



United Electric Cooperative, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

United Electric Cooperative, Inc.
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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chairman

Stephen A. Marshall, District 5
 1030 Donahue Rd.
 Luthersburg, Pa. 15848
 814-583-7320

Vice Chairman

Timothy D. Burkett, District 6
 5059 Hamilton Markton Rd.
 Punxsutawney, Pa. 15767
 814-938-7991

Secretary/Treasurer

Eileen Pisaneschi, District 2
 1964 River Hill Rd.
 Frenchville, Pa. 16836
 814-263-4491

DIRECTORS

Shanelle Hawk, District 1
 502 Pine Run Rd.
 Mayport, Pa. 16240
 814-365-5646

Arden E. Owens, District 7
 505 Trout Run Rd.
 Shawville, Pa. 16873
 814-765-6458

Richard Petrosky, District 3
 P.O. Box 612
 DuBois, Pa. 15801
 814-371-8672

David W. Walker, District 4
 631 Olanta Rd.
 Olanta, Pa. 16863
 814-236-3321

President & CEO
Brenda Swartzlander

Consumer Advocate
Paula Pascuzzo, ext. 8501
Richard Heverley, Editor

2017 annual meeting was a great success

By Richard Heverley, *Marketing & Member Services Manager*

UNITED members and families filled the hall to near capacity for the 80th United Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting of the Members, held May 17 at the Brady Township Community Center in Luthersburg.

Board Chairman Steve Marshall welcomed members and thanked them and their guests for taking time from their busy schedules to attend. Marshall pointed out that it was very nice to see many familiar faces in the crowd, and he extended a special welcome to all members he has not seen at previous annual meetings. He also thanked the Clearfield County Dairy Princess Committee for providing their excellent milk punch, snacks and fruit as they have done for several years.

Eileen Pisaneschi, the board secretary/treasurer, read the Official Annual Meeting Notice that appeared in the May issue of *Penn Lines*, which was mailed to all members April 28, 2017. At the time of the mailing, there were 16,423 members of the cooperative, and all members were sent the notice along with the cooperative's 2016 Annual Report.



PHOTO BY PETER FITZGERALD

GREETINGS: President & CEO Brenda Swartzlander welcomes members to the 2017 United Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting.

"United Electric finished 2016 in a sound financial and operational position," Marshall reported.

He expressed his gratitude and that of the board of directors to all the members who support the cooperative in its efforts to improve the system, not only for the current membership and our needs today, but also for the

future needs. He also thanked the management and employees of United Electric, who all continue to pull together for the betterment of our co-op.

He added, "The board of directors remains dedicated to their commitment to continued system improvement and takes advantage of every opportunity to assure that the co-op is run in the most-efficient manner possible."

State Rep. Chris Dush, who represents our *(continues on following page)*



PHOTO BY PETER FITZGERALD

ELECTIONS: President & CEO Brenda Swartzlander, left, and Frank Betley, president & CEO of the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association and Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc., right, congratulate newly re-elected Directors David Walker and Stephen Marshall.

2017 annual meeting

(continued from page 14a)

members in House District 66, and state Rep. Matt Gabler, who represents United's members in District 75, spoke briefly, expressing the confidence they have in the state's electric cooperatives and the job they do for their members.

Judge of Elections Patrick Lavelle reported the results of the director elections. Because there were no petitions in either district, in accordance with the cooperative bylaws, incumbent director David W. Walker was re-elected as the director in District 4 and Stephen A. Marshall was re-elected in District 5.

Frank Betley, the president & CEO of the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association (PREA), our statewide service organization, and Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc., our statewide generation and transmission supplier, reviewed the continued rate stability Pennsylvania cooperatives have experienced over the last decade during a time when other utility companies have not had the same level of stability.

"The cooperatives' investments in nuclear and hydro generating facilities, which provide the bulk of our generation, are not only carbon-free generation resources, they are now some of the most-efficient and cheapest sources of power in the state," Betley stated.



PHOTO BY RICHARD HEVERLEY

CO-OP REPORT: Stephen Marshall, chairman of the United Electric board, addresses the near-capacity crowd.



PHOTO BY PETER FITZGERALD

OFFICIAL NOTICE: Eileen Pisaneschi, secretary/treasurer of United Electric board, reads the official notice of the meeting.

He pointed out that while cooperative rates remain stable, consumers of the neighboring utility company have experienced continually changing and increasing rates.

"The wholesale power provider along with the distribution cooperative, United Electric, are doing everything possible to hold down the members' energy bills, but there are things that the members can also do to make their bills even less," Betley stated.

