



# 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



### Co-op membership: What's in it for me?

By Brenda Swartzlander

YOU SET UP your electric service account with United Electric and you think, "That's done. Now I just have to pay my monthly bill." But the truth is, we're more than just an electricity provider. You are a member of a cooperative. There are businesses, including American Express, Sam's Club and Costco, that call their customers members, who ask you to pay an annual membership fee to do business with them. That is not what being a member of an electric cooperative means.

As a member of United Electric, you have a voice when it comes to the way we do business. You elect directors to represent you on United Electric's board. These directors, members who receive electricity from United Electric, are tasked with making sound financial decisions on behalf of all members. They hire the management, set long-term goals, approve the budget and set policies to ensure all members are treated fairly.

Unlike other companies that refer to customers as members, we are local. You likely know an employee of United Electric. They may be someone you see in church or the coach of a local team or a member of your fire department. Our employees — your friends and neighbors — share the same concerns that you do.

We're not-for-profit. United Electric doesn't offer profits to investors in some far-off place — we return money over and above operating costs to you, our members, based on electricity consumption. Annually, electric co-ops nationwide return millions of dollars in capital credits. Last year, United Electric returned \$989,200 to our mem-

bers, bringing the total capital credits returned over the past eight years to over \$7.6 million

We're here for you. Our mission is to provide you with safe, reliable and affordable electricity. We care about our members' quality of life, so our employees are continuously finding innovative ways to improve our service. As we embrace new technology, we first consider what advantages it will have for our members. We have come a long way from the days when members had to read their own meter and submit their reading with their monthly bill. Today, automatic reporting meters report your reading, and allow us to check to see if the power is on to your account.

SmartHub gives you the option of going online to check on your account balance, and pay your bill from your computer or cellphone. We offer members a number of value-added services, including installing meter poles, transfer switches, or surge-protection equipment to protect your electronic devices...all at our cost. And for those of you who prefer a more personal touch, we continue to maintain an office in DuBois where you can stop in and do business in person.

These are just a few facts that differentiate electric cooperative members from what others may call members. For more information about United Electric and the services we offer to our members, visit our website at [www.unitedpa.com](http://www.unitedpa.com).

Until next month,  
Brenda

Rustic Views

# The love and labor of farmers

By Glenn Schuckers

THERE IS something to say about leaders who have been farmers or who have some farming in their background. I hesitate to say that trusting a farmer is a lot easier than trusting someone who has never had his hands in the soil or worked up a good sweat working on some land, but looking back, history makes a good point for it. You want an honest answer? Ask a farmer.

At least eight former American presidents were farmers, or had a fairly close connection to farming or agriculture.

The first three, as almost everyone knows, were farmers and had very close ties to the earth. George Washington and Thomas Jefferson had large plantations in Virginia and counted themselves as “planters.” Jefferson, especially, was a farmer who had a genuine interest in his property. He brought in new plants and species, oversaw the planting and care of his farm, and typical of his genius in all areas, kept notes

and journals of all the aspects of his farm.

Although not as active a planter as Jefferson, Washington switched from tobacco to grain crops because they were more profitable, something modern farmers understand. He also applied the scientific practice of crop rotation to prevent his lands from becoming depleted.

Adams, whose home was known as Braintree, had a farm in Massachusetts, but he was so deeply involved in the politics of the new nation that much of the operation of the farm was left to his wife, Abigail.

But many of his letters to her and her responses were about the farm and orchard there.

Abraham Lincoln grew up on what was then nearly the frontier, but all of his childhood and early life was spent on farms, and his background and stories in later life reflected not only his knowledge of farming but also his love of it. It was during his administration that land grant colleges were established, one of whose purposes was to foster the knowledge and practice of farming.

