ground beef
- ½ pound ground pork
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 small yellow onion, diced
- 2 (28-ounce) cans diced tomatoes
- 1 (6-ounce) can tomato paste
- 1 tablespoon Italian seasoning
- 2 teaspoons dried oregano
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt

In a large skillet, brown the beef and pork in olive oil. Drain the grease. Add the meat to a 4-quart slow cooker along with the other ingredients. Stir gently. Cover the ingredients with the slow cooker lid and cook on high heat for 4 to 6 hours or on low heat for 6 to 8 hours. Serve the marinara sauce over pasta or spaghetti squash. *Makes 8 to 10 servings.*



SLOW COOKER PESTO CHICKEN AND POTATOES

- 1 (3- to 4-pound) fryer chicken, cut into pieces
- 12 small gold potatoes, halved
- 2 teaspoons dried parsley
- 2 teaspoons seasoned salt
- 1½ teaspoons coarse black pepper
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- ½ teaspoon onion powder
- ½ teaspoon dried thyme
- ½ cup pesto
- ½ cup chicken stock

Place the chicken pieces and potato halves into a 6-quart slow cooker. Combine the spices in a small bowl then sprinkle over the chicken and potatoes. In another small bowl, combine the pesto and chicken stock. Pour the mixture over the chicken and potatoes. Cover the ingredients with the slow cooker lid and cook on high heat for 3 to 5 hours or on low heat for 6 to 8 hours. *Makes 6 to 8 servings.*



SLOW COOKER CINNAMON APPLE BAKED BEANS

- 1 pound thick-sliced bacon
- 2 (28-ounce) cans baked beans
- 3 gala apples, peeled and diced
- 1 small yellow onion, diced
- ¼ cup maple syrup
- 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon

Dice the bacon slices and cook in a skillet until crisp. Drain the grease. Add the bacon to a 4-quart slow cooker along with the other ingredients. Stir gently. Cover the ingredients with the slow cooker lid and cook on high heat for 3 to 4 hours or on low heat 5 to 6 hours. *Makes 10 to 15 servings.*

How to Navigate Frost and Freeze

GEORGE WEIGEL

SOMETIME IN THE EARLY WEEKS of each fall, Pennsylvania's overnight temperatures sink to 32 degrees, and the gardening season thuds to a frosty conclusion.

Thirty-two is that key milestone where water freezes. Since plant tissue is filled with the stuff, the icy result is dead, ruptured plant cells.

Gardeners who have blooming zinnias and vibrant tomato plants heading into a first-frost night awake to a morgue of wilted blobs the next morning. Soon after, perennial foliage dies back, trees drop their leaves, and even the evergreens downshift from growing up to hunkering down.

So it goes in non-tropical territory — and most gardeners are OK with that. They clear out the dead stuff, turn on a football game and start the countdown to seed-ordering time.

But more tenacious gardeners milk every last inch out of a growing season, using a few tricks to capitalize on the string of above-freezing nights that usually follow that first killing frost.

The way to save cold-wimpy annual flowers and summer vegetables is to cover them overnight with a lightweight fabric, such as floating row covers (porous fabrics sold in garden centers and catalogs), old sheets, tarps, or light blankets. This protection traps only a few degrees of warmth, but that's often enough to get plants through that one- or two-night frosty blast.

Potted plants are even easier. Just slide them into a garage, shed or covered porch until the temperature is back above freezing the next day.

Astute gardeners also know the difference between a light frost and a deep freeze and how different plants navigate cold temperatures.

The most tender plants — so-called “houseplants,” such as monstera, bromeliads and philodendrons — start to suffer even when nights dip into the low 40s.

If you're giving them a summer vacation outside, forget the row covers and get them back inside well before frost threatens (i.e., now!)

Annuals, summer vegetables, borderline-hardy tropicals, and tender-leaning perennials bite the dust at varying points as tempera-

tures slide downward from 36.

Wind, humidity and each plant's cold-tolerating genetics play a role in addition to temperature. That's why it's possible to go out on a morning when the temperature didn't go below, say, 36 degrees and see frost on the impatiens.

