

SEPTEMBER 2024

PENNLINES

Crash Course

Demolition Derbies
Bring People Together by
Breaking Things Apart

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CHAIN CHALLENGES

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ON THE COVER

David Bailey, a member of
Huntingdon-based Valley
Rural Electric Cooperative,
is among the thrill-seekers
who spend their spare time
creating chaos at the state's
many demolition derbies.

PHOTOS BY
MICHAEL T. CRAWFORD

What to Do When the Lights Go Out

Recent Storms, Water Outage Highlight Need for Safety, Preparation



**DENNIS
SHAWLEY**

A DAY DOESN'T GO BY that I don't think about safety. In the utility industry, nothing is more important — a message our team stresses with every lineworker who goes through the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association's Job Training & Safety Program.

At home, safety is crucial, too, and with September marking National Preparedness Month, it's a good time to emphasize the need for consumers of all ages to practice electrical safety.

This year's theme, "Preparing for the Unknown," is particularly timely. Last month, severe storms swept through Pennsylvania, the result of Tropical Storm Debby. Following widespread flooding, Gov. Josh Shapiro issued a disaster declaration in 21 counties, including 10 serviced by rural electric cooperatives. Amid this, a water main break in Central Pennsylvania impacted 42,000 customers, leaving some without running water and others under a boil-water notice for several days. Thousands of power outages were reported, too.

Minute to minute, hour to hour, day to day, year to year, none of us can predict what will unfold, leaving us with only one option: We need to prepare. Sure, it may seem overwhelming — how can you anticipate and plan for *everything*? The key is to take a step-by-step approach, starting with what to do when the lights go out.

Here are some actions cooperative members can take to stay safe when an outage happens:

- **Generator safety:** Generators are invaluable during extended outages but can be deadly if not used properly. Keep in mind, the National Electric Safety Code requires owners to install a manual or automatic transfer switch that disconnects the generator from the main power line. Without a switch, which should be installed by an electrician, power from the generator will flow up to the transformer and back onto the lines, creating a dangerous situation for lineworkers restoring power and others. Also, always operate generators outdoors, at least 20 feet away from windows, doors and attached garages to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning.
- **Downed power lines:** Treat all downed power lines as if they are live and dangerous. Stay at least 30 feet away from them and report the issue immediately to 911 and your cooperative. Never attempt to move a downed line yourself and be aware that lines can become re-energized unexpectedly.
- **Food and water safety:** During an outage, keep refrigerators and freezers closed as much as possible to maintain cold temperatures. A refrigerator can keep food safe for up to four hours, and a full freezer can hold its temperature for 48 hours. Consider having a cooler with ice on hand and stock up on non-perishable food items.
- **Communication and planning:** Make sure you have a way to receive emergency alerts and communicate with family members. Keep mobile phones and back-up batteries charged and have a plan in place for checking on vulnerable neighbors or relatives who may need help.

Your cooperative does its best to avoid power disruptions, but they are inevitable. So as we observe National Preparedness Month, use the lessons learned from this summer's storms to enhance your outage readiness and ensure your family can safely weather any storm. 🌩️

DENNIS SHAWLEY

MANAGER, JOB TRAINING & SAFETY
PENNSYLVANIA RURAL ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION AND ALLEGHENY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

EDITOR

Peter A. Fitzgerald

MANAGING EDITOR

Jill M. Ercolino

SENIOR EDITOR

Michael T. Crawford

LAYOUT & DESIGN

Kaylin E. Acri

ADVERTISING & PRODUCTION

COORDINATOR

Michelle M. Smith

CONTRIBUTING COLUMNISTS

**John Kasun, Anne M. Kirchner,
Yvonne Butts-Mitchell,
Steve Piatt**

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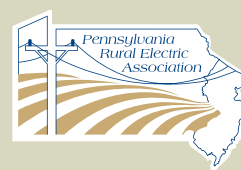
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FOCUSING ON THE POSITIVES

"What is September?" my managing editor asked.

"Hot," I replied, though I quickly realized she meant, "What are people focused on in September?"

Every month has a litany of awareness initiatives, all struggling for attention; I hadn't realized National Save a Tiger Month was tied to September – understandable, as it's hard to compete with Mullets for Mental Health Month.



Normally, you wouldn't associate mental health with demolition derbies – the topic of this month's feature – but at a recent one in Huntingdon County, I met a church group leader and rural electric cooperative member who was participating to promote a 12-step recovery program (September is also National Alcohol & Drug Addiction Recovery Month, another topic we explore in this month's issue).

This happy fellow with a bushy red beard would, hours later, go on to slam his stripped-down ride into anything that moved, all so he could get out of his car and proudly tell people about how the letters painted on the hood – representing an organization close to his heart – had saved his father's life.

Covering the derby – my first – I realized that while the participants are there to smash things apart, the real outcome is bringing people together. Often these events, held throughout the state as soon as the weather gets warm, raise thousands of dollars for and awareness about great causes, including groups that support people with disabilities and recovering addicts.

So I guess it's only appropriate that September also hosts Positive Thinking Day, Sept. 13. I encourage you to use it to focus on what matters to you, like growing a sweet mullet. Or maybe this will be the year you save a tiger – if it's not too hot.

Michael Crawford

MICHAEL T. CRAWFORD
SENIOR EDITOR



SOMETHING TO CELEBRATE: Pennsylvania will be releasing a new license plate next spring that commemorates its role in the birth of the nation.

LET FREEDOM RING

State unveils new patriotic license plate

In honor of America's 250th birthday in 2026, Pennsylvania is releasing a new patriotic license plate that celebrates its role as the birthplace of American democracy.

In addition to the "Let Freedom Ring" license plate, new welcome signs featuring the same theme have been installed in Adams, Bucks, Erie, Fulton, Monroe, Potter, Susquehanna and Tioga counties with another 29 scheduled to be erected.

Motorists can sign up now at penndot.pa.gov to receive an email update about the new license plates, which will be ready to order in spring 2025. PennDOT said fees will vary based on plate type and any optional personalization. The cost to replace a standard plate is currently listed at \$13 on PennDOT's website.

This is the first major redesign to Pennsylvania's base plate since 2000.

CROC SHOCK

Lake Erie visitors report alligator sighting

Several people enjoying the beach at Lake Erie in early August reported seeing an alligator in the water. Erie

police were alerted about the unusual sighting of the 4- to 5-foot-long reptile and passed the information along to the Erie Port Authority.

Port authority officials say they have been keeping a close eye on the water and nearby land and working with local trappers and others who have more experience dealing with the animals. Signs have been installed near the East Avenue Boat Launch and Lampe Marina and Campground, where the alligator was spotted, to advise people of the potential danger.

Reptile experts, who believe the alligator is between 2 and 4 years old, don't think it will be able to survive a northern Pennsylvania winter. They theorize the animal was someone's pet that was released into the lake. Experts said it's unlikely the gator would approach people; however, they also advise visitors who see it to refrain from approaching the animal or attempting to capture it.

Anyone who spots the alligator should call the Erie Port Authority at 814-455-7557, ext. 223.



FOR THE BIRDS

Volunteers needed to help with Pennsylvania Bird Atlas

The Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC) is seeking volunteers for the third Pennsylvania Bird Atlas being conducted through February 2029.

The PGC, in partnership with Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, wants to document what birds live in Pennsylvania, where and in what numbers.

"The atlas will provide a snapshot of the population status and distribution of birds," Game Commission Ornithologist Sean Murphy says. "No other bird surveys are as comprehensive, and for that reason, the results are critical to the establishment of conservation priorities for Pennsylvania birds."

But getting those results takes people — lots and lots of them in lots and lots of places.

To volunteer, go to ebird.org and create an account. Volunteers can then access all the necessary information and tools to participate, including a handbook and other printable handouts, and track what others are seeing in real time (click the "Explore" tab).

Anyone is welcome to participate — there is no particular level of expertise needed. Every observation recorded

helps lay the groundwork for bird conservation now and in the future, the PGC says.

Pennsylvania did its first bird atlas in the 1980s, and the second followed in the early 2000s.

