



# United Electric Cooperative, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives  
serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

## United Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Post Office Box 688

DuBois, PA 15801-0688

Customer Service: 888-581-8969

www.unitedpa.com

Outage: 800-262-8959

Office Hours: M - F 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

## 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

**Debra Horner, ext. 8508**

**Richard Heverley, Editor**

## From the President & CEO



# This COVID-19 pandemic won't stop United Electric

By Brenda Swartzlander

I HOPE this finds you all safe and healthy. This COVID-19 pandemic has definitely disrupted all of our lives, and I hope that by the time you are reading this, we are putting this crisis behind us and things are returning to at least some semblance of normal.

As a provider of critical need to our rural communities, United Electric had to make some major modifications to our operations throughout this crisis to ensure our continuity of service to our members. In early March, as the first reports of the COVID-19 virus began in our part of the U.S., United's management team, in conjunction with the board of directors, took a very proactive approach in preparing for the challenges presented by the spread of the coronavirus. We set in place an Emergency Operation Plan to ensure quick response to our members during this crisis. This plan's first, and most important, goal was to protect the health and safety of our employees and our members as we continued to provide the essential electric needs of our members throughout this crisis.

The first thing we had to address in our Emergency Operation Plan was separating our employees into groups so that everyone was not having contact with each other. Shane Farrell, United's operations manager, was tasked with formulating a work plan to ensure our lineworkers could continue to meet our members' needs while at the same time providing separation among our crews. Our

goal was to prevent an outbreak that could have sidelined some, or possibly all, of our essential workers. In order to accomplish this, our crews were scheduled to report to work from home. Some of our crews were assigned to work out of our Brookville and Clearfield shops, with the remaining crews working out of our main headquarters in DuBois. By doing this, our crews working to meet the needs of our members in the western part of our service area had little, if any, contact with our crews maintaining service to our members in the eastern portion of our service area. They were also advised to avoid as much personal contact as possible while in the field. So, if our field personnel seemed a little standoffish, I apologize. It was to protect their health and welfare, as well as that of our members.

Our Engineering Department was likewise distanced, with most of the engineering personnel working from home as much as possible. This distancing involved staggering the times when it was necessary for the engineering personnel to come into the office to complete their jobs. Throughout this crisis, we had our staking engineers report to job sites directly from home to stake new services and to address other member requests.

Our emergency plan also included extensive changes to our office operations. Unfortunately, we had to close our lobby to all outside personnel, including our members who like to

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Rustic Views

# Patience and procrastination

By Glenn Schuckers

PATIENCE and procrastination both start with the letter “P,” but the similarity stops there. Before I go any further, let me say I am short on the first but long on the second. I procrastinate every chance I get and often don’t wait long enough when I should.

Some things, though, take their own time, and the only thing to do is wait. Nothing I can do will make seeds sprout any sooner, and there is nothing I can do to make a young fruit tree bear fruit before its appointed time.

Four years ago, my sons and I planted a dozen dwarf fruit trees in a field close to our house: eight apple trees, two pear trees, and two peach trees. When we planted them, I knew it would take about six years before they would be old enough to bear any fruit. So when one of the peach trees had blossoms on it last year, I pinched them off and let the tree grow. Had any of those blossoms developed into a peach, the weight likely would have broken the branch that the peaches were growing on. The time was just not right, and it won’t be right yet this year. Maybe two years from now will be right.

Seeds also sprout in their own time, and vegetables ripen at their own rate. Nothing I can do will make 75-day sweet corn ripe in 60 days. Even if I would try to change things like that, they are out of my control.

Patience is seeing things that can be changed, but waiting for the right time for them to happen. One definition I found: “Patience is the capacity to accept a situation without getting angry or upset.”



**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.



PHOTO BY GLENN SCHUCKERS

**PROVIDING A LITTLE HELP:** Two of the trees bent over by snow and ice are now being held up by a rope. Maybe with more patience, nature would have done the work, but sometimes nature needs a little help. One of the other trees had to be cut off as its roots were out of the ground.

