

RAPPAHANNOCK ELECTRIC

Cooperative Living



SUMMER 2026 FAIRS & FESTIVALS GUIDE

PAGE 8

Pilots float their hot-air balloons above the Lexington, Va., countryside during Balloons Over Rockbridge 2025.

LESLEY MCCORMICK PHOTO





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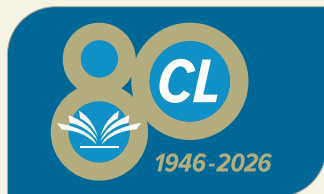
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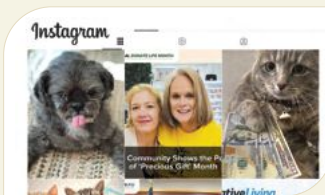
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Correction: The May edition of Cooperative Living omitted the credit for Jim Robertson of Northern Neck Electric Cooperative as the photographer of images included with the story "Future on the Line."

VIEWPOINT

Reflecting on Community



In the co-op world, we often talk about community. In fact, it is in the DNA of a co-op — as reflected in one of our founding principles called Concern for Community. Our service reaches to the heart of the community, and we value every connection. We energize the future for our very young and career-bound high school seniors. We are grateful for the workers keeping the lights on and our elders sharing the wisdom of days gone by.

When I read this month's *Cooperative Living*, I can't help but reflect upon the community members whose stories fill these pages. Our Rural Living column recognizes the milestone of high school graduations. A new crop of young people are entering the workforce or pursuing higher education. A number of these folks will become future community leaders.

Our Cooperative Focus explores those who choose a career of service in our electric cooperatives, giving back to their communities by working to keep the lights on. And of course, we continue to look back at 80 years of this magazine and showcase some of the people who grappled with issues that previous generations have overcome to make our communities what they are today.

We talk a lot about "service" in co-ops. It's not just about keeping electric service affordable and reliable. It's about giving back — embracing that Concern for Community that inspired co-ops in the first place. It's who we are. It's what we do.

In a world of complex challenges, negative news stories and difficult issues, let's stay focused on helping others and working together to overcome the challenges ahead. Then we will have many good stories to tell in the next eight decades of *Cooperative Living*.

Brian S. Mosier

Brian S. Mosier, President & CEO
Virginia, Maryland & Delaware Association of Electric Cooperatives

Cooperative Living

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To inform you about your cooperative and its efforts to serve your energy needs; how to use electricity safely and efficiently; and the people who define and enhance the quality of life in communities served by electric co-ops.

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Please recycle.



Eyes on the Skies

Contributing weather data to forecasters nationwide

by Laura Emery, Staff Writer

Brad Blase has a front-row seat to Mother Nature's shifting moods. From a small solar-powered station on the back patio of his home in Powhatan, Va., he tracks shifting winds, rising humidity, subtle swings in temperature and barometric pressure changes that hint at what may come next. "The weather is highly variable. Even seasons, year to year, can be so different," the Southside Electric Cooperative member says.

Blase has always been fascinated by the weather. "As a child, I had a plastic outdoor thermometer I checked every day," he recalls.

What began as childhood curiosity has grown into a serious hobby — one that places him among a nationwide network of citizen observers helping scientists and forecasters better understand weather conditions on the ground.

A self-described "weather geek," Blase is a professional geologist whose interest in the weather deepened years ago when he and his wife, Beth, were living in Winchester.

"In Winchester, we built a house [served by Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative] on the side of North Mountain, and it was very windy. I was curious about how fast the wind was blowing, so I purchased the Davis weather station I have now," he explains.

Soon, Blase was hooked and sharing his data online. He got involved in CoCoRaHS — Community Collaborative Rain, Hail and Snow Network — a nationwide volunteer effort to collect precipitation measurements using standardized rain gauges.

"The National Weather Service spot-checks their data using citizens' rain gauge data," he says. "When I started with CoCoRaHS in 2005, there were only a couple thousand observers. Now, there are over 20,000."

