



# 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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## From the President & CEO



### The power behind your power

By Brenda Swartzlander

AS APRIL arrives, it brings with it the showers that produce spring flowers. April also brings with it spring storms, high winds and often lightning — all of which can cause power outages. While United Electric Cooperative’s primary goal is to provide safe, reliable electricity to our members, there are times when Mother Nature has other plans. Most of us can ride out a storm from the comfort and convenience of our homes. However, there is a group of professionals that springs into action when the weather takes a turn for the worst — your co-op lineworkers.

#### One of the most dangerous jobs

Braving stormy weather and other challenging conditions, lineworkers often must work 40 or more feet in the air, carrying heavy equipment to restore

power. Listed as one of the 10 most dangerous jobs in the U.S., lineworkers must perform detailed tasks next to high-voltage power lines where even the slightest misstep could be life-threatening.

To help keep them safe, lineworkers are highly trained and wear specialized protective clothing and equipment at all times when on the job. This includes special fire-resistant clothing that will self-extinguish, limiting potential injuries from burns and sparks. They also wear specially insulated sleeves and rubber gloves to protect them from electrical shock. While this gear performs a critical function, it also adds additional weight and bulk, making the job more demanding.

In addition to the highly visible tasks lineworkers perform, their job today *(continues on page 16d)*



Rustic Views

# Garden time

By Glenn Schuckers

I THINK of April as one of those “tweener” months. Seeds and plants for the coming year have been (or should have been) ordered by now. Looking out the window, I think it looks as though I could start planting, but past experience tells me it is too early. Some of the bigger farms may have plowed their fields already, but getting my little corn fields and garden ready takes only one afternoon, so I’ll wait until the ground gets a little warmer. Nonetheless, this is the perfect month to get a lot of jobs done.

First in line, this is a great time to trim trees. By early April, fruit trees are probably still dormant, and the weather makes trimming them a little easier than when spring mud makes getting around a chore. Even if the buds on trees like apples, pears and other fruits look as though they are beginning to swell, trimming the trees won’t hurry them along and I won’t do any harm



PHOTO BY GLENN SCHUCKERS

HOPE: Gardeners live on hope, such as hope these kernels of corn will grow and become tall stalks that will provide ears of corn.

by trimming them.

People often ask what they should do to trim something like an apple tree, and the quick answer is anywhere except the first 6 inches above the ground. Seriously, so long as all of the areas of a tree get lots of fresh air and sunshine, the rest is just details. The

biggest problem we all face when it comes to trimming a tree is that it is really hard to imagine what it will look like when it is full of leaves. The bare branches we see now will soon be covered with leaves and what may look like a bare skeleton now will be a fully covered tree once the leaves open.



PHOTO BY GLENN SCHUCKERS

FAITH: Whether they amount to a “hill of beans” or not, giving seeds a home in warm soil is an act of faith.

The same thing goes for our gardens. They look mostly brown and bare now. Since I did not get ours cleaned out last fall, I have to look at dead vines and bushes. It is not a pretty sight.

Imagining what it will look like at planting time next month takes another leap of faith. By early June, I expect to have about 16 tomato plants, a couple dozen onion plants, a row of cucumbers, an acre of sweet corn and a couple rows of beans.

Speaking of beans, one of the best gar-

deners I ever knew was my dad's sister, Aunt Alta. She planted and tended her gardens for more years than most of us have been on earth, and she knew all the old-time rules and cures. But the one thing I could never understand was how she always said something would "not amount to a hill of beans."

So far as I know, she never planted beans in "hills." Squash, yes; pumpkins, yes; even cucumbers were often planted in little groups or hills. But beans, so far as I can remember, were always planted in rows.

And as to cucumbers, I plan to plant a row of them again this year. Since we had a "backlog" of lime pickles on the shelves last year, I decided to forego planting any cucumbers. I knew if I planted them, they most likely would grow, and if they grew, they would produce cucumbers, and I would feel duty bound to use them, mostly to make "lime" pickles.

That recipe came from Aunt Alta, also. When I first tasted the crunchy treats many years ago, I liked them so much that I asked her how to make them. She was more than happy to give me the recipe.

Making them is not very hard, but it does take about two days, mostly spent waiting for the cucumbers to soak in either a lime solution or clear water. So, this year will be time to make another batch for us and all the family.

Last year was the first time I grew either potatoes or onions and, frankly, I was surprised by a little success. We have been using the potatoes from the garden ever since I dug them last fall and, unlike store-bought potatoes, they have neither shriveled up, gone rotten, or sprouted yet.

The same goes for onions. When we get them from a store, it seems as though Ann needs to use them in about a week or they start to go bad. Yet the ones we dug from the garden are about as firm as they were five months ago.

Our boys often ask why I bother to plant a garden or to trim some apple trees. They also looked a little "side-ways" when I told them I planned to

plant about a dozen fruit trees close to the new house.

Their first question was, "Why?"

I suppose some neighbors might have asked the same thing. The simple answer is, "Why not?" I get "antsy" about this time of year when I can't get outside to do things. I won't say "work" because that implies eight-hour stretches of labor. The fruit trees and the garden are better described as reasons and places to "putter."

I stopped playing tennis about 10 years ago, and I could never get into playing golf. I have nothing against men and women who do either one, but I would rather spend an afternoon in the garden or a morning tending fruit trees.

The fresh produce, be it tomatoes, apples, onions or beans, is just a by-product. The real reward is looking out and seeing the results of the puttering and knowing that the time I

spent does have a result.

