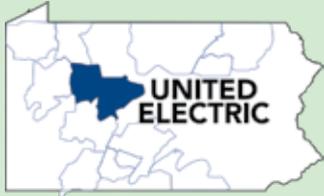




# United Electric Cooperative, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

## UNITED ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

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## From Dark Farms to Digital Dreams: Celebrating Nearly a Century of Connection



**LEN HAWKINS**

**IMAGINE WAKING UP TOMORROW** and flipping a switch ... but nothing happens. These days, electricity is woven into nearly every moment of our lives. We rely on it for everything from making coffee to streaming our favorite shows and even powering the data centers that drive our economy in 2026.



It's almost impossible to picture a time when electricity was a rare luxury, especially for families living in rural Pennsylvania.

But just 90 years ago, the story was very different. In the 1920s, only about half of Pennsylvanians had access to electricity. Investor-owned utilities only installed power lines in regions where they could make the most profit, leaving the countryside quite literally in the dark. By the 1930s, a mere 6% of Pennsylvania's farmers enjoyed the benefits of electric power.

This imbalance didn't go unnoticed — especially by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR). Inspired by Morris Llewellyn Cooke's famous "12-Minute Memo," which detailed how more than 5 million out of 6 million U.S. farms were still without electricity, Roosevelt made rural electrification a national priority.

The memo sparked a revolution. On May 11, 1935, FDR signed an executive order creating the Rural Electrification Administration, and a year later, the Rural Electrification Act provided federal loans to bring power to America's remote corners. While Washington was laying the groundwork, communities in central Pennsylvania were mobilizing to make change happen on the ground.

A.L. Orner, a Home Camp dairy farmer, was contacted by the Clearfield County Agricultural Extension to form an electric cooperative. On Dec. 31, 1936, Clearfield Electric Cooperative was born, followed by Jefferson Electric Cooperative in 1937. For decades, these cooperatives worked side by side — until joining forces in 1966 to form United Electric Cooperative, Inc.

United's first leaders, Clair A. Allshouse, Robert E. Leonard, Glenn W. Olson, Kenneth P. Smith and J.E. Nicholson, knew they were building something that would outlast them.

The same cooperative spirit that first lit up local homes in 1936 continues to fuel our innovation and growth today — and every single member helps shape our journey. The Orner family, whose farm helped to launch this movement nearly a century ago, still calls the area home and runs a smaller family operation. In fact, our very own COO and HR Manager Lauren (Orner) Gustafson grew up among those fields, carrying forward the family's legacy. Stay tuned next month, when we'll dig even deeper into the colorful history of the Orner Farm.

As you browse through the historic photos on page 16D, take a moment to not only appreciate the technological advances, but also how far we've come in making electricity affordable, reliable and safe for everyone. If you have photos from "when the lights came on" or stories to share that occurred before or during 1970, please contact Marketing & Member Services Manager Kristy Smith at 888-581-8969, Ext. 8507, or ksmith@unitedpa.com. We might feature your story and/or photos in a future article.

Here's to 90 years of overcoming darkness together — and to an even brighter future ahead. 🌞

**LEN HAWKINS**  
PRESIDENT & CEO

## Rustic Views

# Marching Along

GLENN SCHUCKERS

**BACK IN MY PREVIOUS LIFE**, I once challenged some students to come up with as many different definitions as they could for the word “run.” As they dug into word meanings, they eventually came up with more than 20.

Today, I have a challenge for you: How many definitions can you think of for the word “march?”

March is the third month of the year in both the Julian and Gregorian calendars. March is the kind of music bands play when they “march” down a street. March can also be what we do to make a point: There have been marches to end hunger and marches to end poverty. It is often said that people who do not conform to the way others think or act “march to a different drummer.”



## Change is coming

For most of us, March is a time to get things started. A biology and science teacher who taught up the hall from me for many years always had his junior high students start tomato plants in his room. The students would start the seeds in Styrofoam cups, and when they were ready to be planted, the kids would each get one to take home. He always told me that tomato seeds needed to be started on or just before St. Patrick’s Day.

When I started tomato plants from seeds and had a row of south-facing windows, I followed his advice and always had healthy plants ready to put out right around Memorial Day. That meant getting seeds planted around the middle of March.

Most of the time in mid-March, snow is still on the ground, the trees are bare and brown, and it is a little hard to imagine that in about 90 days, the countryside will look so different. But that change is coming just as it always has, and it is our job this month to prepare.

Maybe I have already done my first job: planning the garden for the coming year. With that completed, it may be time to order the seeds and plants I will need. I usually order more than I need, and seed companies are partly to blame. If a company sells beans in packets, and the packets have 250 seeds and I only need about 100, what do I do with all the rest?

Not wanting to just throw them away, I usually put them in an empty coffee can that is airtight and save them for ... what? A second garden? Another garden that I have not planted yet? Next year? These are the things I usually tell myself, but 1) I will never be able to find the seeds I kept for a year, and 2) I will probably be afraid the seeds are not good after being kept for a year.

So instead of throwing them out when I should, I’ll throw them out a year later. It’s a vicious cycle, but somehow, I’ll keep the ones I don’t use “just in case they might be needed.”

## TLC for trees

The other job that I always seem to need to do every March is the annual cleanup. I don’t know where the

**HELP WITH HEALING:** A tree’s broken branch is shown. One of the most important jobs in March is pruning trees.

sheets of paper, cloth or cardboard come from, but a lot of them seem to end up in either my lawn or garden. It's not a big job, but it takes up time that I always think should be devoted to more productive things. Still, it needs to be done, and the sooner it's done, the sooner I can get to one of those more important tasks.