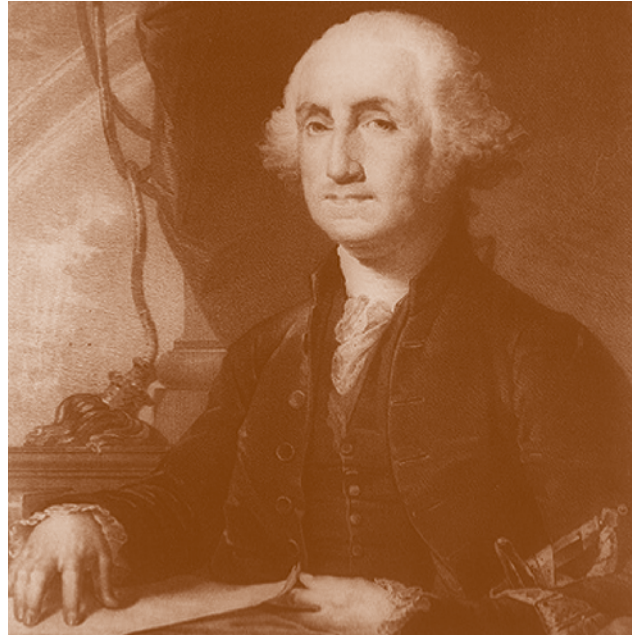
Theodore Roosevelt

was a lifelong rancher who loved everything outdoors. A severe winter almost wiped out his livestock so he knew full well the hardships of farm life.

In recalling his early life on a farm in Missouri, Harry Truman said he would go out with a mule and corn planter, fix his eyes on a spot at the end of the field and drive to it, planting a straight row that could be cultivated later.

Lyndon Johnson grew up in a farm in Texas. Later, as an adult in both Texas and national politics, he kept in close touch with his LBJ Ranch in that state, and took pride in his status as a rancher.

Most Americans remember Jimmy Carter as a peanut farmer, but the farm was transformed into a distribution and storage center when he was an adult. So what is it about farmers that set them apart from other jobs? What is it that is so unique about being a



VIRGINIA FARMER: George Washington, our first president, spent much of his boyhood at Ferry Farm in Stafford County near Fredericksburg, Va., which he later inherited upon his father's death. He eventually acquired a plantation on the Potomac River at Little Hunting Creek, which we all know as his home, Mount Vernon.



MISSOURI FARMER: Harry Truman, our 33rd president, was born in Lamar, Mo., and spent most of his youth on his family's 600-acre farm near Independence, Mo.

farmer, either in the 18th century or the 21st?

If you drive out into the country today, the first thing you will see is that there are not very many active farms. Not all that many years ago, if people drove 15 minutes away from any town in Western Pennsylvania, they would pass almost nothing but farms. Some of them raised grain, some had beef cattle and a lot of them were dairy farms.

In the days when milk was stored in 10-gallon cans and left on a stand beside the road for trucks to pick up and take to a dairy to be pasteurized, homogenized, bottled, and sold, many of the farms in rural America were mainly the home of dairy cows. More often than not, the cows were milked by hand and buckets were dumped into the cans.

Farmers worked all summer to get food for their cows into barns and silos for the winter. And it was hard work. Most of them started their days when the sun was barely up and worked until dark.

A lot of that has not changed except that the tractors got a lot bigger, refrigerated tanks replaced the cans, and lights in the barns mean the day is not over when the sun sets.

In short, dairy farming was and is harder work than most people are willing to do. And farmers do it for a lot lower wage than most people are willing to take.

Most other kinds of farms are similar. Orchards don't demand the kind of daily attention that cows do, but as soon as our crop was picked, and we had it in crates and bins in the barn, it was time to make cider. As soon as one crop was marketed, it was time to start trimming the trees. There was really no off season in fruit growing either.

About the same goes for all kinds of farming. As soon as one season is over, it is time to start another. Grain, vegetable, beef, hog, and chicken farms may have different demands, but they all do have demands, and the work is never really done.

Maybe that is what makes farmers

good leaders. They are accustomed to the idea that work is never done, that the end of one job means the beginning of the next.

They also deal with a lot of uncertainty on a daily basis. When we had the orchard, we never knew in June what the price of fruit would be in September. No farmer knows what the future brings.