Maybe that is because I spent more than 30 years working in a classroom where results are mostly invisible. Teaching could be immensely rewarding, but it could also be immensely frustrating.

When a tree has been trimmed, a garden plowed, seeds planted and tended, the results are both tangible and visible. If that tree produces fruit and if the garden provides fresh produce, that is all well and good, a sort of bonus. The real reward is in the feeling that something real has been accomplished. 🌱



**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.

## ATTENTION ALL STUDENTS!

**United Electric Cooperative, Inc. is proud to present the third year of its "Shine the Light" Scholarship program!**



Two well-established cooperative principles are: concern for community, and education and training for our members. In keeping with these traditions, the board of directors of United Electric has decided to reinvest unclaimed capital credits back to the community by providing educational scholarships to our members.

Several years ago, as a result of lobbying efforts in Harisburg by the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association, Pennsylvania electric cooperatives are now able to use this unclaimed money within their local communities. These funds come from capital credits belonging to former members that have been unclaimed; and the members have not been able to be located for three years. Legislators have agreed to allow the cooperatives to use these funds locally for specific causes.

United Electric Cooperative is offering scholarships to members and dependents of members who have been members for at least one year prior to Dec. 31. Scholarships are for advanced education at an accredited university or technical school. Students must be working toward a minimum of a certificate through master's degree or higher. Opportunities include adults.

All students\*, including adult learners\*, who are attending or planning to attend a university or technical school are eligible to apply. For application and details, please see our website at [www.unitedpa.com](http://www.unitedpa.com) or contact Kristy Smith at 1-888-581-8969, extension 8507, by May 1, 2018.



\*Directors and employees of United Electric Cooperative, Inc. are not eligible.

**From the President & CEO**

*(continued from page 16a)*

goes far beyond climbing to the top of a pole to repair a wire. They have an extensive knowledge of our system that often allows them to determine where to look for a problem before they even arrive at the site of an outage. Line crews use their laptops and cellphones to map outages, take photos of the work they have done, and troubleshoot problems. In our service area, United Electric's lineworkers are responsible for keeping 2,847 miles of lines across parts of 11 counties working in order to bring power to your home and our local communities 24/7, regardless of the weather, holidays, or personal considerations.

While some of the tools and technology that lineworkers use have changed over the years, their dedication to the job has not. Being a lineworker is not a glamorous profession. It is inherently dangerous, requiring them to work near high-voltage lines, often in the worst of conditions, at any time of the day or night. During severe storms, crews often work around the clock to restore power. While April is best known for ushering in spring in our area of the country, it is also when we set aside a day to "thank a lineworker."

Lineworker Appreciation Day is April 9. So during April, if you see a lineworker, please pause to say "thank you" to the power behind your power. Let them know you appreciate the hard work they do to keep the lights on regardless of the conditions.



**Energy Efficiency  
Tip of the Month**

Make sure your refrigerator door seals are airtight for maximum energy efficiency. Test the seal by closing the door over a piece of paper (so that it's half in and half out). If you can easily pull the piece of paper out, your seal may need to be replaced or the latch may need to be adjusted.

Source: [energy.gov](http://energy.gov)

**Attaching objects to poles puts lives on the line – and it's a crime**

YARD sale signs, holiday decorations, basketball hoops, deer stands, satellite dishes and birdhouses all have something in common. These are all things United Electric crews have found illegally attached to our poles. Safety issues caused by unapproved pole attachments place the lives of linemen and the public at risk.

Linemen climb utility poles at all



PHOTO BY RICHARD HEVERLEY

**DANGEROUS HAZARD:** Recently, one of United's line crews performing routine line patrol came across a wire-framed Santa with lighting mounted within a foot of the high-voltage lead to the top of the transformer. Even with our linemen's protective equipment and a bucket truck, this line had to be de-energized to safely remove this hazard.

hours of the day and night, in the worst of conditions, and they rely on their rubber gloves to protect them. Any sharp objects like nails, tacks, staples, or barbed wire can puncture rubber gloves and other safety equipment, leaving our linemen vulnerable to electrocution. Linemen climbing a pole to make repairs or to restore power during a storm rely on relatively small spikes (or hooks, as they refer to them) to grip into the wood of the pole. Although our linemen make climbing a pole look so easy, it is not. One misplaced hook hitting the head of a nail or staple could cause the hook to slip, resulting in a serious injury to the lineman.

In addition to endangering the lives

of our linemen, people making illegal attachments to electric poles are also putting themselves and the public at serious risk. Extending a ladder up a pole is extremely risky for a lot of reasons, not the least of which is the fact that there are lines on those poles carrying 7,200 volts of electricity through uninsulated wire. If a ladder, person, or anything else even gets close to those lines, there is the possibility, or more likely the probability, of electrocution.

Our linemen have found things attached to poles that, even with their protective equipment and a bucket truck, they would not remove without first de-energizing the line. If our linemen would not go near it for fear of being electrocuted, you just have to shake your head and ask yourself, "Why would anyone do anything so foolish?" And even a better question may be, "How are they still alive?"

Please help keep yourself, your neighbors and our linemen safe. Poles may look like the perfect place to attach something, but they are not. Don't endanger your life or the lives of our linemen by making illegal attachments to any utility pole. ⚡

**ANNUAL MEETING**

will be held at the Brady Township Community Center, Luthersburg, Pa. Wednesday, May 16, 2018, at 7 p.m. for United Electric Cooperative's Members

- Directors' Report
- Business Session
- CEO's Report
- Director Election Results in Districts 1 & 7



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