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PENN LINES

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4 **FIRST WORD** Electricity, Excitement and Everlasting Leadership Lessons

Cooperative teen reflects on
Youth Tour's many benefits

6 **KEEPING CURRENT** Ban Lifted, Stay Alert, Three Times as Nice, and More

8 **FEATURE** Creature Comforts

Readers' pets are living the 'pawsh' life

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 **ENERGY MATTERS** Nuclear Energy's Role in Grid Stability Grows Stronger Government asking for fourfold increase in nuclear generation by 2050

20 **FEATURE** Youth Tour 2025 A trip to remember

22 **SMART CIRCUITS** Cool Savings: Refrigerator and Freezer Efficiency Tips

And, yes, closing the refrigerator
door is one of them

24 **RURAL ROOTS** Love, Grace Guide Growth in Parenting

Mistakes are natural – so is
learning from them

26 **COOPERATIVE KITCHEN** Add Melons to Any Meal Their versatility will surprise you

27 **POWER PLANTS** Grow Your Own Bouquets Turn your yard into a money-saving paradise

28 **CLASSIFIEDS**

30 **PUNCH LINES** Junk, Stuff and Other Treasures Maybe it's time to let go?

31 **RURAL REFLECTIONS** Rise to the Occasion Capture the joys of summer before it's too late

This year's Youth Tour
students observe a
long-standing tradition
and pose for the annual
PA-NJ photo on the
steps of the Jefferson
Memorial.



ON THE COVER

Patricia Roberts, a
member of Adams Electric
Cooperative, shows some
love for her pampered
pooch, Mr. Nacho. The
Chiweenie went from being
a rescue to a fashionista who
lets everyone know who's in
charge.

PHOTO BY KAYLIN ACRI

Electricity, Excitement and Everlasting Leadership Lessons



BRANDON HURLEY

IT HAS BEEN A JOY of mine over the past year to serve and represent cooperatives across Pennsylvania on the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's (NRECA) Youth Leadership Council (YLC). I think the best way to encapsulate what this program has done for me is to reflect — reflect on the lessons learned, the people I met and the leadership skills I acquired from an amazing group of mentors.

When asked about these experiences, I like to start with the whole reason for my participation in Youth Tour, which eventually led me to the YLC.

Living in a small town, I have the blessing and curse of being around the same people all the time. While it has its upsides, I often found myself wishing I could branch out and broaden my horizons.

When I heard Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) was offering a trip — Youth Tour — to Washington, D.C., you can imagine how excited I was. That led to an application, which led to an interview, which landed me a spot on a motorcoach to D.C. in June 2024. And how fortunate I was; I could have never imagined where this experience would lead me. (*See photos from this year's Youth Tour on page 20.*)

The people I've met have become my closest friends, and I still look back on the memories from time to time. Youth Tour really does stick with you, in the best way imaginable. And while I was making memories, meeting people and trading pins, I was also elected by my peers to serve on the prestigious YLC.

And that was just the beginning. Over the next few months, I met with all the other state YLC representatives on monthly video calls, where we learned more about cooperatives and how to improve as leaders in our communities.

Last October, I had the privilege of addressing cooperative leaders at the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association's (PREA) Annual Meeting with a speech titled, "5 More Minutes." I talked about the trials and joys of life, and how we should embrace what we have. Speaking from experience, sometimes those 5 minutes are all we have.

In November, I helped my cooperative, Somerset REC, document numerous substations thanks to my newly acquired unmanned aerial vehicle license. To finish the year, I addressed the cooperative's board of directors. I concluded my YLC duties this past March at NRECA's PowerXchange in Atlanta, Ga.

From the moment I stepped on that bus in Breezewood to where I am now, I have grown immensely in my personal and professional lives. I've learned how to be a confident leader, a passionate and purposeful public speaker, and an honorable representative of my peers — and all of this has influenced every aspect of my life.

I joke about it, but it's amazing to look back and see how far a high school junior — who truly had no clue what an electric cooperative was — has come. Cooperatives fuel our communities, and knowing what I know now, I am eternally grateful for what they provided me. Cooperatives allow amazing programs like Youth Tour to thrive, and it has shaped me into who I am today.

Once again, thank you, Somerset REC, PREA and NRECA, for all the opportunities I was blessed with. What once was a dream is now my reality. To everyone who supported me, thank you, especially to my mom and dad. My service to and support of cooperatives did not end with my YLC tenure. In fact, they're only just beginning. 🇺🇸

BRANDON HURLEY

2024 YOUTH TOUR STUDENT
2024-2025 PENNSYLVANIA YOUTH LEADERSHIP COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE
SOMERSET RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

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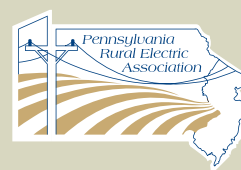
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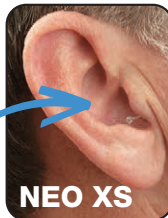


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THE HUNGRY THING

When the kids were little, one of our favorite books to read together was "The Hungry Thing." It told the story of a strange and scaly beast that came to town asking to be fed. The thing was, he mispronounced the foods he wanted, so the townspeople would have to guess what he meant.

When he asked for "shman-cakes," the town Wiseman thought he knew the answer: "Shmancakes, that's plain, are a small kind of chicken that falls with the rain." Of course, it was a clever boy who figured out the Hungry Thing just wanted pancakes.

We enjoyed guessing the foods he wanted. "Boop with a smacker," the kids knew, was soup with a cracker. And so it went.

Today, we're seeing new hungry things creeping into the Commonwealth. They're coming in the form of large-scale data centers, the giant engine rooms powering the rise of artificial intelligence (AI). AI-driven systems already shape much of our daily tech experience, from movie recommendations to online shopping, and their computing power is housed inside these massive data centers.

What makes them true "hungry things" is how much electricity they consume. AI-enhanced internet searches now use 10 times more energy than Google searches from just a few years ago. These systems devour data – and demand ever-increasing amounts of power to run. In fact, the International Energy Agency predicts that by 2026, global data center energy use will match the energy consumption of Japan, a nation of 125 million people.

Closer to home, these energy-hogging beasts are getting some serious attention. President Donald Trump was in Pittsburgh last month for the inaugural Pennsylvania Energy and Innovation Summit, which was hosted by U.S. Sen. Dave McCormick (R-Pa.). They announced more than \$90 billion in investments from private companies in Pennsylvania – funding expected to support AI infrastructure, new data centers, and the electric generation they require. Representatives from Pennsylvania's electric cooperatives were also on hand for the event.

While the high-level event speaks to the rapid growth in AI-driven data centers, it's also a reflection of our demand for the technology they support. At home and at work, data centers power all the streaming, scrolling, and connecting we do online. These facilities are expanding to keep up with our ever-growing appetite for information. In many ways, we are the Hungry Thing. Feed us.

PETER A. FITZGERALD
EDITOR



MAKING HUNTING HISTORY: Earlier this summer, lawmakers passed a bill that allows Sunday hunting. The measure overturns a law that has been in place for more than 150 years.

BAN LIFTED New bill allows hunting on Sundays

After more than 100 years of not legally being able to hunt on Sundays in Pennsylvania, hunters will now be able to do just that after a House bill was signed into law earlier this summer.

The bill, introduced by Rep. Mandy Steele (D-Allegheny), repeals the statewide ban. The Board of Game Commissioners will now determine when Sunday hunting will be implemented.

While the Game Commission has signaled it wants to move forward with the process as soon as this year, it's currently unclear when those dates will be announced.

Pennsylvania has about 850,000 licensed hunters, which is the second most in the nation behind Texas.

STAY ALERT PennDOT warns public about REAL ID text message scam

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) recently alerted the public about a new texting scam involving REAL ID. Officials say fraudulent text messages are being

sent to customers claiming to be from the Department of Motor Vehicles or the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. They're asking people to click on a link and provide personal and payment information.

PennDOT officials report they do not have a process that enables customers to pre-scan and upload REAL ID documents from a home or mobile device. Also, they say, PennDOT will never ask for or accept any identity documents over the internet, via text message or email for any reason.