In some 34 years of teaching, I will admit that I “sometimes” lost patience. If I saw a student who could do better but through lack of effort did not, I have been known to lose patience. If I saw a program that did not benefit kids or their curiosity, I “sometimes” lost patience with people who insisted on using it.

Patience, it is said, is a virtue, but when it gets in the way of progress, patience can be a vice.

But a bigger vice is procrastination. That is just putting things off, like not cutting the grass or taking out the garbage. I know they need to be done; I know that sooner or later they will have to be done, but I must think, “Maybe if I don’t take the garbage out, the garbage fairy will come do it for me!”

That’s how procrastination works. I know something has to be done, but for any number of reasons, I put off doing it. It can be making a phone call,

or paying a bill or cleaning the truck. It quite often involves things that are downright unpleasant. Let’s face it, almost nobody puts off doing things they enjoy.

But I know of a lot of things that are neither enjoyable nor disagreeable. A lot of things we all do fall into that big bucket of neutral; we neither dread doing them nor do we look forward to them.

A couple of months ago I mentioned something like that. A snow/ice storm had bent some of our spruce trees over so far that the tops were nearly on the ground. Some warmer days with sunshine had helped them start the journey to being vertical again, but I was not sure they would ever get to full upright.

I had a choice. I could be patient and see whether nature would repair the damage it had done, or I could go out and try to speed nature along by

trying to straighten the trees.

Deep inside, I think I knew that trying to hurry nature along usually does not work. Nature has its own way of doing things, and we humans do best by not trying to hurry things along. That's what I knew. But I also did not like the way the trees looked, and as one sunny day turned into another and then into a week, I saw — or thought I saw — the trees were not getting any straighter. The thought crossed my mind that those trees might be forever bent over.

So, in a word, impatience won out. I put off doing anything about the horizontal trees until I had our tractor at the house and I looked at the front-end loader it has. It dawned on me that it can raise the bucket some 12 or 15 feet in the air. I reasoned that I could use it to put the trees back into their original shape and use a rope to hold them there.

I procrastinated quite a few days about the whole job, but finally put a ladder against one of the bent trees and tied a rope about six feet from

the top. I then put the rope around a straight tree close by. With the loader holding the bent tree up to about three-quarters of its original position, I climbed the ladder and tied the rope to the straight neighbor.

So far it has worked. The bent tree is at about three-quarters of its original height. But whether nature will finish the job remains to be seen. Usually trying to “help nature along” is a fool's errand and patience is the best path to follow, but even nature needs a helping hand now and then.

I could have procrastinated and called it being patient, and in the long run that may have been the best thing to do, but just as farmers help nature along by spreading a healthy dose of manure on a corn field, I chose to help things along by tying ropes on trees.

Patience and procrastination. Sometimes they get confused, but one thing is sure: just putting things off is not patience. And no matter what I call it, doing what needed to be done, when it needed to be done, was a better path to pursue. ☀

## From the President & CEO

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conduct business in person. Our office remained open throughout this crisis, performing our day-to-day operations and handling all of our members' inquiries and requests by phone. We also separated our Customer Service and Finance and Accounting staffs into two groups, alternating between being in the office and working from home. This ensured that there was no contact between the two groups.

Unfortunately, our annual meeting became a casualty of the COVID-19 pandemic. We truly missed having the opportunity to meet with all of our members, but it would have been irresponsible of us to bring so many people together in one place. At the board's reorganization meeting in May, the judge of elections certified that, in accordance with our bylaws, being the only candidate in District 2, Eileen Pisaneschi is the duly re-elected director in District 2. The board of directors also set the date for our next annual meeting as May 19, 2021. We look forward to seeing you all there.

United Electric has remained responsive to our members' needs, and we are doing everything we can to keep the lights on, regardless of the COVID-19 crisis. With all of us working together, we will come out of this challenging period as strong as ever.