That can happen if your thermometer is 5 feet off the ground or the impatiens were at the bottom of a slope, where the coldest air flows and congregates.

The prospect worsens when an actual freeze is in the forecast. The National Weather Service issues “freeze watches” and “freeze warnings” when temperatures are likely to hit 32, rupturing those plant cells in a much wider range of plants than light frost does.

The date that happens has been dropping later and later in the season in the last 25 years.

Since 2000, for example, the average first-killing frost of fall in the Middletown/Harrisburg area has been Nov. 2. Add that to the earlier end of frost in spring (averaging April 11 since 2000), and the average frost-free growing season is now approaching seven full months in the capital region.

Similarly, Altoona's average first-fall frost since 2000 has moved back to Oct. 16, Warren's (near Erie) to Oct. 19 and State College's to Oct. 26.

Keep in mind, though, that rogue events can happen, such as the super-early, first-fall frost that most of the state got on Oct. 8, 2001, and the super-late spring frost that surprised Altoona gardeners May 23, 2015.

So even though we might enjoy our gardens longer than ever, never trust Mr. Frost. ❄️

HOW TO PROTECT PLANTS

Here are four ways to nurse your plants through frosty and winter weather:

1) Be ready with the sheets and row covers if frost is in the forecast and you're up to extend the season of summer annuals and tender vegetables.

2) Keep the soil damp. Plants survive winter best when they don't go into winter already handicapped with dry roots — especially young plants and broad-leaf evergreens.

3) Give the soil a mulch blanket. Other than a winter-long snow cover, a 2- to 3-inch layer of organic mulch (shredded hardwood, bark chips, leaves, etc.) is the best insulator of plant roots.

4) Protect evergreens from winter wind. Hammer stakes in the ground around evergreens that are prone to winter-wind damage, then fasten sheets of burlap (available in most garden centers) to the stakes to make a protective cylinder.



UNDER COVER: When temperatures start to dip, use sheets to protect plants from frost and prolong their life.

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.

THE ART OF DECEPTION

A person wearing a dark hoodie is sitting at a desk, looking at a laptop. The scene is dimly lit, with the person's face obscured by shadow. The title 'THE ART OF DECEPTION' is overlaid in large, bold, yellow capital letters.

How to Spot – and Avoid – Utility Scams

KATHY HACKLEMAN

Penn Lines Contributor

ANY INDIVIDUAL OR BUSINESS SERVED by a utility could potentially be the victim of an online scam, says Monica Martinez, executive director of Utilities United Against Scams.

“People use their mobile devices for everything,” she says. “The consumer has the ability to do more things online, including banking and other types of monetary transactions, but it also opens them to more risk.”

Consumers will often fall prey to these utility scams, especially when confronted with the threat of a vital service being disconnected — unless payment is made immediately. Online ploys via text or email are common, but scammers will knock on your door, too, and even give you a call.

“[They make it] sound like it’s the real deal,” Martinez says. “Sometimes, they will say the payment was made but it didn’t go through, and they ask for information again. What happens is they get your financial information and end up using it fraudulently.”

Fight scams with vigilance

October is Cybersecurity Awareness Month, created by government and industry groups in 2004 to ensure Americans have resources to stay safe online and protect their personal data.

Actions that keep everyone safer online include enabling multi-factor authentication, using strong passwords, updating software regularly and recognizing phishing, which is an online attempt to steal sensitive information, such as your usernames, passwords, credit card numbers and bank account information.

Consumers are also encouraged to be aware of utility scams, which even the wariest of people may fall victim

to, especially if the amount they are told they owe seems reasonable.

“No one wants to be without their electric, gas or water service, but it’s wise when receiving a message such as this to think, ‘Could this be a scam?’ before acting,” Martinez says.

Scammers, she adds, will also set up fake websites that mimic a real utility website and/or provide a fake phone number so the consumer will feel safe providing personal information. Search engine optimization makes it easy for these fake websites to appear at the top of the list when a consumer searches online for a utility’s name. Scammers have also been known to use real messages from utility websites to make their site seem authentic.