AND THE SURVEY SAYS ...

On-site state forest surveys will help improve visitor experiences

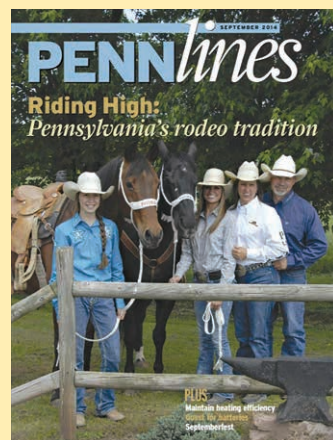
Visitors to Pinchot State Forest (Luzerne, Lackawanna and Wyoming counties) and Weiser State Forest (Dauphin, Carbon, Columbia and Schuylkill counties) are encouraged to participate in on-site surveys being conducted by staff from the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and Penn State University students.

Officials say the surveys will help the Bureau of Forestry understand the wants and needs of forest users to improve experiences on public lands.

Survey questions will include where visitors are from, activities they are pursuing, length of stay in the area, spending patterns while in the area and satisfaction with their experience.

The survey will continue through July 2025 with a final report scheduled to be available in fall 2025. 📍

TIME LINES



SEPTEMBER 2014

A decade ago, *Penn Lines* readers were "Riding High," the title of the September feature that focused on cooperative families and their passion for rodeos. Originating hundreds of years ago with Spanish cowboys, who were skilled in horseback riding and herding livestock, rodeos today are designed to test the skill and speed of modern-day cowboys and cowgirls. And they continue to be a big draw at the Pennsylvania Farm Show each January and at other venues across the state.

SEPTEMBER

COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG



A 'SITE' TO SEE

Looking for something different to do Labor Day weekend? Road trip to Wyoming County for Nicholson Bridge Day Sept. 8. The event celebrates what's been called the "Eighth Wonder of the World" and features music, food and 70-plus vendors. Learn more at sites.google.com/view/nicholsonwomensclub/home.

ROCKHILLRAGTIME.COM

THE GOOD OLD DAYS

The 15th Annual Central Pennsylvania Ragtime & American Music Festival, Sept. 12-15, is four fun-filled days of music, silent movies, lectures, open houses, and more in the twin boroughs of Rock Hill Furnace and Orbisonia, Huntingdon County. Free and ticketed events are planned. Learn more at rockhillragtime.com.



ON THE HUNT

Since 1957, thousands of bowhunters have been journeying to Forksville, Sullivan County, for the Pennsylvania Bowhunters Festival, the oldest gathering of bowhunters in the world. The three-day event, Sept. 13-15, will offer a wide variety of shooting activities and events for the young and young at heart. Find more at pabowhunters.com.

CELEBRATE FALL

Communities throughout rural Pennsylvania are gearing up for fall — and you know what that means: fall festivals. St. Mary's in Elk County will be the site of a Bavarian-themed event, Sept. 20-22, while Smicksburg in Indiana County will host its popular Fall Festival, Oct. 5-6. Learn more at facebook.com/BavarianFallFest and visitsmicksburg.com.



CRASH

**Demolition Derbies
Bring People Together
by Breaking Things Apart**

MICHAEL T. CRAWFORD



COURSE

Hitting and dodging is all part of the chaos at the 2024 Barbecue Bonanza Demolition Derby in Huntingdon.

Ever since we threw British tea into Boston Harbor, Americans have made breaking things a time-honored tradition.

While “rage rooms” are all the, ahem, rage these days, they lack the collective glee of cheering crowds craving chaos. It’s a niche that demolition derbies still fulfill admirably across the Commonwealth.

‘Pretty crazy’

For the uninitiated, a demolition derby pits drivers against one another in a destructive contest. Instead of weaving between cars to cross a finish line, drivers slide and ram their vehicles into each other, hoping to outlast the carnage.

Awards go to drivers who can keep their car going the longest and sometimes to those who put on a good show, either with flashy maneuvers, stunning hits, or just stylishly

designed vehicles.

Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) member Amy Juratovac, who enjoys spray painting and detailing vehicles before sending them off to their demise, says that despite the high-adrenaline carnage, the sport is incredibly safe.

“There’s a lot going on, but there’s also a ton of people who are watching it all unfold,” says Juratovac, who grew up driving four-wheelers. “You don’t have to freak out when you see a car on fire or somebody’s stuck because there are 20 people who are ready to jump in to help.”

Drake Schmourder, a member of and lineman for Mansfield-based Tri-County REC, is no stranger to danger; he works around high-voltage electricity for a living. On the job, safety comes first, and it’s much the same with his hobby.

“Most derbies will want you to take the airbags out [of the car] so they don’t blow up in your face when you hit people,” explains Schmourder, who has been winning prizes at demolition derbies for eight years. “I always put a four-point cage in my vehicle — from the firewall, down the doors and behind the backseat — so stuff can’t get caved in on me. ... You have to wear a seatbelt when you run — just like you would driving a car normally — and a helmet and safety glasses.”

The lineworker grew up watching derbies at fairs. At age 16, a farmer he was working for told him that if he could make an old car run again, he could have it for free. Seeing his chance to finally dip his toes into demolition derbies, he found a way to make it run — at least long enough to wreck it one last time — and earn third place in the process. He’s been hooked ever since.

“I started off with minis — four- or six-cylinder cars — and now I’ve transitioned to large-truck and minivan classes,” says Schmourder, who primarily drives at the Tioga County Fairgrounds in Wellsboro. “It can turn pretty crazy very quickly. I’ve been in derbies where I’ve lasted 15 seconds, and others where I’ve gone all the way and almost won a couple times.”

What’s going on?

From the stands, a demolition derby is wild.

Smoke billows from the dozens of cars crammed into one tight space. Rubber burns as tires fling mud into the stands. Metal crunches and screeches as vehicles slam into one another — noises quickly drowned out by the wails and cries of the crowd. Behind the wheel, drivers make split-second decisions, slamming their boots against the accelerator as they scan for targets while hoping not to be a target themselves.

“It makes you feel like your head is on a swivel,” says



BORN FOR THIS: Drake Schmourder, a lineman for Mansfield-based Tri-County Rural Electric Cooperative, wraps up a day of chaos at the Tioga County Fairgrounds in Troy. Schmourder has been entering derbies since he was a teenager.



DEMOLISHING DESPAIR: David Bailey, a member of Huntingdon-based Valley Rural Electric Cooperative, discusses Celebrate Recovery – a 12-step, faith-based addiction recovery program he promotes at events – ahead of the 2024 BBQ Bonanza Demolition Derby in Huntingdon.

Steven Sickles, owner of Sickles Racing, a demolition derby team that travels across southwestern Pennsylvania. “Your awareness just shoots through the roof of what’s going on everywhere — what’s coming at you, what’s not.”

Drivers can’t just slam into one another endlessly, though. Survival in a demolition derby requires drivers to know when to hit and when to dodge.

“You need to have a good combination of both if you want to win,” Sickles says. “A lot of times, if you’re trying to do too much damage, you’re also hurting your car. You have to weigh the options and take the smart hits.”

While a derby is chaos, it’s not anarchy. Aside from having fire engines and ambulances on standby, a panel of judges enforces the rules — written and unwritten — for the safety of drivers and spectators. For instance, ramming isn’t allowed on driver-side doors; drivers have a minute to get unstuck during a derby; and all vehicles are inspected beforehand to ensure they don’t pose a danger to other drivers or the audience.

Judges also decide who gets awards beyond just surviving to the end. A Mad Dog Award, for example, is presented to the most aggressive driver.

Like most contests, there are different classes of demolition derbies based on the vehicles and what is (or isn’t) installed in them. The most accessible class — the gut-and-go — is a bare-bones approach to demolition derbies. Rather than souping up a car, drivers strip vehicles down to the barest of necessities.

“You take a compact car right off the street, take the windows out, move the gas tank and battery, chain the door shut, and go have fun,” explains Bill DeArmitt, event coordinator for the 2024 BBQ Bonanza Demolition Derby, an annual event at the Huntingdon County Fairgrounds that’s sponsored in part by Huntingdon-based Valley REC.