Bottom line: Customers should not respond to these requests.

THREE TIMES AS NICE Delaware River named Pa.'s 2025 River of the Year

The Delaware River has played a pivotal role in American history, from George Washington's famous crossing during the Revolutionary War to powering the Industrial Revolution. This year, fans of the river are celebrating its recent designation as the 2025 Pennsylvania River of the Year.

Once one of the most polluted

rivers in the nation, the Delaware River has undergone a dramatic recovery. It now boasts more national wild and scenic designations than any other river in the United States. It also supplies drinking water to more than 14 million people.

This is the third time the Delaware River has received this honor, following wins in 2002 and 2011. The designation is based on public voting. This year's contest registered 8,037 total votes, with the Delaware River earning 2,962. The Youghiogheny River and Perkiomen Creek followed with 2,784 and 2,291 votes, respectively.

WALKING THROUGH FIRE

Firefighters undergo wildfire suppression training

Nearly 500 wildland firefighters from 11 states, including Pennsylvania, recently underwent intensive wildfire suppression training through the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) at Shippensburg University. The training is hosted annually by the state Bureau of Forestry.

Pennsylvania has a long history of answering the call to fight wildfires. In 2024, nearly 200 Pennsylvania wildland firefighters deployed to support out-of-state firefighting operations, often as part of 20-person interagency crews.

In January, 40 Pennsylvania firefighters were deployed to California to battle devastating wildfires near Los Angeles. In May, hundreds of firefighters, first responders and local officials worked tirelessly to contain wildfires closer to home in Michaux State Forest.

Since the Commonwealth's wildfire suppression training program began in 1973, DCNR has sent crews to wildfire and hurricane incidents in every region of the country — from Alaska to Hawaii and the western United States. 🌲



TIME LINES



AUGUST 2015

Ten years ago, *Penn Lines* looked at the intersection between wildlife and art by spotlighting photographers, graphic designers, and even a gourd-crafter. The article highlighted a cooperative member who had a passion for macro photography and another who became the owner of the largest gourd-crafting business in the United States. These success stories proved that Pennsylvania is home not only to beautiful wildlife, but also to the beautiful art that it inspires.

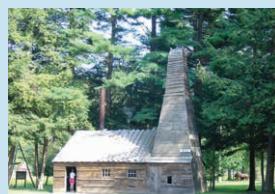


FAIR FUN

For the 59th year, the Tioga County Fair in Wellsboro will take place from Aug. 4 to 9. This year's events include the Bullride Mania Rodeo, truck and tractor pulls, a demolition derby, East Coast Pro Wrestling and a concert headlined by Isaac Cole. Adult admission is \$8, while kids under 36 inches are free. Learn more at tiogacountyfair.com.

DRAKE DAY

It was Aug. 27, 1859, when Edwin L. Drake first struck oil in Titusville, Crawford County. More than 160 years later, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Aug. 10, you can enjoy Drake Day at the Drake Well Museum and Park. Living history presentations are planned. For more information, visit drakewell.org.



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WOMEN WELLNESS

Workshops, vendors, massages and tarot readings will be offered at the Wild Women NEPA Festival Aug. 23 in Tunkhannock, Wyoming County. This year, the event will celebrate the energy of the New Moon. Held at Lazybrook Park from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., admission is \$40. Learn more at wildwomennepa.com.

BRATWURST AND BEER

Say goodbye to August by saying hello to the Erie German Heritage Festival. Beginning at 11 a.m. Aug. 30 at St. Nick's Grove in Erie, the event will offer German food, dancing, vendors, and, naturally, beer. Admission is \$5 per person, or \$8 for a two-day pass, while children under 12 enter for free. For more information, visit dank-erie.org.



DANK-ERIE.ORG

Creature Comforts

Readers' Pets are Living the 'Pawsh' Life

MICHAEL T. CRAWFORD

CHARLES M. SCHULZ, THE CREATOR of the "Peanuts" comic strip, famously said, "Happiness is a warm puppy." Turns out, birds, cats, lizards — you name it — can bring their owners a lot of joy, too. And where there's love, there's lots of pampering: special toys and treats ... one — or several — favorite beds ... calming music ... and even custom accessories.

At *Penn Lines*, we adore our animals, so we hatched an idea: Let's feature our readers' pampered pets. The

response from all of you was overwhelming; we were flooded with photos and stories that were both funny and touching. We wish we could have featured them all, but sadly we ran out of space in the magazine long before we ran out of options.

After hearing our readers' tales (or should we say, tails?), it's no wonder the pets on the following pages live such magnificent lives because, honestly, how could anyone say "no" to these faces? Enjoy.



MR. NACHO

'Small but mighty'

You may have heard of the Beverly Hills Chihuahua, but have you heard of the Gettysburg Chiweenie? Meet Mr. Nacho, a 9-year-old cross between a Chihuahua and dachshund (sometimes referred to as a Choxie) and resident fashionista.

"He struts along like he's in charge," says Patricia Roberts, Mr. Nacho's owner and a member of Gettysburg-based Adams Electric Cooperative. "Any truck, car, person or dog that walks by, he definitely makes himself known. As little as he is — he's less than 10 pounds — he's small but mighty. ... No one is going to get the best of him."

From hand-stitched outfits and themed bandanas — one reads "I'm the boss" — to personalized, matching blankets and toys, Mr. Nacho never lacks for style. Rescued from a local shelter, Mr. Nacho now enjoys regular spa treatments, which include a bath, an oatmeal facial, ear cleanse and nail trim. Afterward, he fills his belly with delicious human-quality meals and treats before belly rubs and a nap on the couch.

"He has all sorts of toys, but he loves his Lamb Chop," Roberts says, referring to the sock puppet voiced by comedian Shari Lewis. "I've bought so many Lamb Chops from the grocery store for him!"

HUMMY



From the streets to the good life

Some pets are born with silver bowls at their feet. Some go from rags and work their way up. In 2013, Katrina Kalicky, a member of Cambridge Springs-based Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative, took pity on a cat roaming the streets of Columbus, Ohio.

Catapulted into a life of luxury, the orphaned cat was given a new name: Hummy — short for Humbucker, which is a device used to cancel out noisy interference on guitars. Instead of hiding under dumpsters, Hummy now has his pick of five different beds and two cardboard boxes for his lounging pleasure. He even has his own blankets for kneading. But, even for cats, there's more to life than snoozing.

Hummy likes to be a part of the family and has his own chair at the table.

"He's one of those cats who has a lot to say," Kalicky says. "He'll ask for food ... but he'll also ask a lot to play. He even has a different meow for cuddles. ... He will play and play until he is out of breath."

Hummy's life of luxury hasn't dulled his instincts. In addition to an array of toys, he enjoys puzzles that hold treats inside. It helps keep his wits about him for the summer months when he brings back "gifts," found while hunting, as a "thank you" for his pampered life.

PONCHO



In a league of his own

We typically speak of pets as our “furry” or “four-legged” friends. As a sun conure — a vibrantly colored parrot native to South America — Poncho fits neither description, but he certainly enjoys plush living and easily qualifies as a pampered pet.

“He’s so funny,” says his owner, Sue Heyler, a member of Mansfield-based Tri-County Rural Electric Cooperative, “[and] he knows what ‘funny’ means! If you say the word ‘funny,’ he starts to laugh!”

Poncho spends most of his time riding on his doting mom’s shoulder or playing in his condo of empty cereal boxes, which he chews into confetti.

“He doesn’t like anybody else. He just wants to be on my shoulder and rubbing up against my chin,” Heyler says. “My husband, John, comes over behind me and puts his arm around me, and Poncho goes ... up onto John’s shoulder, all the way across his back, back down onto my other shoulder and looks John in the face. He is jealous and protective of me.”

Poncho thinks of himself as a tiny, winged person, she says, and prefers the food on her plate (though he will turn up his beak at cooked vegetables). His favorite dishes are mac and cheese, meatloaf, dinner rolls, shrimp, and baby-back ribs.