The instrument on Blase's porch transmits readings to a console inside his home. That data is shared with multiple online platforms, making it available to researchers and meteorologists nationwide, including the National Weather Service.

"The data helps NWS ground-truth [compare radar estimates to ground measurements] its radar data. Thunderstorms, especially, are highly variable in rainfall. Instantaneous reports are more accurate than what radar can estimate, so it helps NWS predict where flooding may occur," he says.

From a plastic outdoor thermometer to a sophisticated weather station, Blase is doing what he's always done — keeping his eyes on the skies. ●

► For more information on how to become a citizen weather observer, visit co-opliving.com.



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1986

Growing Together

Celebrating the fifth decade of Cooperative Living

by Laura Emery, Staff Writer

In celebration of *Cooperative Living* magazine's 80th anniversary, each issue this year will spotlight one of the eight decades since this publication — first published in October 1946 — began inspiring, informing and connecting electric cooperative members.

During the magazine's fifth decade, from 1986 to 1996, rural America continued to transform. Farms remained central, but new industries emerged. Energy policy debates in Washington, D.C., also started to ripple across cooperative territory. *Rural Living* — as *Cooperative Living* was then known — helped readers understand change while celebrating traditions that defined rural life.



“wheeling rights” — the ability to transmit power across another utility's lines — became increasingly important as the electric grid evolved.

Energy remained a focus throughout the decade, and volatile oil prices spurred a search for alternative energy sources.

TECHNOLOGY MEETS TRANSITION

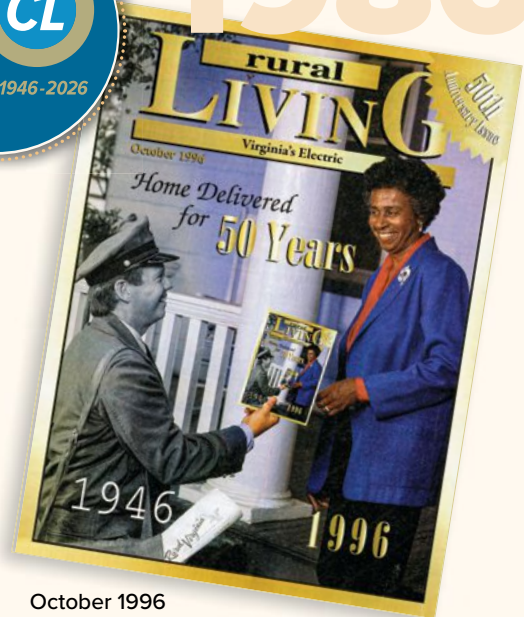
Technology continued to reshape daily routines. In February 1987, a columnist described learning to use a microwave oven with cautious optimism. “I'm still finding my way,” he wrote, capturing the tone of the moment as people adapted to change at their own pace.

Environmental awareness gained momentum. Coverage throughout 1987 highlighted new federal clean-air standards to reduce harmful pollutants.

In August 1987, the magazine reported gasoline averaged about \$1 per gallon, farmland prices had dropped sharply in the preceding years and industries across the country were adjusting to new environmental requirements tied to cleaner air. That same year, nuclear energy continued to expand, as the U.S. added five new commercial nuclear power plants. The total number of nuclear plants grew to 108, supplying about 17% of U.S. electricity.

PEOPLE AND PLACES

While covering national policy and energy developments, *Rural Living* never lost sight of the people at the heart of it all. In 1987, the magazine



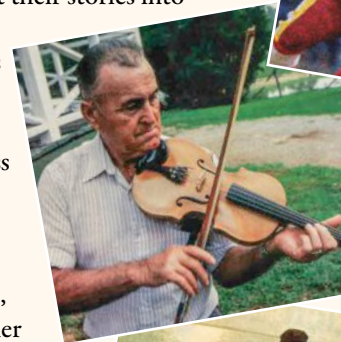
October 1996

began featuring multiple co-op member profiles in each issue, presented as “a visit” with some of the people who make their communities better. From artists, craftsmen and educators to lineworkers, farmers and small-business owners, the magazine brought their stories into readers' homes.