A driver looking to enter a gut-and-go class can have a car ready in eight hours, according to Sickles, who also runs an automotive core business. But if you’re looking to enter a larger vehicle or something with a V-8 engine, it could take up to a month. Sickles suggests interested drivers start in the gut-and-go class.

“For that class, all you really need is the car, a good fuel cell and a battery tray, and you can be in it for under \$800,” Sickles says. “Once you get into the heavier classes ... we have anywhere from \$3,000 to \$4,000 in them when it’s all

said and done. For the V-8s ... some people have anywhere up to \$75,000. There are a lot of expensive builds out there.”

Event organizers will usually print a detailed list of requirements for each class of vehicles months in advance of a demolition derby. According to Schmouder, you don’t need to be a certified mechanic to enter the gut-and-go class.

From demolition to donations

Novelist Graham Greene wrote “destruction is a form of creation” — and that certainly holds true for demolition derbies. Aside from creating a good time for drivers and spectators, the events often contribute to the community, drawing crowds to county fairs or raising money for not-for-profit organizations.

“Just for the United Way, the donation last year was upward of about \$20,000,” explains Todd Quinter, a member of Valley REC and board member for the Huntingdon County United Way, which organizes the BBQ Bonanza. Funds raised support Promoting, Rehabilitation, Independence, Dignity and Education (PRIDE), an organization for those with disabilities.

“That all stays in the county,” he adds. “This is a game-changer when it comes to nonprofits in the area. It brings people from all over the town and all over the region. It’s great for our local community, and everyone’s excited. There’s a lot of energy about it.”

Not-for-profit organizations also use demolition derbies

to raise awareness about the issues they address. David Bailey, a Valley REC member and a youth leader at Mount Union Wesleyan Church, drives two vehicles at demolition derbies — one for the thrill and one for Celebrate Recovery, a faith-based, 12-step addiction recovery program operated by his church.

“We call it ‘healing for every hurt, hang-up and habit,’” says Bailey, whose father has been going through the Celebrate Recovery program for the past year. “You could have anxiety ... [or] any kind of issue you’re struggling with on a day-to-day or periodic basis. It’s an outlet to be with similar-minded individuals.”

Whether a driver is in it for the cash — usually a few hundred dollars for third place and a couple thousand for first — the rush, or some other cause, it’s hard for them to head in or out of the arena without a smile on their face.

“There’s nothing like when you’re down there and you make a big hit and you hear the crowd roar,” Schmouder says. “I tell you what — it is fun, and it’s an adrenaline rush. It’s heart-pounding and intimidating all in one.”

Itching for destruction? Demolition derbies can be found all over the Commonwealth. Check in with your county fair organizers to see if they or a neighboring county has one scheduled, or you can join the “Pa Demolition Derby Events” group on Facebook to find upcoming events. 🚗



OBJECTS CLOSER THAN THEY APPEAR: A competitor in the 2024 BBQ Bonanza Demolition Derby slams the back of his gut-and-go car into another driver’s vehicle while vying for the win at the Huntingdon County Fairgrounds.

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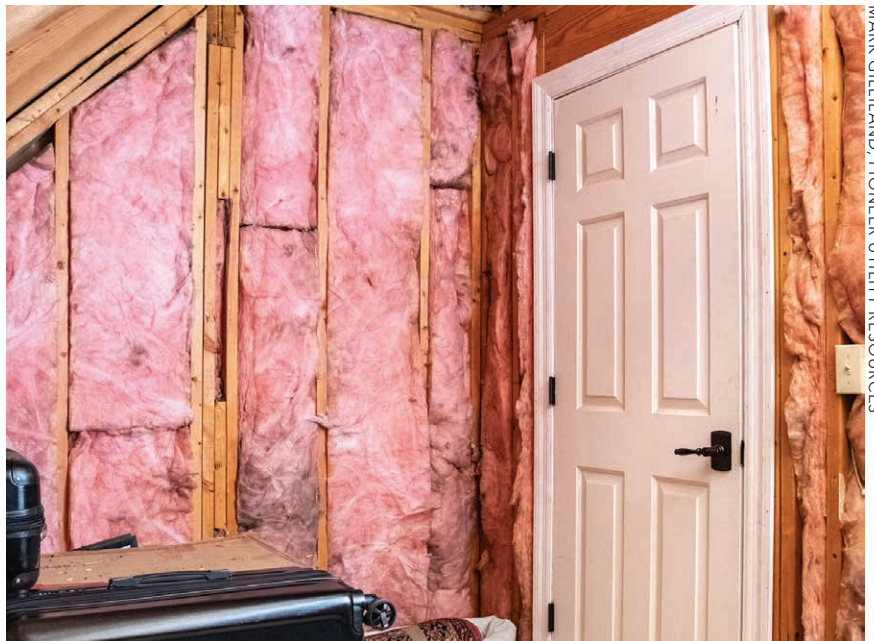
DEAR MIRANDA: How do I use federal tax credits and rebates to upgrade my home?

A: Tax credits and rebates can help bridge the affordability gap to higher efficiency equipment for your home, allowing you to complete upgrades that can lower your energy use and save you money for years to come.

First, knowing the difference between a tax credit and rebate is important. A rebate is a payment for purchasing or installing a qualified product or home improvement. Depending on how the program is set up, the rebate may be provided at the time of purchase or applied for and received after installation. Check with your electric cooperative to see if it offers rebates — many do. Typically, the rebate is applied as a credit on your electric bill. In some cases, the rebate is provided as a cash payment to those who complete eligible projects.

A tax credit is a dollar-for-dollar amount that can be reported at tax time to reduce the amount of taxes owed. You apply for a tax credit when you file your tax documents, so it typically takes longer to reap the benefits than it does with a rebate.

According to Energy Star®, homeowners can qualify for up to \$3,200 annually in federal tax credits for energy efficiency upgrades. Federal



MARK GILLILAND, PIONEER UTILITY RESOURCES

INSTALLING INSULATION: You can also improve your home's envelope with tax credits for insulation.

tax credits are available for heating and cooling system upgrades, including heat pumps, furnaces, central air conditioners, boilers and geothermal heat pumps. Tax credits for Energy Star-rated heat pump water heaters cover 30% of the project cost, up to \$2,000. You can also improve your home's envelope — the portion of the home that separates the inside from the outside — with tax credits for insulation, windows and skylights.

If an energy efficiency upgrade requires improving the electrical panel in your home, there's a tax credit for that, too. You can receive 30% of the cost of the panel upgrade, up to \$600.

These federal tax credits are available through 2032. You must own the home you're upgrading, and it must be your primary residence. Federal tax credits only apply to existing homes in the United States, not new construction.

Additional energy efficiency rebates might also be available. More than half of U.S. states require energy efficiency programs for residents, according to the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy.

These programs can help people save money on their electric bills and help states meet climate goals, reduce system costs and improve the electric grid. In Pennsylvania, a good place to start is the state Department of Environmental Protection's website, dep.pa.gov, where you can find information about several loan, rebate and tax credit programs. (Choose the "Residents" tab at the top of the page, click on "Saving Energy" and go to "Energy Efficiency and Conservation.")

I have had the privilege of working in energy efficiency rebate programs for many years and have seen the benefits firsthand. Tax credit and rebate programs can make upgrades more affordable — helping people save money and improve the overall comfort of their homes. 🏡

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

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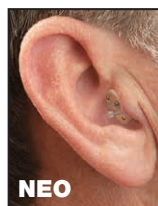


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Local Lore

Tri-County Rural Electric Cooperative

Living Among the Trees

Deep in the Tiadaghton State Forest, which spans large portions of land served by Mansfield-based Tri-County Rural Electric Cooperative, Bob and Dotty Webber built a 500-square-foot cabin. It had no running water, no indoor plumbing and no phone lines. From 1961 to 2015, they lived simply to live, practicing what they preached by promoting and connecting with one of the Commonwealth's greatest natural resources: its forests.