For a bedtime snack, Poncho enjoys cashews, bananas with peanut butter or cookies with milk. Heyler says he’s become adept at eating while standing on one foot, using his opposite foot to hold his food.

PIPER



A man's best friend

What could be more classic than a farmer and his faithful hound?

Piper, an 8-year-old border collie — referred to as “the Ranch Panda” by her owner Scott Lobaugh, a member of DuBois-based United Electric Cooperative — works hard herding all living things in her home state of Montana and is handsomely compensated for her troubles.

“[Scott] got Piper back when he was going to college ... and she has been by his side 24/7/365 since,” explains Doug Lobaugh, Scott’s father, who refers to Piper as his grand puppy. “In the service bay where he worked on tractors, he completely wired in his work bench so that Piper had a kennel underneath ... and he could have his dog at work every day.”

When she’s working, Piper wears an iconic Stormy Kromer hat for warmth and, if the wind is particularly cold, reflective goggles. Each day begins and ends with a hearty, home-cooked meal, and no matter where Scott’s headed, Piper is along for the ride, having traveled across the country from Montana to the family’s cooperative-serviced cabin in Leeper, Pa., at least seven times.

“She’s a well-traveled dog,” Doug proclaims. “She’s been in 17 states, maybe more.”

Born to slay

Jupiter may not be able to fly or breathe fire, but this 3-year-old bearded dragon manages to warm hearts nonetheless. Despite his scales and spikes, Jupiter is keen to snuggle with his owner Megan Jordan, a member of Huntingdon-based Valley Rural Electric Cooperative who has raised him since he was a 3-month-old hatchling.

After Jupiter has his breakfast, he surveys his kingdom with a quick patrol of the house before rushing back to Jordan for his morning cuddles and TV. Though diminutive, Jupiter lives large, dwelling in a custom-built condo, which includes a blanket and a plush, lizard-patterned bed.

"It takes up an entire room," Jordan says of the structure. "It's heated, so it's usually right around 100 degrees. He likes it hot."

Jupiter has a fetching collection of outfits for any occasion, ranging from biker leather for those rough and tumble outings to simple but elegant bow ties for more sophisticated affairs. He has a variety of harnesses with different colored wings for his daily strolls, and he even has a floral-patterned shirt, cut from a Ken doll and tailored to fit him.

Like any true dragon, Jupiter bristles at anyone who doesn't recognize his magnificence.

"He loves when people fuss over him," Jordan says. "If we go anywhere, and people don't notice him or don't come over and say, 'He's so cute,' or stuff like that, he will get upset and look at me with little sad eyes."

"Jupiter may not be furry," she says, "but he is proof amazing things come in tiny, scaly packages."



JUPITER

U.S. zip codes turn up silver for residents

Sealed Vault Bags full of State Silver Bars are actually being handed over to the first U.S. residents who find their zip code listed in today's publication and call before the 21 day order deadline ends to claim the bags full of pure silver

NATIONWIDE - Operators at the National Silver Hotline are struggling to keep up with all the calls.

That's because Silver Vault Bags loaded with pure .999 State Silver Bars are now being handed over to everyone who beats the order deadline.

"That's why U.S. residents will be hoarding all the silver bars they can get their hands on before the deadline ends. This comes as no surprise after the standard State Minimum set by the Lincoln Treasury was dropped for everyone who gets the Silver Vault Bags making them a real steal," said Mary Ellen Withrow, the Fmr. 40th Treasurer of the United States of America, Emeritus.

"As executive advisor to the private Lincoln Treasury, I get paid to deliver breaking news. And here's the best part. This is great news for U.S. residents because the reduced State Minimum set by the Lincoln Treasury is a real steal," said Withrow.

The only thing residents need to do is find the first 2 digits of their zip code on the Distribution List printed in today's publication. If their zip code is on the list, they just need to call the National Silver Hotline before the deadline ends.

And here's the good news. Residents who do are getting the reduced State Minimum set by the Lincoln Treasury of just \$390 for each State Silver Vault Bag which is just \$39 for each pristine Silver half ounce bar as long as they call the National Silver Hotline at 1-888-415-6109 before the deadline ends.

Phone lines open at precisely 8:30 A.M. this morning and are expected to be flooded by U.S. residents looking to cash in on the reduced State Minimum set by

(Continued on next page)



■ **U.S. RESIDENTS CASH IN:** Calls are pouring in from state residents who are trying to get their hands on the Jumbo Silver Ballistic Bags pictured above before the deadline ends. That's because residents who find the first two digits of their zip code printed in today's publication are cashing in on the reduced State Minimum price set for the next 21 days by the Lincoln Treasury.

► **Who gets the Silver Vault Bags:** Listed below are the zip codes that get to claim the Silver Vault Bags. If you find the first two digits of your zip code below immediately call: **1-888-415-6109 DEPT. SMB201**

Alabama 35, 36	Florida 32, 33, 34	Kentucky 40, 41, 42	Missouri 63, 64, 65	North Carolina 27, 28	South Carolina 29	West Virginia 24, 25, 26
Alaska 99	Georgia 30, 31, 39	Louisiana 70, 71	Montana 59	North Dakota 58	South Dakota 57	Wyoming 82, 83
Arizona 85, 86	Hawaii 96	Maine 03, 04	Nebraska 68, 69	Ohio 41, 43	Tennessee 37, 38	
Arkansas 71, 72	Idaho 83	Maryland 20, 21	Nevada 88, 89	Oklahoma 73, 74	Texas 75, 76, 77	
California 91	Illinois 60, 61	Massachusetts 01, 02, 05	New Hampshire 03	Oregon 97	Utah 78, 79, 88	
Colorado 80, 81	Indiana 46, 47	Michigan 48, 49	New Jersey 07, 08	Pennsylvania 15, 16, 17	Vermont 05	
Connecticut 06	Iowa 50, 51, 52	Minnesota 55, 56	New Mexico 87, 88	Rhode Island 02	Virginia 20, 22, 23, 24	
Delaware 19	Kansas 66, 67	Mississippi 38, 39	New York 00, 10, 11, 12		Washington 98, 99	

(Continued from previous page)

the Lincoln Treasury to date. That's why U.S. residents who find their zip code on the distribution list today are being urged to call.

Since this special advertising announcement can't stop anyone from buying up all the new 2025 Edition U.S. State Silver Bars they can get their hands on, the Lincoln Treasury has not set a limit of how many Jumbo Silver Ballistic Bags residents can get – these are the bags pictured that contain 10 individual Silver Vault Bags each. Everyone who gets these will be glad they did.

"Residents who want to cash in on the reduced State Minimum set by the private Lincoln Treasury better hurry. That's because after the deadline ends, the State Minimum for these pristine half ounce U.S. State Silver Bars set by the Lincoln Treasury will go up to \$68 per bar no matter how many bars people get," Withrow said.

"We're bracing for all the calls and doing the best we can, but with just hours left before the deadline ends, residents who find the first 2 digits of their zip code listed in today's publication need to call the National Silver Hotline," Withrow said.



■ SILVER IS SOARING:

It's good news for state residents who get the Silver Vault Bags each loaded with 10 solid .999 pure Silver State Bars. That's because residents are getting the State Minimum set by the private Lincoln Treasury as long as they call before the deadline ends.

READ THIS IMPORTANT INFORMATION: If you find your zip code on the distribution list printed in today's publication read below then immediately call: **1-888-415-6109 DEPT. SMB201**

► **I keep calling and can't get through:** Keep trying. Right now everyone's looking to cash in on the reduced State Minimum set by the Lincoln Treasury. In fact, we won't be surprised if thousands of residents order up as many Silver Vault Bags as they can get their hands on before the deadline ends. That's because the State Minimum set by the Lincoln Treasury has been reduced to just \$39 for each silver half ounce bar for everyone who gets the vault bags. And since each Silver Vault Bag contains 10 pristine State Silver Bars for just \$390 we're guessing state residents will be claiming two or more bags while they're up for grabs. But all those who really want to cash in are taking the Jumbo Silver Ballistic Bags containing 100 State Silver Bars before the deadline ends and the State Minimum set by the Lincoln Treasury goes up to \$680 per Vault Bag. In fact the State Minimum set by the Lincoln Treasury is reduced even further for those getting the Jumbo Bags so just be sure to ask the National Silver Hotline operator for your discount. So if lines are busy keep trying.