So how do you know if the site you’re using is legitimate? Certain clues will give away a fake site, experts say. For instance, look carefully at the URL, which is the site’s web address; those used by fake websites may be off by a single letter or number. Beyond that, look for poor grammar, low-quality images, offers that seem too good to be true and requests for nontraditional payment options, such as gift cards, cryptocurrency and prepaid debit cards.

Scammers also target consumers who are relocating by offering to help the new resident set up utility accounts for a fee (utilities may require a deposit, but they do not charge consumers a fee to begin service). In addition, some utilities report scammers will target consumers in areas suffering a major outage by offering to move them closer to the top of the reconnection list for a fee.

The key to avoiding scams is vigilance, Martinez says.

She advises consumers to check, double check and triple check any unusual contact. Be wary, she says, of requests for immediate payment to avoid disconnection

and alert for anyone who claims you've overpaid a bill and needs your bank information to issue a "refund."

"Stop and take a moment," Martinez says. "Find the number of your local utility and call them. Don't be forced into doing anything immediately."

Cooperatives offer protection

In the meantime, remember your electric cooperative employees want to keep you safe. Kyle Smith, information technology manager at Gettysburg-based Adams Electric Cooperative, is one of them.

At the most basic level, Adams Electric takes steps to guard its members' personal information.

"From an employee standpoint, people only have access to information they need to perform their jobs," Smith says. "If an employee doesn't need access to members' Social Security numbers, they don't have it. Even when we are talking to a member, that member has to be verified before we discuss their account with them."

The cooperative also trains employees and board members to avoid phishing scams and uses *Penn Lines*, bill stuffers and other communication to remind members about cybersecurity basics as well as cooperative business practices.

"We're not going to call and ask you to pay something over the phone or ask for bank account information or your full Social Security number," Smith says. "We make members aware of our business practices so they can tell when something is unusual."

Smith also writes occasional articles for *Penn Lines*. A recent one used a locked-door analogy to educate

consumers about online safety.

"People used to open their unlocked front door to anyone," he says. "Now, most people lock their door and look out to see who is there before they answer. I tell them to use that concept for emails and texts. Don't trust them implicitly. Look at them and think about if they might lead to a cybersecurity issue."

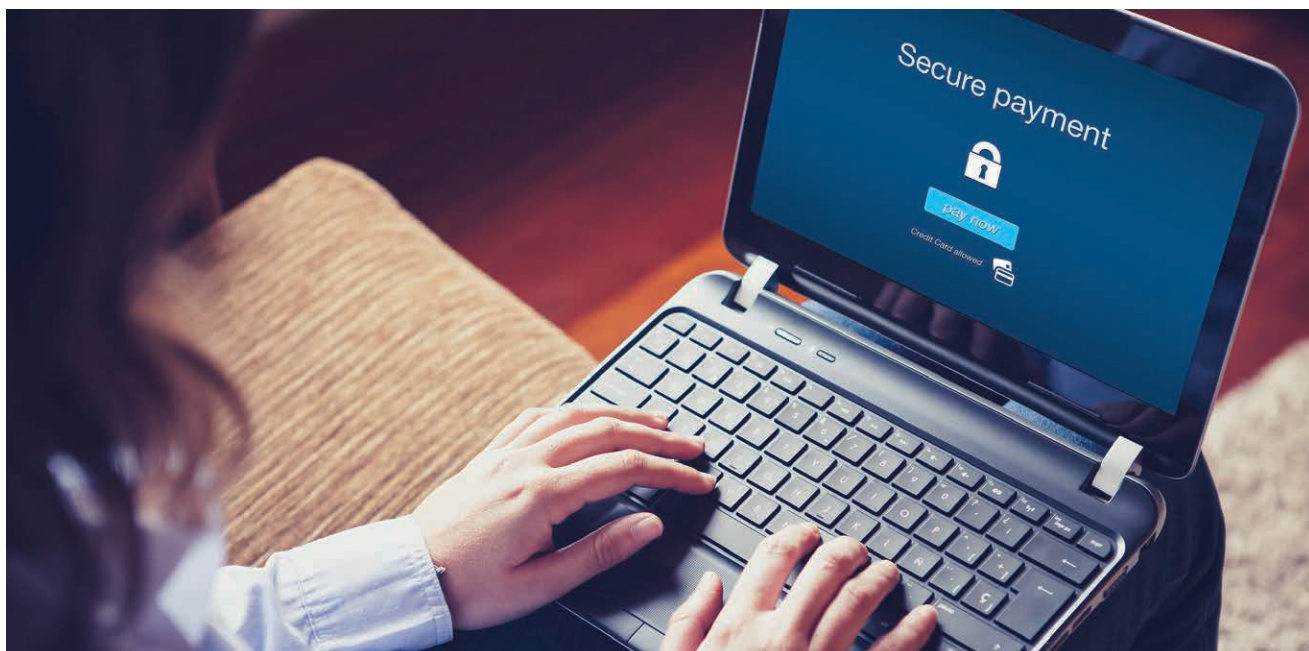
While the most common utility scam is a "late-payment" claim, there are others. One involves an email or text saying the utility has created a new log-in portal ("Go to our new website and sign in ..."). There, the consumer is asked for personal information.