"The Webbers' enthusiasm for the forest and the conservation-minded lifestyle they lived was most certainly contagious among those with whom they spent time," says Joshua Roth, Pennsylvania Lumber Museum (PLM) site administrator.

According to the PLM, Bob and his co-workers at the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) designed and built the



CONSERVATION HOME: Bob and Dotty Webber built this 500-square-foot cabin in Slate Run shortly after they were married in 1961. Throughout their lives, they served as advocates for connecting people with the forest, viewing it as Pennsylvania's greatest natural resource. The Webber cabin is now located in Ulysses on the hill behind the Pennsylvania Lumber Museum's visitor center.

42-mile Black Forest Trail that loops through portions of Tiadaghton. Bob also helped to build and maintain more than 90 miles of public trails in north-central Pennsylvania. He's also believed to have hiked more than 50,000 miles in his lifetime.

Dotty passed away in 2012, and Bob in 2015. In 2018, their cabin was relocated to the lumber museum's property along Route 6 in Ulysses. The museum staff's goal is to inspire visitors to become better stewards of Pennsylvania's forests and heritage,

much like the Webbers.

To learn more about the couple, their cabin and the museum, visit lumbermuseum.org.



Main Office: Mansfield, Pa.
Consumer-members served: 19,624
Website: tri-countyrec.com

This month's work of art is from Daisy Cohenour, age 9, whose parents receive electricity from DuBois-based United Electric Cooperative. Daisy drew this picture based on our July 2024 Outdoor Adventures column, "The Perfect Fishing Buddy." Finn, Steve Piatt's 9-year-old Labrador retriever, reminded Daisy of her dog, Yeller, who died four years ago. We are sad to announce Finn, too, unexpectedly passed away shortly after the article was published. We hope Yeller and Finn find each other and are having fun over the rainbow bridge.

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

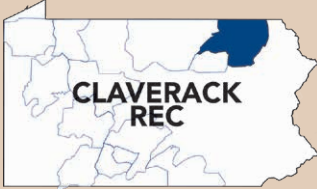
Each month, we'll feature the artwork of our young readers (or our readers' youngsters), inspired by something they've read in *Penn Lines*. Paints, pencils, crayons, clay, sand – any physical medium is OK! You may send digital photos of the creation to CommunityCorner@prea.com, but please: no digital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

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One of 14 electric cooperatives serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

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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.

Guest Column

Your Trusted Energy Adviser



BRIAN ZEIDNER

WHEN I STARTED WORKING FOR Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) in 2005, a lot of members had questions about an emerging technology: high-efficiency heat pumps. I had a lot of discussions and coordinated several learning events about air- and ground-source heat pumps.

I gathered technical information on the heating efficiencies and operational costs of different systems, such as wood, coal, pellets, oil, propane and electric. I also developed and implemented a heat pump rebate program for members.

I knew this information would be useful to members as they considered making major investments and upgrades to their homes. It was useful to me, too, as I evaluated and then installed a high-efficiency air-source heat pump in my own home. As your adviser, I practiced what I preached.

Throughout my tenure, I've come to realize I am continuing a tradition of member service others began. Fred Fiester and Brent Raupers provided relevant, accurate energy information to members for decades. They set the standards for communicating with members and for being viewed as your trusted energy adviser.

In fact, our buildings in Wysox, Tunkhannock and Montrose — constructed in 1963 — all had display areas for electric appliances. Today, the stage and functioning spotlights still remain in our Tunkhannock district office.

Member events were often held at these locations to provide education on appliance choices to make life easier. From pumping water to cooling milk, from washing clothes to refrigeration, the cooperative has been answering member questions since 1937.

And it was in this same spirit of education that we purchased an electric vehicle (EV), whimsically named Eve, in 2020. For some members, the topic of EVs can be political and divisive. Many have strong feelings about EVs and government mandates. We understand the passion, intuition and independence of our rural members.

Still, we're committed, as always, to being your trusted energy adviser for electric appliances — and we consider the EV an electric appliance — regardless of the perceptions. There are several good reasons for us to be knowledgeable.

We should be able to share relevant and accurate information about this appliance with you, our members. How far does it go on a charge? How do you charge it? How long does it take to charge? Does cold weather impact the range? What are the maintenance costs? How much does it cost to fully charge it with Claverack REC's rates?

For 12 months, we answered all these questions and others in a *Penn Lines* column called "All About Eve." We felt these were applicable concerns about this electric appliance, and we felt sharing this information — based on our actual experiences — was a credible way to provide you with answers.

Projections indicate that a lot of drivers will purchase EVs in the future. Studies also indicate that 90% of the time, EVs will be charged at home. If even a small percentage of our members start using a home charger, it is going to have

Continued on page 16D

How to Assess the Value of Electricity

CASEY WOOD, VICE PRESIDENT, COMMUNICATIONS

ELECTRICITY IS AN ESSENTIAL NECESSITY for homes and businesses, but how can its value be quantified? Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) believes affordable and dependable energy is simply invaluable. Through strategic partnerships, we have been able to offer exceptionally low rates while meeting the increasing energy demands of our communities.

For instance, the average monthly electric bill in June 2024 for a residential member consuming 960 kilowatt-hours (kWh) is \$165.36, equivalent to just \$5.51 per day for a 30-day month. To illustrate, the cost of powering your home is lower than the cost of a Big Mac Meal at McDonald's, priced at \$9.89.

In addition, the disparities between our monthly rates and those of investor-owned utilities, like Penelec (First Energy) and PPL, are evident. While our charges total \$165.36 for residential consumers, Penelec and PPL list rates of \$190.24 and \$220.27, respectively.

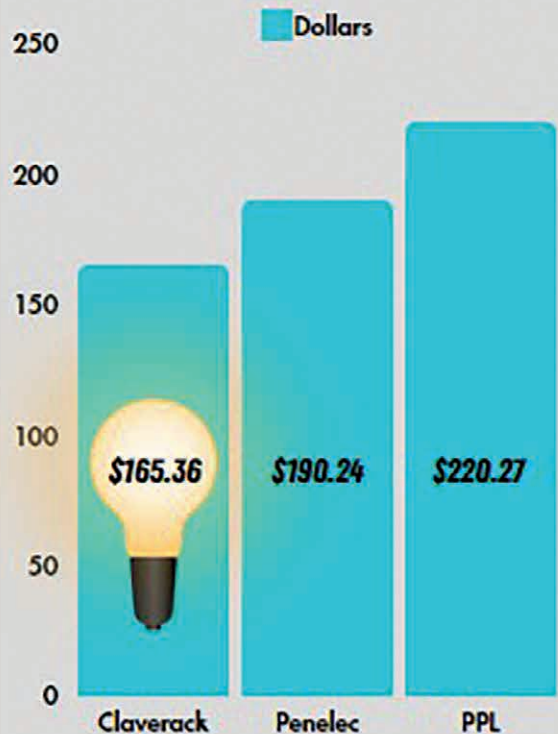
But how can we maintain these lower rates and what is

the value of electricity?

Claverack REC's partnership with Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc. (Allegheny), our generation and transmission cooperative in Harrisburg, enables us to procure a significant portion of our electricity at discounted rates. Allegheny maintains a diversified power supply portfolio with substantial investments in nuclear and hydropower resources. By consolidating resources and procuring power in bulk, Allegheny negotiates lower rates on behalf of Claverack REC and

KEEPING ELECTRICITY AFFORDABLE

Monthly Electric Bill Comparison
for Average Residential Customer
Consuming 960 kWh



Note: Rate comparison effective as of June 1, 2024.

VALUE COMPARISON KEEPING ELECTRICITY AFFORDABLE

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The electric rate is based on the average residential customer usage of 960 kWh as of June 1.
The cost of the medium-size Big Mac meal is based on zip code 18848 as of July 29.

the 13 other participating cooperatives in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Through this partnership, less than 35% of Claverack REC's electricity is acquired from the volatile open market, enabling us to offer highly competitive rates to our members. This partnership equates to significant value for our members. Also, it not only offers cost benefits but also minimizes reliance on carbon-intensive fuels.