► **How much are the Silver Vault Bags worth:** It's hard to tell how much these Silver Vault Bags could be worth since they are in pristine condition, but those who get in on this now will be glad they did. That's because the State Minimum set by the Lincoln Treasury goes up to \$680 per bag after the deadline ends. So you better believe that at just \$390 the Silver Vault bags are a real steal for everyone who beats the deadline.

► **Can I buy one State Silver Bar:** Yes. But, the reduced State Minimum set by the Lincoln Treasury of just \$39 per bar applies only to residents who purchase a Silver Vault Bag(s). That means only those residents who order a Silver Vault Bag(s) or a Jumbo Silver Ballistic Bag get the reduced State Minimum set by the Lincoln Treasury. All single bar purchases, orders placed after the deadline and all non-state residents must pay the normal state minimum of \$68 per silver half ounce bar.

► **Why is the State Minimum set by the Lincoln Treasury so low now:** Thousands of U.S. residents stand to miss the deadline to get the silver at the reduced State Minimum set by the private Lincoln Treasury. Now all residents who find their zip code on the Distribution List to the left are getting the Silver Vault Bags for themselves and all the solid .999 pure State Silver Bars found inside. The price for each Silver Vault Bag after the deadline ends is set to the normal state minimum of \$680 which is \$68 per bar. But residents who beat the 21-day deadline only cover the reduced State Minimum set by the Lincoln Treasury of just \$390 for each State Silver Bar Bag which is just \$39 per bar as long as they call the National Silver Hotline before the deadline ends at: **1-888-415-6109 DEPT. SMB201**. Hotlines open at 8:30 A.M.

***** All 49 States listed are available - States not listed are already sold out *****



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PHOTO ENLARGEMENT SHOWS ENGRAVING DETAIL OF SOLID HALF OUNCE STATE SILVER BARS

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P7471 OF2024R-1

Local Lore

Sullivan County Rural Electric Cooperative

What's in a Name?

These days, there are dozens of things people can enjoy when visiting Worlds End State Park in Sullivan County, home to Sullivan County Rural Electric Cooperative.

You can experience the charm of the Forksville covered bridge, enjoy the stunning views from Loyalsock Canyon Vista, and for those who equate fun with a challenge, there's the Worlds End Ultramarathon, where participants have to cover 64 miles in 19 hours.

And yet, despite its modern-day reputation as a go-to destination for nature lovers and athletes alike, it wasn't always so inviting. Or, at least, that's according to its history, which dates to 1872, when a map christened the area with the Worlds End moniker.

Take it from W.S. Swingler, assistant district forester of Wyoming State Forest — now known as Loyalsock State Forest — who wrote this in



SARAH PARRISH

REACHING THE END OF THE WORLD: Worlds End State Park in Sullivan County originally got its name from the visual of seven mountain ranges converging to create the sensation that park-goers had reached the end of the world.

1935: “[The name] arose from the topography of the place. Seven mountain ranges converge on the point, and one does receive the sensation of being at the ultimate ends of the Earth.”

The legend of the park's name only grew in time. At one point, “Worlds End” became “Whirl's Glen,” which later became “Whirls End,” before ultimately landing back where it began — and stands today — as Worlds End. Through it all, each name has shared one thing in common: nature.

“The proponents of the second name base their claim upon the whirlpool in the Loyalsock Creek,” Swingler explained nearly a century ago. “The third name was probably a contraction of the other two. Since the whirlpool had largely disappeared, it was decided that the name Worlds End would be the most appropriate.”

Despite the ominous nature of the park's name, the Commonwealth's own website can't help but heap praise on the destination: “The rugged natural beauty coursing through the heart of the Endless Mountains landscape provides many photographic possibilities.”

Proof again that there's more to a name than what typically meets the eye. 📷



Main Office: Forksville, Pa.
Consumer-members served: 6,199
Website: screc.com

A Little Treasure

This month's artwork, inspired by the April 2024 *Penn Lines* feature on morel mushrooms, comes from Vivian Baumunk, age 5. According to her mother, who receives electricity from Forksville-based Sullivan County Rural Electric Cooperative, Vivian loves exploring the creek and forest behind their home, catching frogs and crayfish, and gathering little treasures from the woods. Thanks for this little treasure, Vivian!

Vivian Baumunk, age 5

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

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

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



Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



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serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

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LET'S FACE IT: We're a power-hungry generation.

And while we're talking on our smartphones, asking human-like computers for advice, and puttering around the yard with electric lawn mowers and weed eaters, dark clouds are gathering over the grid.

Will we have enough energy to power our ever-growing needs? Some experts don't think so.

They point to our voracious appetites for all kinds of watts — kilowatts, megawatts, you name it — and to head-scratching energy policies that are driving traditional resources like coal and natural gas plants off the grid faster than new resources can come online.

While steps are being taken to address the imbalance at state and national levels, some damage has already been done, resulting in higher costs to deliver electricity. Lots of factors are at play, but for members wondering what this means for their household budgets, it's important to understand PJM Interconnection, its recent capacity auction and the anticipated impact on our rates.


PJM oversees the multi-state power grid that Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) is plugged into and coordinates the flow of electricity from generators to local utilities like ours. It also operates wholesale markets and plans for future grid needs. Each year, PJM hosts a capacity auction to ensure it has enough electricity to meet peak demand in the future.

Recently, in reaction to increased demand and tightened supply, capacity market prices didn't just increase, they skyrocketed — by more than 800% for the 2025-2026 delivery year. And for consumers across the grid, that signals one thing: potentially higher electric bills.

Fortunately, Somerset REC gets its wholesale power from Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc. (Allegheny), which we own and operate along with 13 other rural electric cooperatives in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Over the decades, the Allegheny board, overseen by directors from each of these 14 cooperatives, has made forward-thinking investments in energy resources, including nuclear and hydropower plants, that today provide nearly 67% of the electricity we distribute to our members.

These assets are important because they shield us — and you — from the energy market's volatility, including the extremes we've seen and will likely continue to see on capacity pricing. Neighboring investor-owned utilities buy 100% of their energy on the open energy market, making them and their rates vulnerable to that volatility. Our exposure, however, is limited because our supplier, Allegheny, only needs to buy about one-third — or about 33% — of our energy needs from outside sources. With long-term power-purchase contracts in place to further manage risk, we've set the stage for additional price stability.

As a result, Allegheny offers some of the lowest, least-volatile generation rates in the PJM region — and that's not going to change when the 2026 numbers are set later this year. Further, Allegheny continues to find ways to reduce costs and maintain stability. It recently secured millions in federal grant funding to boost its supply of affordable, carbon-free energy and add to its nuclear resources. That funding will help stabilize overall energy costs for consumers.

At Somerset REC, rising costs are never taken lightly, and rate increases are only considered as a last resort. Our board of directors is made up of cooperative members just like you, so they understand the impact that rate changes have on local families and the rural communities they serve. That's why we will continue to work with partners like Allegheny to keep the safe delivery of electricity as affordable as possible. 

RUSTON OGBURN
GENERAL MANAGER

Somerset County Students Take on Washington

EMILY BAER, DIRECTOR OF MARKETING & MEMBER SERVICES

EACH YEAR, SOMERSET RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE (REC) selects students who have just completed their junior year of high school to attend the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's Youth Tour, a weeklong tour of Washington, D.C. Fourteen delegates from Somerset County had the opportunity to interact with more than 1,700 students from around the country, tour historical and cultural sites, and meet with legislative staff members from their congressional districts.

While in Washington, D.C., they joined teens from 43 states, celebrating more than 60 years of Youth Tour success. The goal of Youth Tour is to provide outstanding rural teens with an opportunity to learn more about electric cooperatives and how the federal government works while having fun and making new friends.