Clearly, it's an ever-changing world when it comes to fighting utility scams, and cooperatives and other utilities must stay one step ahead of scammers.

"We are never going to say exactly what we are doing to prevent scams," Smith says, "but I can say we have firewalls in place [and] practices for verification."

Similar consumer-protection practices are in place at Valley Rural Electric Cooperative (REC). Information Technology Manager Max Hetrick says staff will post general cybersecurity reminders online and warn the public about scams brought to their attention. Internally, the cooperative focuses on cybersecurity training for employees.

"We constantly remind employees and members that Valley REC doesn't just ask for or solicit information over the phone or by email," Hetrick says. "The single most important thing is constantly reminding everyone to not click on links in emails or texts, and don't hand out information over the phone unless you have called the company directly." 📞



CHECK AND DOUBLE CHECK: Online scammers will use all kinds of ploys to get valuable information, including usernames and account numbers, from consumers. When in doubt, don't act immediately. Instead, call your electric cooperative to verify that what you're being told is legitimate.

Energy Innovation Creates New Career Opportunities

SCOTT FLOOD

ELECTRIC CO-OPS ACROSS AMERICA are celebrating Careers in Energy Week, Oct. 21-25. This industrywide initiative connects today's energy workforce with tomorrow's by making the public aware of important and rewarding job opportunities, many of which didn't even exist a decade or two ago.

Co-op members are familiar with some of the people who work in the energy industry, such as the lineworkers who restore power after a storm and the member service representatives who take calls about outages and billing. Others are important, too, including the people behind the scenes who are helping to shape tomorrow's energy landscape.

Energy storage specialists are a good example. Solar energy has the potential to provide more of our electricity, but it has a fundamental problem: It only works when the sun is sufficiently bright. Engineers, technicians and others are close to creating giant, battery-like devices that can store excess solar energy so it's available when the sun's out of sight.

Then there are renewable energy engineers, who are busy designing and implementing more efficient ways to harness energy from the sun, wind, and water. They've been behind many advancements in recent years. Another group of engineers is focusing on improving the smart grid, the nationwide network that connects power producers and users. They're seeking ways to reduce energy that gets wasted while improving coast-to-coast reliability.

More environmental scientists

are needed as well to help energy producers better understand how to meet the demands of consumers while protecting local and global ecosystems. It also takes skilled energy policy analysts to study data, evaluate the impacts of proposed policies, and advise governments and organizations on energy-related issues.

Personal and professional growth

Many of these new positions require extensive education, but others provide entry-level opportunities. For example, as more homeowners want to use new technologies like solar panels, they need trained technicians to install them. Another growing opportunity is for energy advisers, who have the skills to examine homes and businesses and identify changes that could lead to lower energy bills.

While opportunities abound throughout the energy industry, people who have an interest in these fields often find work environments they enjoy at local electric cooperatives. In fact, a surprising number of co-op employees spend most, if not all, of their careers there. Co-ops often are some of the community's most stable employers, typically providing plenty of opportunities for personal and professional growth. Wages and benefits tend to be competitive, too.