So the answer to how you assess the value of electricity and how we can price our rates so competitively lies in one word: collaboration.

Our collaboration with Allegheny enables us to deliver cost-effective and reliable energy without compromising the top-quality local service our members expect. By ensuring affordability and reducing dependence on the open market, Claverack REC and Allegheny continue to demonstrate a steadfast commitment to providing economical, dependable clean energy and services to our communities.

While the value of being a Claverack REC member goes beyond affordable rates, pricing undeniably plays a crucial role. 📞

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Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.




ENERGY EFFICIENCY

TIP OF THE MONTH

Now is the time to schedule annual maintenance for your home's heating system. During fall months, HVAC technicians are typically less busy, making this an excellent time for maintenance and any necessary repairs before the winter months.


A qualified technician can clean filters, check for leaks and ensure all system components are working efficiently to keep your home cozy and warm when the temperatures begin to drop.



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GUEST COLUMN

Continued from page 16A

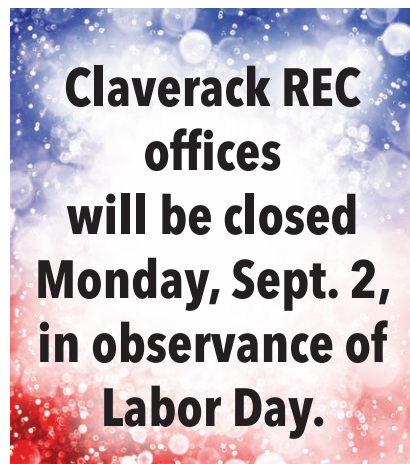
an impact on our local distribution system. We should understand this impact and develop a plan to deal with it.

Finally, we need to consider our rates, which directly affect you. Will widespread EV charging stress the Claverack REC and regional grids and impact electric generation and transmission costs? Will reliability be reduced if many members purchase EVs and charge them during peak times? Should alternative rates be considered to encourage certain behaviors of EV owners?

Purchasing an EV and learning about these issues has helped us become a more knowledgeable resource for you and has helped us better manage your cooperative.

Check out claverack.com/electric-vehicles and claverack.com/heating-options for articles and informational videos. From heating systems and washing machines to electric vehicles and smart meters, being your knowledgeable and trusted source of information is a crucial role, and we're honored to be your trusted energy advisers. 📺

BRIAN ZEIDNER
DIRECTOR OF MEMBER SERVICES



Tree Stand Safety

BRIAN ZEIDNER, DIRECTOR OF MEMBER SERVICES

WHEN ASKED TO WRITE ABOUT tree stands and safety, I initially thought I really don't know much about tree stands. The older I get, the more I like to stay close to the ground. A fall several years ago that resulted in several broken bones confirmed this mindset.

But living in a rural area, working for an electric cooperative, and being an avid sportsman, I realized that sharing some past experiences might be of value.

A few years ago, someone I love dearly was archery hunting from a tree stand about 25 feet off the ground when the platform suddenly broke. The only thing that saved him from serious injury or death was his harness and tree strap.



For many years, part of my job was reading meters and inspecting wires coming into and out of meter bases. As I worked around our rural system, I was surprised to find tree stands installed on power poles.

This is a bad idea for many reasons, the most serious one being safety. Hunters who choose to sit in a metal stand directly under high-voltage wires are putting themselves in an extremely dangerous — and potentially deadly — situation, especially if the wind picks up, there's a broken wire or insulator, or a tree falls into the line.

In addition, attaching stands, straps, steps and hooks to a utility pole is dangerous for the lineworkers who have to climb those poles, often in the dark and in stormy weather.

Any tree stand we discover on a cooperative-owned power pole is considered a hazard, and members are notified immediately that it needs to be removed. Incidentally, the same goes for other equipment, such as satellite dishes, antennas, signs and other items. If items are not removed, the cooperative will remove them and bill the property owner.

Besides staying off power poles when hunting, here are some additional practices to stay safe in your tree stand this fall:

1. Inspect your stands, ladders, gear and the trees themselves before use.
2. Use a lifeline to ascend and descend when accessing your stand.
3. Always wear an appropriate harness and tie-in when reaching your stand.
4. Always have three points of contact when climbing (two hands and one foot, or two feet and one hand).
5. Use a haul line to pull up your equipment after you are safely in your stand.
6. Have an emergency contact plan in case of an emergency.

Here's another interesting note from the *Hunting and Trapping Digest*, published by the Pennsylvania Game Commission: When using a tree stand on land you don't own, it is unlawful to damage trees. Tree stands on commission-managed lands must also have the owner's identification tag legibly displayed.

Whether you choose to stay close to the ground like me or you employ lofty hunting strategies, we wish you a successful, exciting and safe hunting season this fall. 📺



DORM SAFETY: 101

AVOID ELECTRICAL OVERLOAD



It's the time of year when college campuses are preparing for students moving all of their worldly possessions into their home away from home - the dorm!

Safe Electricity urges everyone to make sure their college-bound students take precautions to prevent and protect themselves from campus-related fires and shocks. **Do not overload your electrical outlets, power strips, or extension cords.** Use power strips with an over-current protector that will shut off power automatically if there is too much current being drawn.



Potentially older wiring in student housing and apartments may not be able to handle the increased electrical demand of today's college student. If use of an appliance frequently causes power to trip off or if its power cord or the outlet feels hot, the appliance should be disconnected immediately and the condition reported to a resident assistant or housing manager.



Visit SafeElectricity.org for a complete list of safety steps to prevent and reduce the risk of electrical fires.



Sweet and Savory Bites

ANNE M. KIRCHNER

PHOTOS BY ANNE M. KIRCHNER



AFTER-SCHOOL SNACKS ARE IMPORTANT NO matter how old your children are. Kids need to unwind after a long day of learning, playing and socializing. Create a relaxing space in your kitchen or dining room then sit down with your children as they graze on a homemade snack. A tasty treat will satisfy their appetites and light-hearted conversation will soothe your soul.

Energy balls are super easy to make with no cooking involved. They are also loaded with favorite flavors — peanut butter, cinnamon and chocolate chips. Pigs in a blanket are a traditional appetizer and kids love to eat them anytime. Lemon drop cookies can be made quickly and effortlessly. The soft cookie is full of zesty citrus flavor. 🍋

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

PEANUT BUTTER ENERGY BALLS

- 2 cups quick oats
- ½ cup creamy peanut butter
- ⅓ cup honey
- ¼ teaspoon cinnamon
- 3 tablespoons mini chocolate chips

Mix all ingredients together in a bowl. Freeze the mixture for 5 minutes. Use a cookie scoop to measure equal amounts of dough. Roll the dough into small balls, pressing it together with your hands. Keep refrigerated for up to two weeks. *Makes 24 balls.*



PIGS IN A BLANKET

- 2 (8-ounce) cans refrigerated crescent rolls
- 1 (14-ounce) package cocktail-size smoked sausage links
- 1 egg, lightly beaten
- 1 tablespoon water
- Everything Bagel Seasoning

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Line a cookie sheet with parchment paper and set aside. Unroll the crescent roll dough and separate into triangles. Cut each triangle in half lengthwise. Place a sausage link at the wide end of each triangle and roll up to the opposite point. Place the roll, seam side down, on the cookie sheet. Repeat with the remaining dough and sausage links, leaving a few inches in between each rolled link on the cookie sheet. In a small bowl, beat the egg and water to make an egg wash. Brush the egg wash over the top of the rolls. Sprinkle Everything Bagel Seasoning on top of the rolls and bake for 12 to 15 minutes, or until golden brown. *Makes 8 to 10 servings.*



LEMON DROP COOKIES

- 1 (15.25-ounce) box lemon cake mix
- 2 eggs
- ⅓ cup canola oil

Place all ingredients in a mixing bowl. Using a spoon or hand mixer, combine the ingredients until well blended and a soft dough forms. Use a cookie scoop to drop the dough onto a baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Bake at 350 degrees for 10 to 12 minutes or until the bottom edges of the cookies turn light brown. Cool the cookies on a wire rack, then store in a plastic container with a lid. *Makes 2 dozen cookies.*

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Stiltz is a world leading Homelift manufacturer, so you'll be in good hands. Your elevator will be installed and maintained by Stiltz trained professionals - who truly care about your freedom.