This once-in-a-lifetime experience teaches students to be aware of important issues and to become active citizens working to make a positive difference in their communities. It is an experience like no other.

On the go

Each day of Youth Tour is filled with activity and little down time, and the heat and humidity in the middle of June can be exhausting. Everyone sleeps a little and talks — and walks — a lot. The program has endured for 60 years with the one constant: the students, who never fail to be



A 'CAPITOL' INVESTMENT: Students from Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative pose in front of the Capitol building as part of Youth Tour. Back, from left: Luke Barron, Freddie Sutton, Lindsey Shaffer, Jayna Nieves, Taylor Demchak, Addie Barto, Sydney Walker, Elsie Barna, Emma Klahre and Emily Baer. Front, from left: Alauna Berkey, Olivia Baker, Madi Visinsky, Ava Hummel and Trinity Hoover.

amazed, inspired, humbled and grateful. Next year, most of these teens will be headed off to college or trade school, so this is an opportunity for them to explore new experiences and maybe find some direction.

The 14 students sponsored by Somerset REC were: Olivia Baker, Elsie Barna, Luke Barron, Addison Barto, Alauna Berkey, Taylor Demchak, Trinity Hoover, Ava Hummel, Emma Klahre, Jayna Nieves, Lindsey Shaffer, Freddie Sutton, Madison Visinsky and Sydney Walker. These students were selected by a panel of judges after an interview and essay contest.

A memory book, which is similar to a yearbook, will be given to each student. It will include Youth Tour highlights, quotes and photos about their unforgettable week in Washington D.C. Here are a few comments from the students this year to give you a better understanding of their experience.

Olivia Baker — “I enjoyed my week on Youth Tour while seeing different cultures and ways of life. I learned that I could connect with many people by being myself and other people will love me for it. For anyone considering going on this trip, do it! It is seriously life-changing!”

Elsie Barna — “The most impactful thing to me was the opportunity to see the Pentagon. I learned how easily I can make friends and how easy it is for me to talk to complete strangers. I would tell other students to make the most of the week by getting out of your comfort zone. Every day is fun, and you get so many amazing opportunities. I would highly recommend it.”

Luke Barron — “Experiencing city life and seeing our nation's capital was very impactful to me. I will never forget dancing in front of the White House in Lafayette Square. I would tell other students that it is a fun, educational trip to a place that all Americans should see.”

Addison Barto — “The thing that impacted me the most was all the museums and seeing things that I haven't seen before. I learned I am more confident than I thought when making new friends, and I hope I never forget pin trading with other states. I would absolutely recommend it — this is one of the most special experiences I've ever had!”

Alauna Berkey — “I loved seeing the amount of history and legacy our nation has to offer in its capital. I learned that I care about what goes on in D.C. and the way our government works more than I originally thought I did. I hope I never forget being able to experience D.C. fully for the first time. I would tell other students that this truly is the trip of a lifetime and there's none other like it. No matter who you are, this trip will change and impact everybody.”

Taylor Demchak — “It's amazing how many

opportunities are out in the world for me. This trip brought me out of my comfort zone and the dance party brought everyone together from many different states. I would tell students how fun it was."

Trinity Hoover — "I enjoyed getting to learn the inner workings of our national government. Not only do I hope I never forget my first time in D.C., but I also hope to never forget the people I met through pin trading. If you are a shy person like me, this trip is the perfect way to prepare yourself for the new beginnings that college will bring you."

Ava Hummel — "The most impactful thing to me was seeing how different life is outside of Pennsylvania. I gained confidence and stepped out of my comfort zone, and I hope I never forget the flash mob in front of the White House. I would tell other students that this trip is an incredible opportunity, and it would be one of the best experiences they can ever have."

Emma Klahre — "What impacted me the most was the motivational speech given by Mike Schlappi, where he said that we are not too young to make a difference. After imagining all the amazing things I can do when I grow up ... I finally realized that I don't have to wait to make a difference. I learned that starting a conversation with a stranger only takes one 'hello.' I would tell other students that not only will you make amazing friends and connections, but you will also find yourself supported by the staff to reach your full potential."

Jayna Nieves — "Seeing the Pentagon Memorial made a huge impact on me. I learned that it's OK to be my loud and outgoing self around new and old friends. If they don't like me, it's their loss. This trip is well worth it. The people, places and chaperones made my trip so much fun, and I am so grateful for this experience."

Lindsey Shaffer — "Visiting the memorials allowed me to learn and appreciate the deeper meanings to the events I learned about in school. Meeting new people is way easier than I thought it would be. The trip is amazing, and it makes you step out of your comfort zone in a not-so-uncomfortable way."

Freddie Sutton — "I really liked going to the museums and monuments. I would tell other students to take the opportunity to take this trip because it is so much fun."

Madison Visinsky — "I learned that I have the ability to do things that make me feel uncomfortable, like talking to new people, becoming extremely close with people I just met and to be on time. I hope I will be able to remember the big moments, but I pray I don't forget the small ones. Youth Tour is an experience you don't want to pass up. Not only do you make lifelong friends, but you also get to learn about history. It's a long week, but every moment is worth it."

Sydney Walker — "What impacted me the most was realizing that there are so many people out there who are also driven and motivated in life. I had never been to D.C.



IN THE SHADOWS: Students representing Somerset County Rural Electric Cooperative pose in front of the International Spy Museum in Washington, D.C.



A MOMENTOUS OCCASION: Students representing Somerset County Rural Electric Cooperative pose for a photo in front of the Washington Monument.

before, so I was super excited to go on Youth Tour to explore national monuments. I hope I will never forget seeing them for the first time and how emotional I was about our nation's history. I also hope I never forget the memories I made with friends I just met. Youth Tour is a super great opportunity to meet new people, see new places and learn new things. I would recommend it to anyone!"

Wow, aren't these amazing kids? As their chaperone, I am fortunate enough to see these students enter as strangers and leave as friends, step outside their comfort zones, and gain confidence. The monuments and memorials stay the same each year, but guiding these enthusiastic students through our nation's capital and seeing the excitement in their eyes is what makes it different every time.

This was my fourth Youth Tour excursion and spending a week with these students is a great honor. It is a wonderful opportunity to get to know the students in our community. After all the farewell hugs at week's end, I feel confident our future is in good hands. 🇺🇸

Power Line Safety: Tips Worth Sharing

IT IS IMPORTANT TO BE ALERT and knowledgeable about what to do when you see a downed power line, or when your vehicle, farm equipment, or construction equipment is in an accident involving a utility pole.

Your immediate priority should be your own safety and the safety of others. Stay at least 30 feet away from any downed line. Electricity can travel through the ground, so do not approach downed wires or anything they are in contact with, such as puddles of water and fences.

If you are in the vehicle and in danger of a fire or another hazard, jump out without touching the vehicle and try to land on the ground with your feet together. Then, shuffle away with small steps. You can also hop with your feet together and get as far away you can — preferably 50 or more feet away. By keeping your feet together and on the ground, this minimizes the risk of electrical shock.

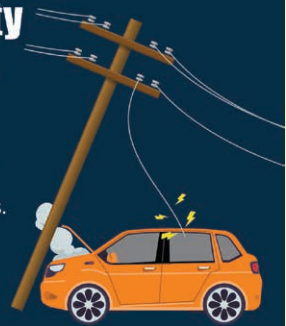
Never try to move or drive over a downed power line. Contact 911 and Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative to report the emergency. Even if a downed line appears to be a phone or cable line, don't touch it — you could have misidentified it or it could be touching an energized power line. The best approach is to treat all downed lines as if they are energized.

Knowing how to keep yourself and others safe around downed wires is important. Please share this information to keep everyone safe while traveling. 📢

DOWNED POWER LINE and Vehicle Safety

When electric equipment becomes damaged, the ground and objects can become energized. Know what to do to **save your life** and the lives of others.