Maybe the most important job this month is pruning the trees. Hopefully, the snow will have melted and the ground will be dried out enough that I won't have to wade through knee-deep snow or slog through inches of mud to prune them. A warm day in March before any leaves begin to open, when the sun is high enough that I'll be able to look up without being blinded, is an ideal time to prune the trees.

To me, looking up is one of the parts of pruning. I always tell folks to look at each tree from four sides, and use their imagination when they look. Forget how the tree looks now when the branches are bare and imagine what it will look like in three or four months, when there's new growth and the limbs and branches are covered with leaves.

When I trim, it is not for March, but for the six or seven months that follow March. That takes a lot of imagination, but it is necessary. I am not going to delve into the finer details of proper pruning; whole books have been written about that. In addition, there are pamphlets, guides and even demonstrations on YouTube. Still, here are a few of the basics:

First, after I look at a tree from four sides, I take out any broken limbs or twigs. Winter snow, ice and wind have a way of breaking branches, which will not heal themselves. A limb that is broken now will still be broken in July and will be in the way of other healthy limbs later. Also, any limb that is rubbing against another limb will still rub against it in the summer, and either one or both will lose some bark, which is not good.

From there comes the hard part: Look at the tree and imagine what it will look like when it is full of new growth and leaves. Remember, for trees to thrive, they need three things: sunlight, air and water. When a tree is well trimmed, you should be able to look through it, the air should be able to circulate through it, and rain should be able to get through it to the ground below.

Finally, pay attention to the aesthetic of the tree. Apple trees generally need to be a little narrower at the top and wider closer to the bottom. Peach trees are a little more umbrella shaped, while plum and cherry trees can be a little like a ball on a stick.

With all that in mind, we both have a lot to do this month, so good luck getting everything done. If you don't finish, don't worry. There is always April. 🍀



**READY FOR PRUNING:** This tree has not been trimmed for two years and needs a lot of pruning. About half the branches that are pointing up need to be cut off while others need to be tied to make the tree wider and lean tall.



**United Electric**  
COOPERATIVE, INC.  
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**DREAM.**  
**SHINE.**  
**ACHIEVE.**

**ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS FOR THE SHINE THE LIGHT SCHOLARSHIP**

All students attending or planning to attend higher education\* | Application deadline is **April 15, 2026.**

**Contact Kristy Smith:**  
888-581-8969, Ext. 8507  
ksmith@unitedpa.com  
unitedpa.com

\*Must be a United Electric Cooperative member or dependent. Directors, employees and their families are ineligible to apply.



# United Electric Turns 90!



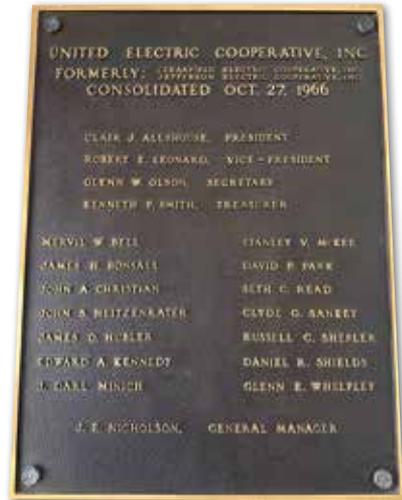
The Jefferson Electric Cooperative headquarters building in Brookville is shown during the late 1930s. Jefferson Electric was a predecessor to today's United Electric Cooperative.



The Clearfield Electric Cooperative headquarters building is shown before it merged with Jefferson Electric Cooperative to become United Electric Cooperative.



The Clearfield and Jefferson electric cooperatives held their first combined meeting in 1966.



This plaque commemorates the founding of United Electric Cooperative in October 1966.



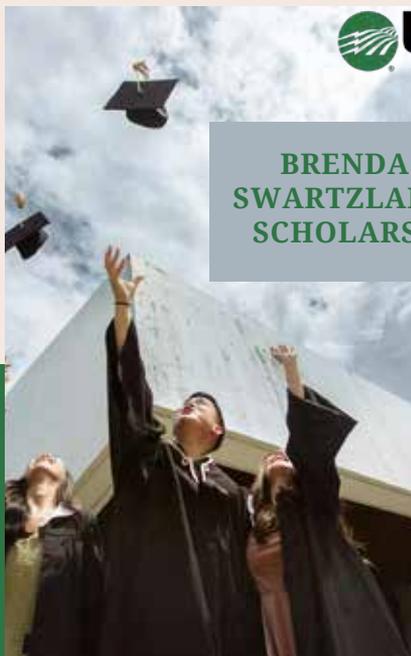
Maude the Mule is shown in a Jefferson Electric Cooperative truck used for setting poles.



Jefferson Electric Cooperative linemen are shown in the fall of 1966.



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**BRENDA L. SWARTZLANDER SCHOLARSHIP**

**ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS FOR THE BRENDA L. SWARTZLANDER SCHOLARSHIP\***

Eligible applicants must major in:

- Business Management
- Engineering

**Deadline to apply: 4/15/26**

Applicants are also eligible to apply for the Shine the Light Scholarship.

**Contact Kristy Smith:**  
888-581-8969, Ext. 8507  
ksmith@unitedpa.com  
unitedpa.com

\*Must be a United Electric Cooperative member or dependent. Directors, employees and their families are ineligible to apply.