*"I can't imagine what
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— Mr. James, Villanova, PA



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Navigating Supply Chain Challenges

SCOTT FLOOD

FROM GROCERY STORE SHELVES TO repair parts for vehicles, we've all had firsthand experiences with supply chain issues in recent years. So much so that the supply chain has become a convenient scapegoat any time a business falls short of our expectations. But when it comes to your local electric cooperative, supply chain challenges are very real and often troubling.

Parts and components electric co-ops use every day are in short supply, which delays planned upgrades and increases the costs of parts and labor.

Electric cooperatives are working together to find innovative ways to deal with supply chain issues. This year, those efforts resulted in a major win that has co-op leaders breathing more easily.

In 2022, the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) proposed new efficiency

requirements for distribution transformers, a vital piece of equipment that delivers power to every home, school and business in America. The proposal would have required transformer manufacturers to switch from grain-oriented electrical steel (GOES), which has long been used in the production process, to amorphous steel within three years.

The proposal raised red flags, according to Stephanie Crawford, regulatory affairs director for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), your cooperative's advocate in Washington, D.C.

"Amid all the challenges co-ops are already facing," she says, "it presented a big problem to ask the industry to make a 100% switch in just three years when the sole supplier [of amorphous steel] only produces enough for about 5% of today's market."

NRECA, the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association, rural electric

cooperative leaders in Pennsylvania and New Jersey and others in the power industry rallied to educate Congress, the White House and DOE about supply chain challenges and share their concerns about the quick shift to amorphous steel.

One major concern was the loss of local jobs. Butler, Pa., is the site of a plant — one of two in the nation — where GOES is produced. The shift to amorphous steel would have resulted in the loss of 1,300 jobs in rural Pennsylvania alone.

"After more than a year of advocacy efforts, the DOE issued its final rule, which allows continued use of GOES in smaller-sized transformers," Crawford explains. "This provides greater certainty with the transformer sizes cooperatives use the most, particularly in the residential segment."

The DOE rule also includes a longer compliance time frame for switching to amorphous steel.

For the foreseeable future, electric cooperatives will continue to face challenges in securing the supplies and equipment they need. The good news is that most have initiated processes to mitigate and manage those risks so they can continue to meet their members' needs. While the future availability of larger transformers remains a cause for concern, co-ops are pleased to see investments in U.S. manufacturing facilities, and that's a hopeful sign. 📶



SHORT SUPPLIES: Parts and components electric cooperatives use every day are in short supply, which delays planned upgrades for power reliability and increases the costs of parts and labor. Recently, however, cooperatives and their advocates convinced the federal government to reconsider and change a rule that would have further impacted the nation's supply of transformers.

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.

ADVERTISEMENT

Popular CoQ10 Pills Leave Millions Suffering

Could this newly-discovered brain fuel solve America's worsening memory crisis?

PALM BEACH, FLORIDA — Millions of Americans take the supplement known as CoQ10. It's the coenzyme that supercharges the "energy factories" in your cells known as *mitochondria*. But there's a serious flaw that's leaving millions unsatisfied.

As you age, your mitochondria break down and fail to produce energy. In a revealing study, a team of researchers showed that 95 percent of the mitochondria in a 90-year-old man were damaged, compared to almost no damage in the mitochondria of a 5-year-old.

Taking CoQ10 alone is not enough to solve this problem. Because as powerful as CoQ10 is, there's one critical thing it fails to do: it can't create new mitochondria to replace the ones you lost.

And that's bad news for Americans all over the country. The loss of cellular energy is a problem for the memory concerns people face as they get older.

"We had no way of replacing lost mitochondria until a recent discovery changed everything," says Dr. Al Sears, founder and medical director of the Sears Institute for Anti-Aging Medicine in Palm Beach, Florida. "Researchers discovered the only nutrient known to modern science that has the power to trigger the growth of new mitochondria."

Why Taking CoQ10 is Not Enough

Dr. Sears explains, "This new discovery is so powerful, it can multiply your mitochondria by 55 percent in just a few weeks. That's the equivalent of restoring decades of lost brain power."

This exciting nutrient — called PQQ (*pyrroloquinoline quinone*) — is the driving force behind a revolution in aging. When paired with CoQ10, this dynamic duo has the power to reverse the age-related memory losses you may have thought were beyond your control.

Dr. Sears pioneered a new formula — called **Ultra Accel Q** — that combines both CoQ10 and PQQ to support maximum cellular energy and the normal growth of new mitochondria. **Ultra Accel Q** is the first of its kind to address both problems and is already creating huge demand.

In fact, demand has been so overwhelming that inventories repeatedly sell out. But a closer look at **Ultra Accel Q** reveals there are good reasons why sales are booming.

Science Confirms the Many Benefits of PQQ

The medical journal *Biochemical Pharmacology* reports that PQQ is up to 5,000 times more efficient in sustaining energy production than common antioxidants. With the ability to keep every cell in your body operating at full strength, **Ultra Accel Q** delivers more than just added brain power and a faster memory.

People feel more energetic, more alert, and don't need naps in the afternoon. The boost in cellular energy generates more power to your heart, lungs, muscles, and more.

"With the PQQ in Ultra Accel, I have energy I never thought possible at my age," says Colleen R., one of Dr. Sears's patients. "I'm in my 70s but feel 40 again. I think clearly, move with real energy and sleep like a baby."

The response has been overwhelmingly positive, and Dr. Sears receives countless emails from his patients and readers. "My patients tell me they feel better than they have in years. This is ideal for people who are feeling old and run down, or for those who feel more forgetful. It surprises many that you can add healthy and productive years to your life simply by taking **Ultra Accel Q** every day."

You may have seen Dr. Sears on television or read one of his 12 best-selling books. Or you may have seen him speak at the 2016 WPBF 25 Health and Wellness Festival in South Florida, featuring Dr. Oz and special guest Suzanne Somers. Thousands of people attended Dr. Sears's lecture on anti-aging breakthroughs and waited in line for hours during his book signing at the event.

Will Ultra Accel Q Multiply Your Energy?

Ultra Accel Q is turning everything we thought we knew about youthful energy on its head. Especially for people over age 50. In less than 30 seconds every morning, you can harness the power of this breakthrough discovery to restore peak energy and your "spark for life."

So, if you've noticed less energy as you've gotten older, and you want an easy way to reclaim your youthful edge, this new opportunity will feel like blessed relief.

The secret is the "energy multiplying" molecule that activates a dormant gene in your body that declines with age, which then instructs your cells to pump out fresh energy from the inside-out. This



MEMORY-BUILDING SENSATION: Top doctors are now recommending new **Ultra Accel Q** because it restores decades of lost brain power without a doctor's visit.

growth of new "energy factories" in your cells is called mitochondrial biogenesis.

Instead of falling victim to that afternoon slump, you enjoy sharp-as-a-tack focus, memory, and concentration from sunup to sundown. And you get more done in a day than most do in a week. Regardless of how exhausting the world is now.

Dr. Sears reports, "The most rewarding aspect of practicing medicine is watching my patients get the joy back in their lives. **Ultra Accel Q** sends a wake-up call to every cell in their bodies... And they actually feel young again."

And his patients agree. "I noticed a difference within a few days," says Jerry from Ft. Pierce, Florida. "My endurance has almost doubled, and I feel it mentally, too. There's a clarity and sense of well-being in my life that I've never experienced before."

How To Get Ultra Accel Q

This is the official nationwide release of **Ultra Accel Q** in the United States. And so, the company is offering a special discount supply to anyone who calls during the official launch.

An Order Hotline has been set up for local readers to call. This gives everyone an equal chance to try **Ultra Accel Q**. And your order is backed up by a no-hassle, 90-day money back guarantee. No questions asked.

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Important: Due to **Ultra Accel Q** recent media exposure, phone lines are often busy. If you call and do not immediately get through, please be patient and call back.