Travel features encouraged readers to explore destinations across the region. The October 1987 issue focused on the Eastern Shore, highlighting barrier islands known for wild ponies, working waterfronts and coastal traditions. The issue also explored the history of decoy carving and highlighted A&N Electric Cooperative lineworkers serving Tangier and Smith islands.

In 1988, *Rural Living* circulation had reached 250,000, making it the largest subscription magazine in Virginia.

The January 1988 issue focused on Radford native Gary Clark, whose NFL career was gaining momentum. He later became a four-time Pro Bowl selection



Halley's Comet

In February 1986, Halley's Comet swept past Earth — a once-in-a-lifetime sight for most readers.

By March 1986, the magazine reported that a national survey found cooperative communities increasingly included retirees and blue-collar workers rather than farmers or ranchers.

ENERGY IN FOCUS

Energy policy discussions in Washington, D.C., were beginning to affect cooperatives and their members directly. The Reagan administration's plan to privatize power marketing raised concerns about increased bulk power costs for electricity generated at federal hydropower stations. Discussions about

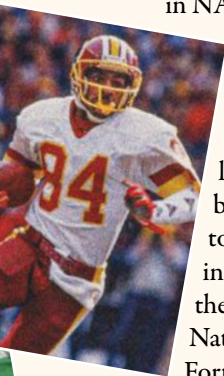
-1996



and helped lead the Washington Redskins to two Super Bowl championships.

In the May 1989 issue, John Cephas of Bowling Green, Va., was featured for his fingerstyle guitar rooted in Piedmont blues traditions. Before his death in 2009, he received a National Heritage Fellowship and, with Phil Wiggins, earned prestigious blues awards and helped preserve a regional musical legacy.

Rural Living readers met Rockbridge County's Rick Mast in August 1989, who went on to compete for 15 seasons in NASCAR's top series and record dozens of top-10 finishes.



The October 1989 issue paired global and local themes, covering both cooperative efforts to help impoverished families in Central America and the Boy Scouts of America National Jamboree at Fort A.P. Hill.

SERVICE AND STRENGTH

Also in October 1989, Virginia Power joined Old Dominion Electric Cooperative to develop plans for a coal-fired generating plant in Halifax County. Over the next 16 months, the magazine invited readers to follow the Clover Power Station from early planning through permitting and construction. By the time the plant entered service — Unit 1 in 1995 and Unit 2 in 1996 — readers understood the role it would play in strengthening the region's electric infrastructure for the future.

Just weeks earlier, that infrastructure

had been tested. Hurricane Hugo ripped across the Carolinas, leaving extensive property damage and knocking out electric service across the region. *Rural Living* reported that 14 of the region's electric cooperatives dispatched more than 150 lineworkers to assist restoration efforts.

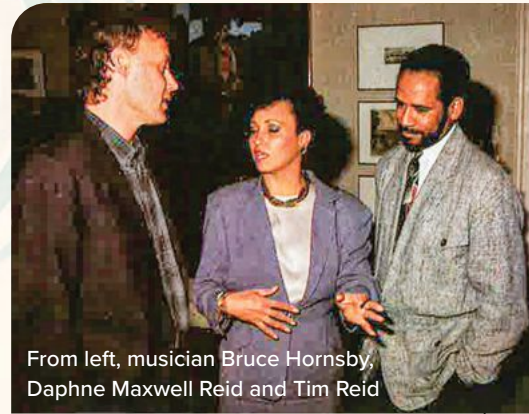
After the Berlin Wall fell in late 1989, editor Richard Johnstone Jr. reflected in the January 1990 issue that "even the most hard-bitten cynics" should now recognize that "miracles do happen." That same issue marked the debut of the publication's Virginia Legislative Guide, which helped strengthen readers' connection to policymakers.