He pointed out the huge advantage to all cooperative members when members participate in the statewide load management program. The program controls the flow of electricity to the water heaters in homes of volunteers in an effort to curtail load when power demands are at their highest, which is also when electricity is most expensive. This program saves Pennsylvania cooperatives hundreds of thousands of dollars per year. He also discussed the advantages of LED lightbulbs. This led to a lot of interesting questions and discussion about the many improvements, not only in light quality, but also the savings these new LED bulbs offer consumers.

United Electric President & CEO Brenda Swartzlander expressed her pleasure at having such a great turnout, especially all the new members who are a part of the cooperative's future.

"It's been 80 years since the rural

residents of Jefferson and Clearfield counties took their future into their own hands and formed United Electric," Swartzlander stated. "What started in 1937 with a \$310,000 loan from the REA has evolved into a cooperative with total assets of over \$96 million serving over 18,000 accounts. Most of these accounts are residences, farms and seasonal members, but the number of businesses and commercial accounts has increased over the years, due in a large part to the availability of electricity in the rural area. But essentially, we are the same as the rural residents who founded the co-op all those years ago. We all have a stake in the betterment of our communities... and as always ... our main concern continues to be having a reliable, safe and affordable supply of power.

"Poles are still poles and wires are



PHOTO BY RICHARD HEVERLEY

STATE REPORT: State Rep. Matt Gabler, who represents United's members in District 75, speaks as state Rep. Chris Dush, who represents our members in District 66, and Stephen Marshall, board chairman look on.

still wires, but the way we go about building and maintaining the system today has changed dramatically over the years. When I started at the co-op — let's just say a number of years ago — meter technology hadn't changed since utility companies started selling electricity."

United Electric is upgrading to the second generation of self-reporting meters, which will not only provide meter readings for billing purposes, but also allow the cooperative to check if there is power to the meter in real time.

(continues on page 14d)

Rustic Views

Planting seeds is a simple, joyful act

By Glenn Schuckers

WHEN a lot of us stop to think about what we have been doing the past few months, we cannot help but think about what we have planted. That is why I often feel pity for the people who don't plant anything. We now have a certain satisfaction in seeing what we planted growing and getting close to completing what we planned for some six weeks ago. It is a down payment on things that are eternal.

Way back in May, and even before that, when I pored over the seed and plant catalogs, I envisioned what the garden would look like. This year, I planned to cut back on the number of things like tomato plants and rows of beans, but to increase the variety of what I planted to include potatoes, onions, peppers and squash. So while I now have "only" two dozen tomato plants, I have three rows of potatoes, a row of onions, a dozen pepper plants and a dozen hills of acorn squash.

While it is a little too early to know if all I planted will yield the crops I planned for, the plants are looking good; neither the critters nor diseases nor insects have destroyed them — yet. I will have to wait for about four weeks to know if all the work was worth it, but just having what looks like a successful garden is enough for now.

Part of the joy of planting something, whether it is a garden, an orchard, flowers or just a box of herbs, is the joy of having patience.

Patience is one thing people who plant things must develop if they don't already have it. I have never seen a seed sprout overnight or a plant produce peppers the day after it is planted. Every gardener knows that what he or she plants will take days to grow; seeds may take a week just to sprout and even the earliest corn takes about two months



PHOTO BY GLENN SCHUCKERS

PLAYING IN THE DIRT: People who are planters almost universally love playing in the dirt as they find satisfaction in feeling it on their hands and under their fingernails.

from the time the seeds are planted until the ears are ready to eat.

One of the other joys non-planters miss out on is the feel of fresh soil on their hands. I don't usually call it soil, since that is a verb as well as a noun, but usually just call it what it is, dirt. People who are planters almost universally love playing in the dirt.

I suppose it's possible to plant something wearing gloves, but the size of things like squash seeds or tiny carrot, radish, lettuce, and beet seeds virtually rules out doing it in any way other than with bare hands. There is also the satisfaction of feeling dirt on their hands and under their fingernails.

That feeling makes me feel as though I am getting closer to being one with the earth from which we all grow. The ancient Greeks had the idea that Uranus, the sky, and Gaia, mother earth, were the origins of all life. They looked and saw that all living things sprang from the earth in the presence of sunlight and rain, and reasoned that the earth must be the mother of all life.

In our modern and sophisticated world, we know better than the ancient peoples, but we should never abandon our connection with our origins.

And like it or not, our origins are with earth, soil, dirt. No matter how we try, mankind has never been able

to completely sever its ties with dirt. Maybe that's the reason why I feel a little better when I put my hands into some dirt that has been prepared for planting. The feel of warm dirt around my hands and under my fingernails seems to signal that not only am I alive, but also that I am connected to something bigger.

There is not, after all, any shame in having dirt packed into the wrinkles and crevices of hands and also lodged under the fingernails. It is a sign that in this world of technology, computers, cellphones and wireless tablets, some things that have been around for centuries still remain.