Dinosaurs, Dogs and Dates with the Spice Girls

MITCHELL KYD

STAYCATION. IT CONJURES UP A swaying hammock where you luxuriate in simple pleasures: nothing planned, naps without alarms and icy drinks by the pitcher. Better yet, there is no whopping bill at the end. But that's not always the case.

When my grown kids and my daughter's young family set off on a 20-hour road trip, the other grandma, Judy, and I were happy we had declined. Instead, we preferred to miss them and anticipate their return after little staycations of our own. Our offer to tend to all their critters in their absence seemed so reasonable at the time.

In addition to our own pets, we took on another three dogs, five turtles, three anoles, and two fish tanks in one household, and a rooster and six baby chicks at the other. For me, that meant at least one daily round trip of 34 miles.

Judy and I made a pact. She would handle all the early-morning feedings and first romps for the dogs, and we'd split the afternoon outings. I would handle every evening's cuddles and last call with the pups. I also took on the care and feeding of all the other residents.

I stopped at my son's house daily to take care of Blossom the Warrior Rooster and the peeps we called the Spice Girls. They were so small at the time that Ginger, Pickle, Pepper, Chili, Nutmeg and Cinnamon Girl needed to be indoors, under the heat lamp. They lived in a chicken condo in his basement.

If you've never raised peeps, you may not know those adorable chicks are best known for two things: incessant peeping at one end and incessant — you know — at the other. Even at that early age, their instincts are to scratch the ground for food and rearrange their bedding in a flurry to prepare for dust bathing. That means that all of that smelly aftermath flies out of the pen and onto the floor.

Chicks grow at an amazing rate, too, and while my son was gone, the Spice Girls lost all their baby charms. They morphed into awkward, gangly teenagers with ostrich legs and ugly pinfeathers sprouting through their formerly downy fluff. The peeping continued, of course, only louder.

The fish tanks at my daughter's home were no problem, nor were the five adopted turtles in their big aquarium, even though they also had a lamp that needed to be turned on and off. Like the dogs, they were always excited to see me and would scramble to make a turtle tower to be the first to poke a head above the water at feeding time. That tribe included Belle, already past her 30th birthday, as well as Turtlelini, Morelli, Squirt and Crush.

The anoles were more high maintenance. They are modern dinosaurs, and lizards Wiz, Liz, and Miz occupy their own terrarium that must be misted with conditioned water every day. They, too, had a daily regimen with a heat lamp. Anoles are bug-eaters, and one of my jobs was to

feed them meal worms with a set of tweezers. Nothing much can faze you when your day includes that duty.

Judy picked up the mail, took trash to the curb, vacuumed and pulled weeds. I cleaned the kitchen and the bathroom at the end of our shift, filled their fridge, and stocked fresh donuts. Judy also took on the job of making sure the back yard stayed kid-friendly. With three dogs zooming around several times a day, performing doody duty was more than a nicety; it was a necessity.

For 12 days, the dogs got extra snuggles with the grandmas (with no annoying toddlers to horn in on the sofa) and treats overflowed. Blossom continued to get his hand-fed desserts outside the back door as I explained he would soon be very interested in the Spice Girls in the basement.

Our mission was completed with great success. Nothing died; nothing escaped. We were critter-sitters beyond compare. Look for us soon on Craigslist: Got-it-DoneGrandmas.com! 🐾



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

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AGING AND ADDICTION

Drug Abuse, Misuse Rising Among Older Adults

PAULA PIATT

Penn Lines Contributor

WHEN THE IDEA OF YOUR “Golden Years” — retirement with a life full of fun, spent volunteering, and enjoying the fruits of your labor — meets with reality — chronic illness and pain, loneliness, and decreased income — the shine can quickly diminish.

Increasingly, seniors are turning to a readily available, easy-to-find “solution” in their medicine cabinet.

Study after study tells the story of the nation’s aging population and its struggles with addiction. A 2018 Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine paper chronicled a steady rise in older adults seeking treatment between

2004 and 2013. Those numbers exploded in the next three years, jumping more than 50%

between 2013 and 2015. And Medicare data suggests

that, since 2013, the estimated rate of opioid use disorder in older adults — the result of chronic use — has increased by more than 300% overall in the U.S.

The last set of data avail-

able from the National Institute on Drug Abuse says that in 2018, nearly 1 million people over the age of 65 lived with a substance abuse disorder. In the dozen years between 2000 and 2012, the number of older adults admitted to treatment facilities has doubled. And this was all before COVID-19 and the struggles the pandemic brought.

That’s because the triggers have always been there, addiction and recovery counselors say.

“As counselors, we look at something called ‘social determinants of health’: Fifty percent of a person’s health is the healthcare they receive. The other 50% is all the other things happening in their lives,” says Angela Morton, the director at Recovery Is NWPA, a consortium of agencies in Erie, Crawford, Clarion and Venango counties that provides support and resources to families impacted by substance abuse. It’s a rural corner of Pennsylvania served by a handful of electric cooperatives.

“It’s a much different picture in someone who’s 70 and widowed and living alone,” Morton adds. “They are alone and very isolated, maybe depressed ... even possibly having thoughts of suicide. If you don’t have some kind of sense of purpose or a sense of belonging in the world, you can fall risk to the isolation that can lead to misusing medications, prescriptions, illicit drugs or alcohol just to self-medicate.”

Continued on page 26





Continued from page 24

And many seniors have the drugs on hand — prescribed for chronic pain or an illness they've been battling.

Easing the pain

Dr. Jill Miller, who is certified in addiction medicine, sees patients at the Meadville Medical Center's family practice office as well as at the Saegertown Recovery Clinic, both located in territory covered by Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative (REC).

"It's easy for a patient to use more than prescribed when they're in pain, especially if they can't remember whether or not they took the medication," she says of her patients, who then can slip to the next level. "As access to opioids diminishes, more and more older adults switch to illicit pain-control drugs, such as heroin and fentanyl.

"We also have had older patients come in using fentanyl/opioids from the streets after their children encouraged them to try it for pain."

And in a cruel irony, the very symptoms they are trying to self-medicate can be aggravated by drug use, creating a spiral that's hard to break. Older adults metabolize drugs and alcohol in different ways, and that can add to the issues they are already trying to deal with.

"Often, coordination and judgment are impaired," Miller

says. "We see many of our older patients presenting after multiple falls. Frequently, they are covered in bruises, have fractured ribs, concussions and open wounds. Many times, they don't even remember where they fell or how they injured themselves."

Treatment for older adults, at least when it comes to medicine, can also differ. Buprenorphine, methadone and naltrexone are routinely prescribed to treat addiction, chosen based on the patient's age and their health. When working with older patients, Miller says, physicians will often prescribe medication that leaves the system quicker to reduce the risk of overdose and impairment.

As always, knowing when you need help is the first step in getting it. Angela Morton of Recovery Is NWPA says if your relationships, finances, work or social activities are being impacted, it's time to look for help. Caregivers should also be looking for these signs.

Older adults struggling with drug — and more commonly, alcohol — misuse are a "quiet population," says Christy Steidle, a prevention specialist at Mainstream Counseling in Huntingdon, a region served by Valley REC.

"The abuse that we see with things like opioids or other medications in the older population tends to be accidental," she says. "People forget that they took their medication, and so then they're taking another dose."

So even just having the drugs in the house can be a danger. Morton says medication management in the home is critical: Take the medication as prescribed by your doctor, don't share medications or take something prescribed to someone else and, if you don't finish a prescription, dispose of it properly.

Finding the help you need

Each county in Pennsylvania has a Single County Authority, a local clearinghouse for drug and alcohol help and information. Visit the Department of Drug and Alcohol Program's website, ddap.pa.gov, and look for "County Drug and Alcohol Offices" under the "Get Help Now" tab. In addition to information on where to find help, many county offices can provide an at-home opioid drug disposal kit as well as naloxone (commonly known as Narcan), a medicine that rapidly reverses an opioid overdose.

For Morton, facing the crisis head-on starts with eliminating the stigma surrounding drug use and misuse.