The October 1991 issue highlighted the growing leadership role of women in electric cooperatives and featured board members from several Virginia cooperatives, including Rappahannock Electric Cooperative's Darlene Carpenter, Northern Neck Electric Cooperative's Elnora Tompkins and Southside Electric Cooperative's Lillian Hicks.

FAMOUS FACES AND FORECASTS

Rural Living's January 1992 cover featured legendary actor Charlton Heston as part of a story on Virginia's growing role in film and television production. Virginia native Tim Reid of "WKRP in Cincinnati" was also photographed at the Virginia Festival of American Film and later appeared again in *Cooperative Living*.

In 1993, the Northern Virginia edition was retitled *Current Living* as the area's demographics became



From left, musician Bruce Hornsby, Daphne Maxwell Reid and Tim Reid

more suburban than rural.

An article in May 1993 imagined the future of household technology 20 years later, predicting homes assisted by robots cooking meals, mowing lawns, organizing closets and monitoring security.

CELEBRATING MILESTONES

In November 1994, the magazine introduced the Say Cheese column featuring reader-submitted photographs of everyday life across cooperative communities. *Rural Living* celebrated its 50th anniversary in 1996, reflecting on milestones that included the first color cover



in 1956, the change from tabloid to magazine format in 1960, introduction of local pages in 1967, the transition from *Rural Virginia* to *Rural Living* in 1970 and the first 40-page issue in 1985. *Rural Living* had grown into one of the region's most widely read magazines.

Through years of change, one idea continued to guide the magazine's mission: Electric co-ops belong to the people they serve. It's a message that defined the publication's fifth decade and still shapes *Cooperative Living* today. ●



The animation studio, Pixar, was founded in 1986. Its first feature-length movie was *Toy Story*.



In 1989, the World Wide Web was invented proposing a "universal linked information system."



The Berlin Wall fell in late 1989 as East Berlin transit restrictions were overwhelmed and discarded.



The 1996 Summer Olympics, commonly known as the Centennial Olympic Games, were held in Atlanta, Ga.

Recharging the Workforce

Lineworker demand challenges co-ops to feed career pipeline

by Chris Dovi, Contributing Writer

VMDAEC's Girl Power Camp offers high school girls a one-day exploration of careers in line work.

VMDAEC PHOTOS



Pre-apprenticeship programs are on the rise.



Demand for power line workers and related trades is soaring.

From the Bureau of Labor Statistics to Goldman Sachs Research and the U.S. Department of Energy, projections point to a growing need for skilled utility workers in the years ahead.

The numbers are staggering: According to BLS, there will be 7% employment growth for power line workers from 2024 to 2034 — nearly 11,000 job openings per year for power line installers and repairers. This employment growth registers well above the average for other careers, compounded by the fact that 40% of utility workers are at retirement age already or will be by 2030.

It's a complex issue for utilities. Retirements are outpacing the training of new skilled lineworkers as energy demands hit their highest levels worldwide. And the exit of utility workers with decades of experience leaves younger workers without seasoned mentors.

Mike Costley, an adjunct instructor for Southside Virginia Community College's Power Line Worker Training School in Blackstone, Va., retired in 2019 after 27 years as a Dominion Energy lineman. "When I retired, the average age of a lineman was about 45 to 50 years across the country," he says. "Today the average age is about a decade younger."

The workforce trend puts pressure on large utility companies and rural electric cooperatives alike. But co-ops face additional challenges. The co-ops' rural locations can make it harder to recruit skilled workers to relocate to those areas. And investor-owned utility companies can lure co-op workers away with salary and benefit incentives.

Yet the Virginia, Maryland & Delaware Association of Electric Cooperatives and its member co-ops have created strategies to showcase utility jobs for any career-focused audience.



Choptank Electric Cooperative



Forty percent of utility workers are at retirement age already or will be by 2030.

Employment for power line workers is projected to grow 7% from 2024 to 2034.

— Bureau of Labor Statistics

Drawing interest among high schoolers is a key tactic, says Katie Luckett, director of marketing, communications and education at Maryland’s Choptank Electric Cooperative.