 Safe Electricity.org®



In an accident involving a power line:

1. **Stay Inside the Vehicle:** The ground may be energized.
2. **Call 9-1-1:** Report downed or damaged lines.
3. **Warn Others:** Tell bystanders to stay away.
4. **Wait for Utility Crew:** Do not exit until it's safe.



If you notice smoke or fire:

5. **Exit Safely:** Cross arms over your chest and jump out with feet together. Do not touch the car and the ground at the same time.
6. **Move Away:** Shuffle or bunny hop with feet together. Get as far away as you can.



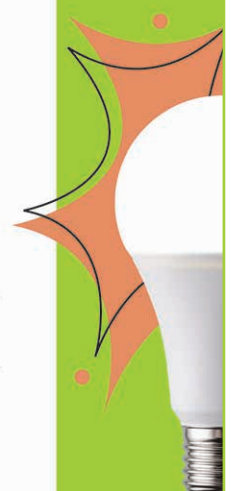
Happy
LABOR DAY
★ ★ ★ ★ ★
SEPTEMBER 1

The office of Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative will be closed Monday, Sept. 1, in observance of Labor Day.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

Replace your cooling system's filter regularly to maintain strong airflow and boost energy efficiency. A clean filter means your system doesn't have to work as hard, saving energy and lowering your utility bills. Factors like allergies and pets in the home can impact how often filters should be replaced. Check the filter every month and replace it as needed. Changing filters regularly also reduces wear and tear on your cooling system, helping extend the life of the unit.

Source: energy.gov





NEVER ENTER FLOOD WATERS

When floods happen, news reports often show homeowners and reporters standing in or rowing through flood waters.

This is a BAD IDEA. Flood waters can cover downed power lines or other electrical hazards, and the combination of water and electricity can cause shock or electrocution.

Here are some safety reminders:

- Never enter flood waters; this includes on foot or by any other means such as a boat or canoe.
- Electrical hazards such as downed power lines could be lurking underneath the standing water.
- Do not enter a flooded basement if water could be covering outlets, appliances, or electrical cords.
- Do not touch electrical equipment such as wires, switches or fuses if you are wet or standing in water or on a damp surface.

Cleaning up can also be dangerous:

- Downed and deadly power lines can be hiding under branches and debris.
- Do not use electric yard tools if it is raining or the ground is wet.
- Replace water-damaged electronics and equipment.
- Always be aware of power line locations when using or carrying ladders, poles, or any other extendable or long tools.
- Be aware of power line locations each time you are elevated, for example: on a ladder, rooftop, or boom lift.

Learn more at:



Nuclear Energy's Role in Grid Stability Grows Stronger

MICHAEL T. CRAWFORD, SENIOR TECHNICAL EDITOR

IN TODAY'S WORLD, THERE'S ALWAYS a light on somewhere, requiring a steady, stable supply of electricity. Pennsylvania's rural electric cooperatives have long taken advantage of one source in particular: nuclear energy. And now it looks like the rest of the nation will be following suit.

In late May, executive orders from the Oval Office called for a fourfold increase in nuclear generation by 2050, streamlined permitting for new reactors, and enhanced federal coordination to support both large-scale plants and advanced nuclear technologies, such as small modular reactors. Permitting for nuclear projects has historically taken years, but the executive orders direct the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to approve new reactor applications within 18 months.

While the recently passed reconciliation package, signed by President Donald Trump in early July, may have cut funding for some programs, it preserves the Nuclear Production Tax Credit, which supports new and existing nuclear power plants by lowering their operational costs and attracting investment.

'The message is clear'

This renewed focus on nuclear power is reassuring for Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc. (Allegheny), which supplies the majority of your cooperative's wholesale power. Some of that power is generated by the Susquehanna Steam Electric Station (Susquehanna), a nuclear plant in Luzerne County. Allegheny owns a 10% share of the facility, which in 2024, provided cooperative



NEW LIFE FOR NUCLEAR: The Susquehanna Steam Electric Station (Susquehanna) in Luzerne County is a key asset in Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc.'s energy portfolio. Recent Trump Administration executive orders are giving nuclear plants like Susquehanna a larger role in producing the nation's energy.

consumer-members with close to 60% of their energy needs.

"For Pennsylvania's rural electric cooperatives and the consumers we serve, the message is clear: Nuclear power is critical to our nation's energy future," said Steve Brame, president and CEO of Allegheny and the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association, your cooperative's state and federal advocate. "That's something Pennsylvania and New Jersey cooperatives have long understood with a reliable, efficient plant like Susquehanna in our portfolio."

The renewed policy focus comes at a time when electricity demand is surging, driven in part by artificial intelligence and data center growth. Major tech companies are already seeking long-term nuclear contracts to feed their needs.

In Pennsylvania, for instance, Talen Energy, which operates the Susquehanna plant, has inked deals to host a data center campus at the site. Microsoft has also signed a 20-year power-purchase agreement with Constellation Energy to restart a reactor at the Crane Energy Center near Harrisburg. The former Three

Mile Island site has been dormant since 2019.

In addition to propping up nuclear power, the executive orders emphasize energy security, with calls to reduce reliance on foreign fuel sources and reinvest in domestic supply chains. The U.S. Department of Energy is expected to play a key role in coordinating this work, including possible funding opportunities for infrastructure upgrades and next-generation reactor deployment.

The orders explicitly support life extensions for current plants and encourage utilities to consider pairing large reactors with smaller, advanced units on the same site.

The federal government is expected to release more detailed implementation guidance in the coming months, including potential funding mechanisms, partnerships and siting criteria for new reactors. 🗣️

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

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Youth Tour 2025: A Trip to Remember

EIGHTY STUDENTS FROM PENNSYLVANIA and New Jersey took a once-in-a-lifetime trip in June when they traveled from their electric cooperatives across the two states to Washington, D.C., for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) Youth Tour.

While there, they toured monuments and memorials, visited museums and Capitol Hill, and networked with more than 1,600 other students from across the United States.

“Youth Tour gives students a chance to step outside their comfort zone and connect with other teens from across the nation,” says Steph Okuniewski, Youth Tour director for the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association. “In the 19 years I have attended Youth Tour, I have seen students develop lifelong friendships, choose career paths and return to their communities with a better understanding of electric cooperatives and the important role they play in rural areas.” 🇺🇸



TOMORROW'S LEADERS: Delegates from Pennsylvania and New Jersey gather for a photo in front of the White House. The students also had the opportunity to visit one of Washington D.C.'s newest museums, The People's House: A White House Experience.



MOMENTS TO REMEMBER: Youth Tour was a week filled with experiences for cooperative teens. Clockwise from bottom left: Riley McCausland of REA Energy Cooperative shows off her collection of state pins; Nadia McLean of Central Electric Cooperative and Max Gochmour of New Enterprise Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) have a great time at Co-op Connections Night; From left, chaperone Sarah Parrish and students Emily Lewis and Noah Rakestraw, all representing Sullivan County REC, visit the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial; While visiting The People's House: A White House Experience, Amanda Allabaugh of Claverack REC, front, finds a hidden compartment in the resolute desk. Other Claverack representatives, from left, are: Everett Leonard, Bella Clark, Maia Montross, chaperones Steve Allabaugh, the co-op's president and CEO, and Megan Rought, and student Ed Eastman; Brandon Hurley of Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative (REC), Pennsylvania's 2024-2025 Youth Leadership Council (YLC) representative, poses with the 2025-2026 YLC representatives: Pennsylvania's Kendall Woods, center, of Adams Electric Cooperative and New Jersey's Cristina Hatzimihalis of Sussex REC.

Cool Savings: Refrigerator and Freezer Efficiency Tips

MIRANDA BOUTELLE

Q: What are some ways I can improve the efficiency of my refrigerator and freezer?

A: When exploring ways to be more efficient with refrigerators and freezers, we often find ourselves stuck between convenience and conserving energy. While you can upgrade to newer equipment, care and habits can be just as important to saving energy.

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) helps us understand what to

look for in our existing equipment and new appliances. In general, the larger the refrigerator, the more energy it uses. The most efficient models are typically 16 to 20 cubic feet. Models with the freezer on top tend to use less energy than bottom freezers or side-by-side units. A refrigerator 15 years or older uses about 35% more energy than an Energy Star®-certified model.