"It might be an embarrassing thing for a 70-year-old; the stigma might even be bigger [in this age group]. If we're afraid to talk about it, it's hard to get help," she says. "We need to shift our language, treatment and understanding of substance use to include compassion, so that anybody who does need help is able to come forward." 🗣️

HELP FOR ADDICTION

If you or someone you love is struggling with addiction, here are some useful resources:

- ▶ **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) National Helpline:** Call or text 988, telephone 800-662-HELP (4357) or chat online, 988lifeline.org. The organization's website, samhsa.gov/find-help, also has a range of valuable information for those needing support and their families.
- ▶ **FindTreatment.gov:** An offshoot of SAMHSA, this is a confidential, anonymous resource for those seeking treatment for mental and substance use disorders.
- ▶ **Pennsylvania Department of Drug and Alcohol Program:** Go to ddap.pa.gov for information about state and county programs and providers.



At Home in the Wilderness

STEVE PIATT

BEFORE PAULA AND I BECAME

seasoned wilderness travelers, we stumbled and bumbled our way into and — thankfully and sometimes miraculously — out of the bush.

I suppose there's a learning curve to it like anything else, but plunging into the wilderness — serious wilderness, the kind where help arrives via float plane or helicopter — without a certain level of knowledge and ability can be, at best, embarrassing, and at worst, life-threatening.

Over the years we've managed to keep the embarrassment strictly between us. Our backcountry miscues have never made the front page of the local paper or required any assistance from forest rangers or medical personnel.

However, we've experienced, in no particular order, sunburns; near hypothermia (I shunned donning my rain gear during what I thought would be a quick summer shower); brief moments of confusion about our exact location (some folks would call it lost); a canoe that nearly drifted away from our island campsite (always tie it off); and a half-hour extrication from a spruce bog when my right snowshoe plunged through the ice as we tracked moose in Canada's Algonquin Provincial Park. The assorted nicks and cuts from falls and fish hooks aren't even worth mentioning.

The wilderness forced us to become fast learners, and we've gotten schooled on trips to the St. Regis Canoe Area in New York's Adirondacks; several paddle-and-portage excursions in Algonquin Park; and canoe and even dogsled



LIVING AND LEARNING: It takes a lot of trial and error to feel truly at home in the wilderness — and to enjoy serene, isolated moments like this.

trips from Minnesota's Boundary Waters Canoe Area into Ontario's Quetico Provincial Park (we cleared customs at the U.S.-Canada border via both canoe and dogsled).

Along the way, we learned those nighttime visitors to our campsite weren't marauding black bears but, invariably, pesky raccoons — but we still dutifully hung our food pack high out on tree branches. We learned that, on the bigger waters, it was best to get an early start before the wind picked up. We learned to pack light, and that the person who invented Kevlar — that lightweight material that allowed me to shoulder our canoe with relative ease as we carried it between lakes — should have won a Nobel Prize.

We eventually became at home in the wilderness, totally comfortable out there, treating the wild with respect but not fear. Our encounters with moose, wolves, otters, bald eagles, ermine and, yes, bears, were something to savor and place in our memory bank, not anything that kept us awake at night. The loons and owls, thankfully, did that.

Our decision-making, obviously, focused on the route we'd take as we plunged into the wilderness, but once out there, we had other choices to make. Do we take that island campsite, one that tips the odds in favor of avoiding a bear visit, or do we opt for that flat shoreline site that guarantees a spectacular view of the sunset? Do we continue to fish for smallmouth bass that are in a feeding frenzy, or do we reel up and try to call in the bull moose we heard grunting deep into the bush? Do we break camp daily or do we go hard and deep on Day One and establish a base camp?

So at home in the wilderness, even after a 10-day trip, we would head back into civilization with a bit of sadness — except for the prospect of a pizza and huge glasses of milk, as well as reuniting with whatever Labrador retrievers were in our lives at the time.

And, truth be told, I only ever forgot the tent once. 🐾

STEVE PIATT is a veteran newspaper editor and outdoor writer who along with his wife, Paula, has hunted and fished across North America. He is most at home on the water and in the fields of the Keystone State. He lives in Bradford County.

ISSUE MONTH AD DEADLINE

November 2024	September 16
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Please note ads must be received by the due date to be included in requested issue month; ads received after the due date will run in next issue. Written notice of changes/cancellations must be received 30 days prior to issue month.

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Source: NFPA's Electrical Fires Report, 2022

Pick a Card – Any Card

JOHN KASUN

MY WIFE AND I WERE running errands recently. When I say “my wife and I,” I actually mean my wife was shopping and I was tagging along. My wife says shopping with me is like taking a 5-year-old to the amusement park. She claims I am always wandering off or talking to strangers. She automatically wonders what I did when an announcement comes over the loudspeaker, “Clean up on aisle five.”

I had promised to behave this day as I followed behind and stuck close when she stopped suddenly at the greeting card section. Looking over the cards, she said (more to herself than me), “Linda and Lester’s anniversary is coming up; I will need a graduation card for Kara, and I should keep one or two sympathy cards on hand as well.”

Being a well-trained husband, I know the best thing for me to do at times like this is to be quiet and try to find the funny card section until this is over. My wife and I have different opinions on what makes the best card for any occasion. My wife looks for the perfect card, while I tend to pick one that is funny or can be altered to be funny to fit the occasion.

One card immediately caught my attention. I could not believe my luck: It was perfect, simple and direct. On the outside it said, “Happy 90th Birthday,” and inside simply stated, “Happy Birthday.”

My hand shook slightly with excitement as I pulled it from the rack and noted it was the only card like it on display. Smiling like I had just swallowed a banana sideways, I offered it to my wife for her consideration. Glancing at it, her face slowly twisted into a frown.

“Who is this for?”

“It is for our neighbor, Joe,” I responded. “His birthday is later this week.”

“Did you look at this card? It’s nice, but it is too simple, only saying ‘Happy Birthday,’ not to mention the fact it says ‘Happy 90th Birthday.’ Joe is only going to be 60,” she said.

“Do you think you might have missed something in your selection?”

“It might seem like that to the untrained eye,” I replied, “but there are several things you are missing. First: Joe is not expecting a card at all, so simply getting him one will be greatly appreciated. Second: After I gave him such a nice card, he would feel awkward asking me to return the tools I recently borrowed; that will give me a little more time to finish the job I was working on. So, you see, it is a win-win situation.”

“I think you forgot one small detail,” she replied. “The card is for a 90-year-old. How are you going to explain that?”

“Ah, that’s the best part,” I said with a laugh. “First of

all, consider the short greeting inside. Any 90-year-old has better things to do with his time than read a bunch of mush in a card that he probably can barely see. The card is on sale for only a buck, probably because they do not sell many 90-year-old birthday cards. Joe is like me: He likes to save money, so I am going to leave the price tag on. He will get a kick out of that, and because he loves getting a good deal, he will appreciate

it even more. The best part is I plan to put a note inside that says I will actually be 115 years old on his 90th birthday and will probably not even be alive and, consequently, unable to attend the festivities. In essence, I am simply getting him a birthday card ahead of time, which is really thoughtful. I think I have all the bases covered.”

Turning back toward the card rack and shaking her head she whispered, “Sometimes I just don’t understand you, but I must admit, you never cease to amaze me. Check and see if you can find a card for that.”

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.



Shake It Off

Anyone who's lived in Pennsylvania for more than a season knows the temperatures don't always shift neatly with the calendar (and boy, were those temperatures rough this summer). Sometimes you've just got to shake off whatever's ailing you and drive forward. After all, a bit of sweat shouldn't keep you from making just one more good memory.

Please send us your good memories — in photo format — for 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. 📷

STEPHANIE RAMSDORFER • NEW ENTERPRISE REC



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.



DEBI ACKER • SULLIVAN COUNTY REC



FAY SERBIAN • REA ENERGY



JEAN THOMPSON • VALLEY REC

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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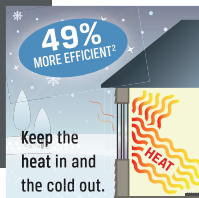
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*Using U.S. and imported parts.