“We host many tours here at Choptank for high school students interested in utility linework,” Luckett says. “We show them the equipment, materials, bucket trucks, climbing demonstrations, the outside of a substation. ... It’s as close as the students will get to real linework without being up in a bucket or dealing with dangerous equipment.”

If students can’t get to the co-op, the co-op will take demonstrations to them, she adds.

Interactive events and programs across co-ops engage students to learn by doing. VMDAEC’s Girl Power Camp empowers young women and introduces them to utility careers. Events at the association’s training facilities in Palmyra, Va., and Salisbury, Md., get the young women geared up and active in simulating basic skills of the trade. Some Girl Power participants have transitioned from pre-apprenticeship training into full-fledged co-op careers.



A Day in the Life



Girl Power



Power Line Worker Training School

Co-ops such as Community Electric Cooperative and Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative offer a half-day session for high schoolers called A Day in the Life of a Lineman, allowing them to meet professional lineworkers, see equipment and learn the scope of the career.

Pre-apprenticeship training programs are growing in Virginia and Maryland to channel young people into the trade, largely inspired by the SVCC program, which recently celebrated its 10th anniversary. So far, the program graduated 730 students. Keith Harkins, vice president

of academic and workforce programs, says about 90% of graduates are hired directly into apprenticeships.

It has spawned similar programs at other community colleges — Wytheville, Mountain Empire and Laurel Ridge community colleges all now boast similar programs. Wor-Wic Community College in Salisbury, Md., began training the sixth cohort of students in its pre-apprenticeship program in May.

Years ago, says Alan Scruggs, VMDAEC’s vice president of safety and training services, lineworkers were hired off the street. “It takes a good five years to bring in somebody green off the street and get them up to speed where they can actually contribute as a journeyman,” he says.

Programs like SVCC’s help identify recruits who are serious about the profession. “It weeds them out before they’re hired by a co-op or any other utility,” says Scruggs.

And with safety always the chief concern for any utility crew, there must be increased attention to preparation, says Rachael Freeman, VMDAEC director of safety training.

“More young employees are stepping into leadership roles earlier in their careers,”

she says. “One way the association has tried to do our part to help address this is by offering crew leadership training.”

The training teaches workers looking to advance how to “lead across the generation gap,” she says, and how to transition from linework into positions where a worker may have to supervise former peers.

“The course has helped provide newer leaders with practical tools and guidance as they move into supervisory roles,” she says. ●

2026 Guide TO Fairs & Festivals



Whether it's in your backyard or a few hours' drive away, there's an event calling you and your fellow fun-seekers. This year's Summer Fairs & Festivals Guide gives you a meaningful reason to get busy with your calendar and GPS.

This season's fairs and festivals span the map, from the photogenic Balloons Over Rockbridge in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley to the Chincoteague Island Blueberry Festival on Chincoteague Island, Va. There's almost no good reason to stay home this summer. So, here's what you need to get up and go:

BALLOONS OVER ROCKBRIDGE

July 4-5
Lexington, Va.

This spectacle on the Oak Hill grounds of the Virginia Horse Center engages almost all your senses. The collection of hot-air balloons offers a magical display, and those who take one of the available tethered rides can experience the bliss of floating freely — or somewhat freely. Balloons over Rockbridge was created as a nonprofit festival to bring wonder and enjoyment to attendees while raising funds for local charities and

other nonprofit organizations. Come watch the graceful hot-air balloon launches, enjoy live music, sample offerings from food vendors and check out kid-friendly family activities. Balloonsoverrockbridge.com

SHENANDOAH COUNTY CELEBRATES 1776

June 20, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.
Woodstock, Va.