Here are some tips to keep your refrigerator running efficiently and limit overuse:

Keep it organized. One of the biggest issues with refrigerator energy use is opening the door or keeping it open. An organized fridge makes food items easier to find, minimizing open-door time and keeping cold air inside. Place items in the same spots so they are easier and faster to find. I tell my kids to take a quick look inside at the options and close the door

while they are deciding what to eat.

Keep it clean. Regularly cleaning the gasket — the flexible strip around the perimeter of the fridge door — ensures a tight seal between the door and the unit to keep cold air inside. If the gasket is not sealing tightly, it should be replaced. Removing and cleaning the vent at the bottom of the unit can help airflow. Clean the coils at the back using an extended brush instead of moving the fridge and risking injury.

Keep it safe. The DOE recommends setting your refrigerator temperature between 35 and 38 degrees and freezer at 0 degrees.

If you have a second refrigerator or freezer, here are some things to consider that can help you save energy.

Do you need it to be plugged in year-round? Perhaps you can keep it empty and unplugged for part of the year. Maybe you only really need it during the holiday season. Unplugging it for the months you aren't using it will save energy, and you'll still have it as a backup when you need it.

If you are a hunter or buy meat in bulk, set a goal to empty your freezer before you restock. This allows you to avoid food waste and unplug the extra appliance when it is not needed.

If possible, consider the location. Keeping the second fridge or freezer in a cool basement versus a hot garage requires less energy.

Instilling simple cleaning and food storage habits are easy ways to be more efficient with your in-home refrigeration. 🍷

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, which represents more than 900 local electric cooperatives.

MARK GILLILAND, PIONEER UTILITY RESOURCES



KEEP COOL: If you have a second refrigerator or freezer, consider ways to avoid food waste and unplug the extra appliance when it is not needed.

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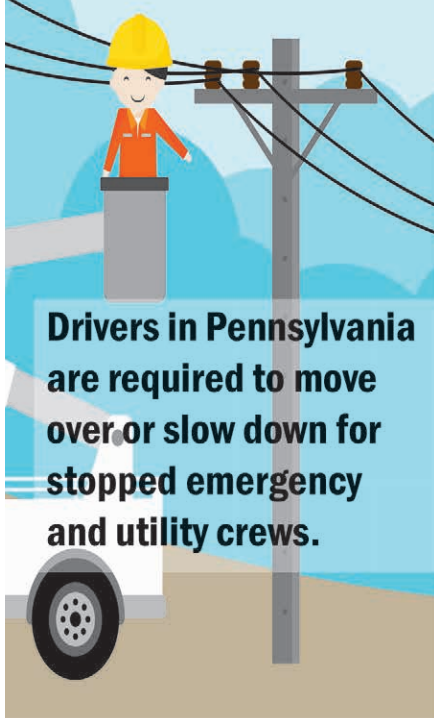
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Love, Grace Guide Growth in Parenting

ABIGAIL ZIEGER

WHEN I WAS PREGNANT with my first child, I wanted to be as prepared as possible and do things “the right way.” I read baby books and parenting books galore. We were given adorable onesie sets, swaddling blankets, baby swings and a maple crib. We prepared a nursery, and I ate, slept, and dreamt all things newborn.

But the early years of parenting were harder for me than I expected. I dealt with postpartum depression, some major life changes, and the challenges that come with having one — then two, and then three — small children in the house. I soon found that I had no idea what the “right” way was to raise children, and I struggled. I second-guessed myself and worried about nearly everything. It was a rough start, to say the least.

After my third child, we knew our family was complete, so we gifted almost all our baby things, except for special keepsakes. It made me feel good to bless someone else with some of the things we received when we were young parents, and I felt ready to move into the next phase.

Imagine my surprise when I discovered I was pregnant again. I thought we were done. I was worried about starting over, dreading the overwhelming feelings that had consumed me as a young mother. Instead of spending hours planning for the baby, I procrastinated on getting what we needed. I scraped through the pregnancy with just a few thrifted maternity items, gathered a small basket of newborn clothes and ordered some diapers online at the eleventh hour.

About a week after my due date, I had a fast labor and gave birth to our fourth. As I held my newborn to my skin, my nerves returned. What if I forgot something important? I turned to my midwife and asked, “OK, remind me: I have to feed her, burp her and change her. Is there anything else I need to do?”

My midwife shrugged with a smile and replied, “Just

give her a bath every once in a while. That’s about it.”

That, I could do.

Once my baby girl arrived, things changed. My older children were more independent and could help by running to grab a diaper or a burp cloth when I needed it. She wore her older siblings’ jammies, slept in a hand-me-down Pack ‘N Play, and was just the easiest baby.

The funny thing was, I was much more relaxed, too. All the worries and indecision I experienced with my older children really didn’t seem to matter so much this

time. I found myself at peace carrying this child in my arms. I didn’t think so much about all the decisions. I just did my best to love all my kids and not be so hard on myself.

When I look back on it, I’m tempted to judge my younger self. Didn’t you realize that you didn’t need all those things for the baby? Didn’t you know you could only learn so much from books? Why couldn’t you have worried less and enjoyed it more? Why did you have to make it so much harder than it was?

But I couldn’t have known all those things when I was a new mom. Parenting is just something you have to bumble through by making mistakes, learning,

finding your own way and trying your best.

In the end, it doesn’t really matter how many baby clothes you have, how cute your nursery looks (or if you have one at all), or how many parenting books you read. You’ll make all the mistakes we all seem to make — and you’ll learn and grow through them. The best thing you can give your child is love, and the best thing you can give yourself is a little grace.

The rest will fall into place on its own. 🧡

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.



IT'S CONTEST TIME!

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

CONTEST NO. 1 – OLDEST ISSUE OF *PENN LINES*! If you have an oldie but a goodie around the house, take a photo of it with you. Please make sure the publication date is visible.

CONTEST NO. 2 – MOST WELL-TRAVELED *PENN LINES*! Take your favorite copy of *Penn Lines* beyond the borders of the Commonwealth. Send us a photo of you holding the magazine at your destination in front of a recognizable landmark or a sign that shows where you are. Also include a 50- to 100-word essay about where you were and why you brought that issue.

CONTEST NO. 3 – A DATE WITH *PENN LINES*! We'll be honest: We like it when we get to go to some place nice. Take your favorite issue of *Penn Lines* to a special place in your community and take a photo of yourself with it.

FOR ALL CONTESTS, WE WILL NEED: your name, address, daytime telephone number, the month and year of the magazine, and the name of the cooperative that serves your home, business, or seasonal residence.

PRIZES: \$50 gift card for each contest winner; the winning photos will be featured in a 2026 *Penn Lines* issue.

DEADLINE: Friday, Oct. 31

SEND ENTRIES TO: PennLines@prea.com
(put "60 Years of PL" in the subject line)
or *Penn Lines* Editor/60 Years of PL,
P.O. Box 1266, Harrisburg, PA 17108-1266



Add Melons to Any Meal

ANNE M. KIRCHNER

PHOTOS BY ANNE M. KIRCHNER



AS SUMMER COMES TO AN END, melons are a classic ingredient for any meal. Their versatility can be surprising. Make a cantaloupe salad brightened with lime zest and mint. Serve a spicy watermelon salsa with chips or grilled chicken. Assemble a colorful trifle with honeydew and blueberries.