Until next month,



Brenda



## FREE TO MEMBERS

Wood pallets, wood crates and wooden wire spools/reels are available at United on a first-come, first-served basis. Please inquire with Scott Zimmerman at 814-503-8504.

Special Advertising Feature

# A Salute to the Red, White and Blue!

## This Independence Day, Test Your American Flag IQ

The American flag is one of the most recognized symbols in the world. It may have many names—the Star-Spangled Banner, the Stars and Stripes, Old Glory—but it has one clear meaning: it stands for unity and freedom.

Our flag has earned our respect: handle it with care! In that spirit, we invite you to find out just how much you know about caring for and flying our national banner.

To determine your flag IQ, answer each of the following questions, then check below for the answers and figure out your score.

### 1. How do I fly the flag on a flagpole?

(One answer is false—which one?)

- When on the same flagpole, always fly the U.S. flag above any state, municipal or social-organization flag
- When on the same flagpole, the U.S. flag should be above any other nation's flag
- Raise the U.S. flag briskly and lower it ceremoniously
- When flying the U.S. flag near flags of other nations, it should be positioned on its own right

### 2. How do I hang the flag indoors?

(One answer is false—which one?)

- The flag may be used to cover a ceiling
- The flag can be hung horizontally or vertically
- The union, or canton (the blue field of stars), should be on the flag's right and the viewer's left
- If hung in a window, the canton should be on the viewer's left

### 3. When properly folded, the flag takes what shape?

- A rectangle
- A triangle
- A square
- A hexagon

### 4. When is a flag not flown at half-staff?

- Upon the death of a president or former president
- When the president or the governor of a state declares an official period of mourning
- On Memorial Day, honoring those who have died while serving the U.S.
- When a member of your family dies

### 5. How do I raise a flag to the half-staff position?

- Raise it slowly to half-staff
- Raise it slowly all the way to the top, then slowly to half-staff
- Raise it all the way to the top, then all the way to the bottom, then to half-staff
- Raise it briskly all the way to the top, then lower it slowly to half-staff



### 6. What should a civilian do when a flag passes by in a parade or procession?

- Salute and stand at attention
- Place the right hand over the heart while the first U.S. flag passes by
- Place the right hand over the heart while each U.S. flag passes by
- Place the left hand over the heart while the first U.S. flag passes by

### 7. What do I do with my flag when it's worn out?

(One answer is false—which one?)

- Burn it in a private place
- Organizations such as the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Boy Scouts of America or the Girl Scouts can dispose of your flag
- Fold it, then carefully place it in the trash
- Contact your town or city officials for more information

### Answers

- (b) is false. The U.S. flag should never share a pole with another nation's flag. International law forbids the display of one nation's flag above another in times of peace.
- (a) is false. The flag should never be used to cover a ceiling.
- (b) is correct.
- (d) is false. Flags are flown at half-staff only during official periods of mourning. On Memorial Day the flag is flown at half-staff until noon and then at full-staff for the remainder of the day.
- (d) is correct.
- (b) is correct. People in military uniform salute as the first U.S. flag passes; the remaining flags in the parade do not need to be recognized.
- (c) is false. When the U.S. flag is no longer in a condition to be displayed with honor, it should be destroyed in a dignified way.

### Score

- 1-2:** Not too good. Back to Civics class!  
**3-5:** Impressive, but there's room for improvement.  
**6-7:** Well done! Stand tall, patriot!

Presented by



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Cooperatives

We gratefully acknowledge for their expertise the National Flag Foundation—the foremost authority on the U.S. flag and the U.S. Flag Code of 1923 as amended through the last edition in 1998. The Code offers the official way to show respect for the flag, but has no enforcement power or rigor of law. If you would like additional information please visit: [www.americanflags.org](http://www.americanflags.org)

Crowd photo: Mike Powell, Allsport Concepts