That is a comforting thought — that the same dirt people dug in a century ago is still there to plant seeds in today. In a world where almost nothing seems permanent or lasting, having something that lets us know that even though we are temporary inhabitants of the space we occupy, the dirt we plant in will be around long after we are gone.

All of that sounds way too fancy and philosophical for the simple act of putting seeds and plants in the dirt, and it is. Planting seeds is a simple act. Everyone can do it. All that a person needs are some seeds or plants and some dirt. The dirt can be a plot of land as big as an acre, or as small as 10 feet

(continues on following page)

2017 annual meeting

(continued from page 14a)

“This is a huge advantage, especially during a severe storm,” Swartzlander said. “During outages, these meters interact with our outage management system, allowing dispatchers to check to be sure the power is on to all the accounts on a given line before the crew leaves the area, eliminating the need to call members to ask if their power is on.”

She also presented an update on the new SmartHub online interface that has been embraced by members wanting to inquire on the status of their accounts and pay bills online.

“When I introduced SmartHub at last year’s meeting, we had about 4,800 members registered to use E-bill (the predecessor to SmartHub),” she said. “In the last year, we have expanded to almost 5,200 SmartHub users and more than 500 members using the new smartphone app on their cellphone to access their account information.”

She said the cooperative is aware not all of our members are ready to move to these new technologies.

“Rest assured that, as a cooperative whose mission is to serve our members’ needs, you still have the option of receiving a paper bill, which you can pay by mail, and you still have the option of stopping in our office and doing business face-to-face with a real person,” Swartzlander said. “Regardless of the technologies we are embracing, your co-op continues to maintain a presence in the community, and we continue to have an office where you can stop in and talk to someone in person whenever you need to.”

Swartzlander reported that after closely evaluating advancements in technology, United Electric is moving forward with the installation of a Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system.

“SCADA has become essential to the further improvement of our reliability to our members,” Swartzlander said. “With SCADA in place, we can monitor our substations, communicate with various equipment on our

electric system, and make adjustments to equipment in the field from our office. Many of the regulators, reclosers, and switches we have been installing in our substations over the last decade have the ability to transmit data and can be controlled remotely. We currently have electronic reclosers on over half of our mainline feeders, and we have plans to complete this phase of the project over the next few years. Until now, we had not been able to utilize these features. Once the SCADA system is in place, we will know exactly what is happening at our substations, in real time. SCADA will send text alarms or emails to our supervisors when abnormalities are occurring. SCADA will also aid our engineering department in the planning of line rebuilds with load balancing, and it will help us determine if we may need to upsize substation equipment. With the right equipment in place, we will be able to open and close tie-points between substations to backfeed when necessary, which will drastically decrease outage time. This will be a long-term project, but right from the beginning, SCADA will help United Electric improve reliability to our members and allow us to assess situations in the field in order to respond more quickly when needed.”

The special guest speaker, Bob Farmer, a native of Louisville, Ky., has written extensively for the “Farmer’s Almanac.” He travels the nation, entertaining audiences with his own take on rural life and the eccentricities of some of his friends and family in the hills of Kentucky. He was a great hit with the crowd, many of whom seemed to know people very similar to the ones Farmer was describing.

To conclude the meeting, Marshall thanked the members for their continued support of the cooperative, stressing the importance of member participation in the business of the cooperative. He also encouraged them to keep in contact throughout the year and expressed his wish to see everyone back at next year’s annual meeting. ☀

Rustic Views

(continued from page 14c)

by 10 feet. It can be a box of dirt on a patio or even some clay pots on a back porch. The size really doesn’t matter.

What does matter is that the planters have the faith to believe the seeds they are putting in the dirt will grow. What matters is that the planters have the patience to allow nature to take its course.

What matters is that the planters care enough about the work they are doing to provide the essentials their young plants will need. Plants need sunlight and they need water, but some prefer just a little of both. Too much sun or too much water can be just as damaging as too little.

What matters is that the planters eliminate the competition the plants have from weeds. Left alone, weeds can choke out the plants we want or they can take over a garden. Nature is not prejudiced; nature will feed the goldenrod as surely as it feeds the cucumbers. Nature has had millions of generations to create weeds that can withstand anything.

But in planting and then caring for things like gardens and flower beds, we affirm our faith in things that are more important than the transient toys we have around us. When we show that we have enough faith to plant something, we show that we have the faith and patience in doing something that is eternal. ☀



Glenn Schuckers, a longtime member of United Electric, operated Schuckers’ Orchard in Luthersburg until the mid-1990s. He is a retired high school teacher and a contributing writer for *The Courier Express*.

We are pleased to have Glenn provide our *Penn Lines* readers with his take on rural life.

OFFICE CLOSING
 United Electric’s
 office will be closed
 on Tuesday, July 4, in
 observation of
 Independence Day.