Whether you're a student getting ready to pursue that first "real" job or someone who's ready for a career change, the energy industry is worth exploring. It offers stability and growth as well as opportunities that run the gamut from member services and engineering to construction,

science and financial management. Your local co-op also gives you the chance to be the person your neighbors know they can depend upon. That's a benefit that's tough to beat. 📱

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 nearly 900 electric co-ops.

JONES-ONSLOW ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE



GOOD ENERGY: Electric co-ops tend to be some of the community's most stable employers, and they typically provide plenty of opportunities for personal and professional growth, such as access to specialized training or classes.

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December 2024

October 16

January 2025

November 15

February 2025

December 16

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- ☐ Month(s) in which the ad is to run.
- ☐ Ad copy as it is to appear in the publication.
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SPECIAL OFFER – BOTH COOKBOOKS FOR \$12. "Country Cooking" – \$5, including postage. "Recipes Remembered" – \$7, including postage. Both of these cookbooks are a collection of recipes from men and women of the electric co-ops of Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Payable to: Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association, P.O. Box 1266, Harrisburg, PA 17108. Write Attention: Cookbooks.

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FOR SALE: SEVEN SQUARE OF BRICK PAVERS. White, fair condition, \$55 per square. If bought as seconds, they would cost \$100 per square. Call 223-272-0438; leave message.

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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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RECIPES & FOOD

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

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TRICK OR TREAT

Don't Let an Electrical Mishap Be Your Halloween Trick

As you ready your yard and porch for Halloween, make sure the decorations you plug in do not become hazardous. **To avoid a Halloween scare, take these safety precautions:**

- Discard any decorations that have **cracked or frayed cords** or damaged plugs.
- **Do not** put any decorations on power poles, padmount transformers or any other electrical equipment.
- Use decorations that are endorsed by a reputable testing laboratory such as **Underwriters Laboratories (UL)**.
- If you are using extension cords outdoors, make sure they are **rated for outdoor use**.
- **Secure all cords** so they do not become tripping hazards.

- Plug all cords into circuits protected by **GFCIs** to prevent electrical shock.
- **Do not use nails or tacks** to hang lights or other electrical decor.
- Keep decorations **away from flammable items** like bales of hay, cornstalks or witch's brew.

Have a safe and festive Halloween complete with safe tricks and tasty treats.

Learn more at:



Ottoman Lady

JOHN KASUN

EVERY TIME I GO TO a big-box store I see someone trying to load a 70-inch TV, a barbecue grill for a family of eight or a pile of 8-foot-long lumber into a compact car with a 3-foot trunk.

Normally, I am just an innocent bystander who finds it fascinating that people think whatever they buy should automatically fit in their car. Their actions often remind me of a kangaroo trying to stuff a baby elephant into its pouch and thinking if it turns out just a little, the elephant will somehow magically fit.

My role as an innocent bystander, however, changed this past summer when I became personally involved in one of these clown shows. It started when I stopped to drop off some items at a consignment shop. There was only one small car in the parking lot, so I pulled alongside it to be close to the shop's front door. I had a few small boxes to drop off and thought I would be in and out in a few minutes. Wrong.

As I was making my first trip through the door, I was met by two young women carrying out a large, round, gold velvet ottoman that had to measure at least

40 inches across. It had gold fringe around the top and looked like it came out of a harem. I remember thinking that it must also come with a dancing girl wearing a veil.

I held the door for them, and they made their way to the small compact car. I glanced at the trunk and the image of a kangaroo and a baby elephant again popped into my mind. I had no idea why she thought she could get that ottoman into her car, but I knew it would be fun to watch if I had the time.

While carrying my second load of boxes into the store, I saw the pair had abandoned the trunk idea and were trying to get the large ottoman into the back seat. A few minutes later, they had the ottoman firmly stuck half in and half out of the car. Although they were both pushing

with all their might, the ottoman wasn't budging. Up until that time, things were going pretty well for me. I was, however, too dumb to leave well enough alone.

"If you live close by, I will put it in my truck and haul it home for you," I offered.

"No, I will be all right," the new owner replied as she was now inside the car trying to push the ottoman back out the rear door. "I think it will fit in the front seat if I can just get it out."