Let color, touch and sound be your guides when picking the perfect melon. Look for golden yellow cantaloupes and creamy white honeydews. Push the spot at the end of the melons where the stem was attached. If the area depresses and bounces back, you have a winner. To find a sweet, mature watermelon, look for the yellow field spot. Also search for the heaviest watermelon that radiates a hollow sound when tapped. 🍉

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

CANTALOUPE MINT SALAD

- 2 cups cantaloupe, cut into chunks
- 2 cups cucumber, chopped into large pieces
- ½ cup feta cheese, crumbled
- 12 to 15 large fresh mint leaves, chopped
- Zest of 1 lime
- 2 tablespoons lime juice
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon coarse black pepper

Place cantaloupe, cucumber, feta, mint and lime zest in a large serving bowl. In a separate bowl, whisk together the lime juice, olive oil, salt and pepper. Pour the dressing over the cantaloupe mixture and toss gently. Chill for 30 minutes before serving. *Makes 6 to 8 servings.*



WATERMELON AVOCADO SALSA

- 3 avocados, diced
- 3 cups watermelon, chopped
- ½ cup red onion, finely chopped
- 1 jalapeno, seeded and finely chopped
- ¼ cup lime juice
- ¼ cup cilantro, chopped
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- ¼ teaspoon red pepper flakes

Place avocados, watermelon, red onion and jalapeno in a serving bowl. Add the lime juice, cilantro, salt and red pepper flakes. Toss the ingredients gently. Cover the bowl tightly and refrigerate 2 to 3 hours. Serve the salsa with tortilla chips, grilled chicken, steak or fish. *Makes 4 to 6 servings.*



HONEYDEW BLUEBERRY TRIFLE

- 8 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 1 cup Greek yogurt
- ¼ cup maple syrup or honey
- Zest of 1 lemon
- ½ medium honeydew melon, diced
- 1 pint blueberries
- Fresh mint garnish, optional

Beat the cream cheese with a hand mixer until smooth and creamy. Add the Greek yogurt, maple syrup or honey, and lemon zest. Mix until well combined. Create a fruit trifle by layering the honeydew, blueberries and sweetened cream cheese in individual dessert dishes or wine glasses. Garnish with mint and refrigerate until serving. *Makes 4 to 6 servings.*

Grow Your Own Bouquets

GEORGE WEIGEL

YOU COULD GET YOUR FLOWERS for the table or gift bouquets from the florist or even from the grocery store these days — or you could harvest your own for much less.

Cut-flower gardens are trendy again as a new generation discovers the joy (and money-saving nature) of cutting fresh flowers from around the yard.

The trend goes beyond just DIY gardeners. Local cut-flower operations have been popping up like self-seeding daisies all over the U.S. in recent years as farmers and small-scale growers cash in on a trend that bloomed during the COVID-19 pandemic, when cocooners wanted bouquets to add cheer while being isolated at home.

Chances are, an avid home gardener won't have to do anything special to become a home-grown bouquet-maker. Scouting the yard for flowers that are already there — scissors in hand — is all it takes.

In addition to such popular annual cut-flower options as zinnias and marigolds, many perennial flowers and flowering shrubs are fair game for a vase.

Add foliage options like conifers, ferns, ornamental grasses and colorful perennial leaves to the mix, and it's possible to harvest DIY bouquets nearly year-round.

The hard part for some gardeners is getting over the reluctance to cut flowers that they like just fine still on the plants.

As author Dr. Allan Armitage once reminded, "Cutting is not murder. Half the fun of a garden is taking the flowers in with you or taking a bunch along for friends."

If you don't have a ready supply of flowers or need the gentle nudge of flowers specifically earmarked for



HOMEgrown: This cut-flower garden is filled with cosmos and zinnias ready to be harvested for a vase.

cutting, the solution is a dedicated cut-flower garden.

This is a garden geared to production — similar to a vegetable garden — only in this instance, you're picking posies instead of peppers.

Go with a diverse lineup of flowers, and you'll have a steady stream of blooms to cut throughout the season — and make local pollinators happy at the same time.

Penn State Extension advises that sunny sites are best for cut-flower gardens because most blooming plants produce best with at least six hours of full sun per day.

Good soil is a must, too. Work 2 to 3 inches of compost into compacted or poorly drained soil to create raised beds that are much friendlier to young roots.

A soil test is also a good idea to determine what nutrients your bed might need — as well as how many it will need, too. DIY Penn State soil-test kits are available for \$10 at county Extension offices and some garden centers. To learn more about these tests, go to agsci.psu.edu/aasl/soil-testing/fertility.

To maximize blooming, Penn State Extension recommends three things: 1) fertilizing according to test recommendations; 2) keeping the soil consistently damp; and 3) snipping flowers regularly to encourage continual bloom.

To maximize cut-flower life, take a bucket of lukewarm water into the garden and place the stems in it as you cut. Early in the morning and in the evening are the two best harvest times.

Use sharp scissors or pruners and look for flowers with buds that are just about to open. Exceptions are calendula, dahlias, zinnias, marigolds, black-eyed Susans, coneflowers, sunflowers, gaillardia and coreopsis, which are best cut when the flowers have fully opened.

While harvesting, cut the flower stems back to the main stem — or as long as you can get them, so you'll have plenty to work with when arranging them. Then, strip off the lower leaves before placing the stems in the water pail.

When you're ready to arrange, make fresh cuts at the desired heights while holding the stems underwater to keep the wound from sealing. Then, get the flowers into a vase with water ASAP.

Commercial flower preservatives can help extend flower life in the vase water. Even more important is changing the water every two or three days and making fresh cuts to the stem bottoms each time.

Or just replace the flowers as they go downhill with whatever is blooming at the time. 🌸

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.

ISSUE MONTH AD DEADLINE

October	August 15
November	September 15
December	October 15

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

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- ☐ Month(s) in which the ad is to run.
- ☐ Ad copy as it is to appear in the publication.
- ☐ Heading ad should appear under, or name of special heading (additional fee). See below for FREE heading options.

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Junk, Stuff and Other Treasures

JOHN KASUN

I REMEMBER WHEN MY WIFE and I moved into the new home we had built in the late 1960s. It was oversized for two people with four bedrooms, a first-floor family room, large living room, formal dining room, two-and-a-half bathrooms, finished basement, and an attached two-car garage. Today, that is nothing special, but at the time, it was not normal. If a home of that era had a garage, it was normally an unattached, small, one-car unit. As a matter of fact, thinking back to the time we moved into our home, we only owned one car. To me, it made sense to do it all while we were building rather than add on later.

Within a year after we moved in, we added a utility shed for the lawn mower and garden tools while one half of our garage stood neat, clean and empty. When we added a second car, a friend said something I didn't understand: "You are the only people I know with a two-car garage who can actually park their cars inside. Most people's garages are filled with junk."

As is normal, life goes on and somehow as humans we tend to "accumulate things." Notice I did not use the word "collect." "Collect" is when you gather things of value or of personal interest. "Accumulate" is when stuff comes in your house and never leaves.

One of the main reasons we all keep things is, "just in case." There are several funny things about this logic. When the time comes for you to use the item in question, you often forget you have it. If you do remember that you have it, odds are you will not remember where you put it.

Even though my wife and I built a large home many years ago, we managed to fill it up one small item at a time. One bedroom became an office. Another bedroom was turned into a sewing room. The third bedroom became a very comfortable guest room just in case anyone visited.

Shelves and closets were added in the garage and in

the basement to store jars of miscellaneous screws and half-filled cans of surplus paint — in addition to other treasures too numerous to mention. Several years ago, we built a large storage building on our property to handle the overflow of junk and other treasures.

The ridiculousness of this situation struck me the other day when I pulled into my driveway and saw my truck parked outside the garage. The truck was parked outside because one half of the garage was filled with household

items we moved there to make room for new furniture we purchased. We had meant to get rid of all this extra "stuff," but first we needed to think if we might need some of it later, "just in case."

There is an old saying that goes, "You can't take it with you," and that normally applies to money. However, that statement is true with everything we own, store, gather, collect, salvage or otherwise attempt to protect from the ravages of time. The truth is, we all might be better off without all the extra baggage we carry through life.

I constantly think about selling all the extra stuff we own, and I guess that is what

will happen to it when I die. The only thing that bothers me about dying and having all my stuff go up for sale is that I will miss a really great auction.

The true meaning of life is not in things around us; it is in the beauty of the world and people around us. It would be better for all of us to simplify our lives and focus on the best use of the time we have left. Personally, I intend to do just that.

But first, my wife says I need to get rid of a lot of "stuff."



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.



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How to enter

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

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

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