A disease can come out of nowhere and ruin a crop or decimate a herd of cattle. A July hailstorm or tornado can lay waste to whole fields of corn or oats, and a late frost can wipe out an entire year's crop of fruit.

Hard work, faith in the future, the

uncertainty of nature and the fact that pragmatism overrules ideology in farming are qualities that leaders need. We all need to accept that some things are beyond our control, and we have to work around, over, under, or through the obstacles in our path without complaint.

Don't believe me? Just ask a farmer. 🌻



**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.

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## Harvest workers urged to take time to reap safe harvest

HARVEST can be an exciting and exhausting time, the culmination of a season of hard work. However, the rush to harvest can also yield tragic outcomes. Each year, dozens of farm workers are killed and hundreds are injured in accidents involving power lines and electrical equipment.

“Things people see every day can fade from view and in the busy-ness of harvest time, it’s easy for farm workers to forget about the power lines overhead,” says Richard McCracken of the Safe Electricity Advisory Board. “But failure to notice them can be a deadly oversight.”

It’s essential to review with all workers the farm activities that take place around power lines. Inspect the height of farm equipment to determine clearance. Keep equipment at least 10 feet away from power lines – above, below and to the side – a 360-degree rule.

“Always lower grain augers before moving them, even if it’s only a few feet,” adds Bob Aherin, a University of Illinois professor and agricultural safety & health program leader. “Variables like wind, uneven ground, shifting weight or other conditions can combine to create an unexpected result. Also use extreme caution when raising the bed of a grain truck.”

Farm workers should take these steps to ensure a safer harvest season:

- ▶ Use care when raising augers or the bed of grain trucks around power lines.
- ▶ Use a spotter when operating large machinery near power lines. Do not



SAFE ELECTRICITY

**SAFETY FIRST:** Farm workers should always keep equipment at least 10 feet away from power lines – above, below and to the side – a 360-degree rule.

let the spotter touch the machinery while it is being moved anywhere near power lines.

- ▶ As with any outdoor work, be careful not to raise any equipment such as ladders, poles or rods into power lines. Remember, non-metallic materials such as lumber, tree limbs, ropes, and hay will conduct electricity depending on dampness, dust, and dirt contamination.
- ▶ Never attempt to raise or move a power line to clear a path!
- ▶ Don’t use metal poles to break up bridged grain inside bins. Know where and how to shut off the power in an emergency.
- ▶ Use qualified electricians for work on drying equipment and other farm electrical systems.

Operators of farm equipment or vehicles must also know what to do if the vehicle comes in contact with a power line: stay on the equipment, warn others to stay away, and call 911. Do not get off the equipment until the utility crew says it is safe to do so.

“If the power line is energized and you step outside, touching the vehicle and ground, your

body becomes the path and electrocution is the result,” Aherin says. “Even if a power line has landed on the ground, the potential for the area nearby to be energized still exists. Stay inside the vehicle unless there’s fire or imminent risk of fire.”

If this is the case, jump off the equipment with your feet together, without touching the ground and vehicle at the same time. Then, still keeping your feet together, hop to safety as you leave the area.

Once you get away from the equipment, never attempt to get back on or even touch the equipment. Some electrocutions have occurred after the operator dismounts and, realizing nothing has happened, tries to get back on the equipment.

It is very important that all farm workers and seasonal employees are informed of electrical hazards and trained in proper procedures to avoid injury.

For more information on farm electrical safety, visit [www.SafeElectricity.org](http://www.SafeElectricity.org).

*Safe Electricity is the safety outreach program of the Energy Education Council, a non-profit organization with more than 400 electric cooperative members and many others who share the mission of creating a safer, smarter world.*

### Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Cooler temps will be here soon! No matter what kind of heating system you have in your home, you can save money and increase your comfort by properly maintaining and upgrading your equipment. Contact a licensed professional to inspect your system before the winter chill arrives.

Source: U.S. Dept. of Energy