As I carried my last box into the store, I passed her car just as she was closing the front door. "There," she said proudly, "I got it in." The huge ottoman filled the front seat and reminded me of a giant Big Mac that was all set to eat the car from the inside out.

A few minutes later, as I opened the door to my truck to leave, I heard a faint female voice say, "Excuse me, excuse me." I turned to see the owner of that voice jammed between the ottoman and the driver's door.

"I got it in but now I can't move my gear shift," she said in a weak voice. A few minutes later, I had worked the ottoman out of the front seat and tossed it in the

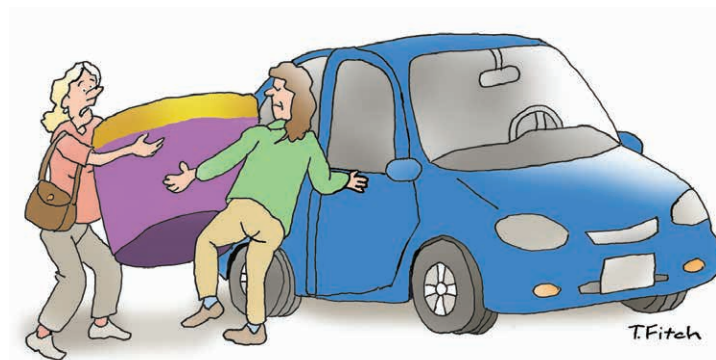
back of my truck. "You go first, and I'll follow you," I said.

My heart sank as she pulled out and said to her friend in the back seat, "I hope I can make it; I am almost out of gas."

A short drive later, we unloaded the ottoman on her porch. She was very thankful and offered to pay me for my trouble. "No thanks," I said, laughing. "I'm happy to help, and besides, you just gave me material for a column that I may get published. Watch for it; I will call it 'Ottoman Lady.'"

She laughed. (True story: I don't make this stuff up — well, not everything.) 🍷

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.



A Certain Point of View

DEPENDING ON YOUR PERSPECTIVE, OCTOBER is a time for change. Maybe that change is as ephemeral as Halloween night or perhaps it's a slow and steady process — like the changing of leaves that litter your yard. Whether you view change as scary or sacred does, of course, depend greatly on your own point of view.

However you choose to view the world around you, we hope you look at some of it through the lens of your camera. Send us your most powerful shots to this year's Rural Reflections contest. The 2024 winners in five categories (artistic, human, landscape, animal and editor's choice) will receive \$75 each, and runners-up will each receive \$25. 📷



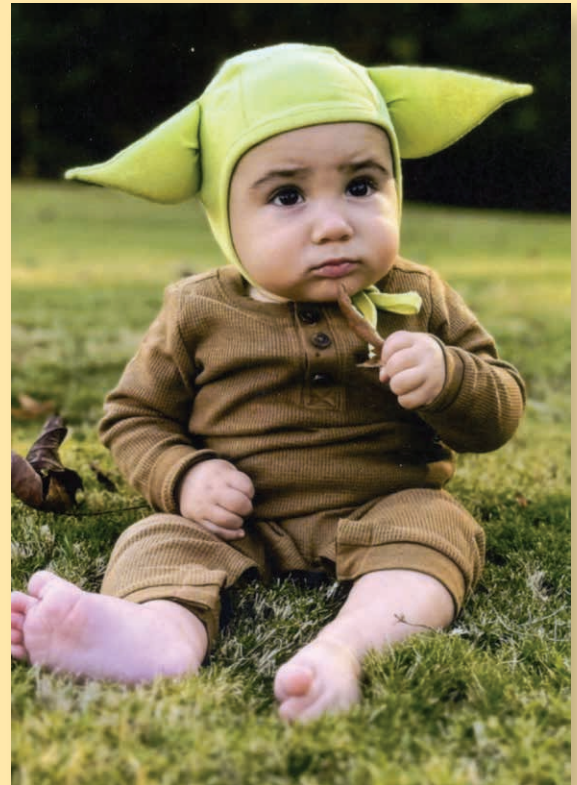
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How to enter

AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHERS are encouraged to send photos for the 2024 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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