Immerse yourself in this all-day, multifaceted tribute

to the founding days of the United States. Beginning with an opening ceremony on the steps of the historic Shenandoah County Courthouse, the day's events include reenactments of Colonial-era characters and culture. Sponsored by the Shenandoah County Historical Society, the event offers something for everyone, including a kid-friendly scavenger hunt, history lectures, museums, art and artisans, local food vendors and Revolutionary War encampments. Shenandoahhistory.org



2026 HOT AIR BALLOON & MUSIC FESTIVAL

JULY 4 & 5

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KIDS ZONE * HOT AIR BALLOON FLIGHTS
FOOD TRUCKS * TETHERED BALLOON RIDES
BALLOON GLOW



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HOORAY FOR HOPEWELL HISTORY 250 CELEBRATION

June 27, noon-7 p.m.
Hopewell, Va.

Situated on the Appomattox River at Hopewell's City Point, Hopewell Manor makes the perfect setting for a festival spotlighting the nation's 250th anniversary. Visitors are immersed in the spirit of the nation's crucible at Historic Appomattox Manor, which witnessed key moments of the Civil War as a strategic riverfront location 25 miles south of Richmond. This free community event, sponsored by the Hopewell/Prince George Chamber of Commerce, concludes with a fireworks finale over the river. Hopewellva250.org

VIRGINIA CANTALOUPE FESTIVAL

July 24, 5-10 p.m.

Berry Hill Resort & Conference Center
South Boston, Va.

It's Lope Fest, for short, and this fruit-focused event, presented by the Halifax County Chamber of

Commerce, honors the local variety of cantaloupe harvested from the rich soil along the Dan River. On this festive evening, you can indeed lope around the stately grounds of South Boston's Berry Hill Resort & Conference Center while enjoying food from a

variety of vendors and vibing to the music of headlining group Supafly Five, along with mixes by DJ Mike Brooks. ValoFest.net

Shenandoah County Celebrates 1776 June 20 10am-5pm

A day for the whole family! Rain or Shine!

Opening Ceremony @10am
—At the Historic Courthouse Steps—
SAR Color Guard • Theatre Shenandoah 1776
• Community Choir • the Muhlenberg Family
• Introducing Patriots, our guests from the past!
• Campaign March • Gun Salute!

Activities: Encampments, Distinguished Lecture Series, Historical Displays, Art & Artisans, Local Foods, Meet People of the Past, Historic Museums OPEN!, Scavenger Hunt, 18th Century Games, Music & Dance.

Sponsors: SHENTEL, ValleyHealth, City of Shenandoah, HOLZEMAN, The Capital Family, FirstBank, DAR, FARM BUREAU, GITS, Edman-Jones, SHENANDOAH.

Event: The Dragons

Location: Downtown Woodstock VA

Contact: Shenandoah County Historical Society
schs.va@gmail.com • shenandoahhistory.org

HOSTED BY Halifax County Chamber of Commerce

PRESENTED BY HITACHI UAW Community Federal Credit Union

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Family Free Event
12pm to 7pm
Downtown Hopewell, VA

hopewellva250.org



Fairs & Festivals Guide

(continued from page 9)

MADISON COUNTY FAIR

July 15-18

Madison County, Va.

This action-packed, four-day event has a motto with a mission: “Give ‘em Something to Talk About.” Your head may spin trying to keep up with the attractions, including a daily reptile show, livestock exhibits, pro wrestling, an ax-throwing show, comedy hypnosis, monster truck rides, a rodeo, live music and a thunderbolt finale — the demolition derby. Add free admission for children 10 and younger as one more reason not to miss a minute. Madisoncountyfairva.com

SHENANDOAH VALLEY MUSIC FESTIVAL

July 17-18, July 24-25, Aug. 7-8, Sept. 5-6

Orkney Springs, Va.

Escape to the foothills of Great North Mountain for stellar live music under the stars. This summer,

the beautifully restored Shrine Mont — a retreat center and National Historic Landmark — welcomes celebrated performers to its open-air concert venue. Come hear Little River Band, The Four Tops, Diamond Rio, Al Jardine & The Pet Sounds Band, The Bacon Brothers, Hotel California and more. Package deals offer discounted tickets and lodging at Shrine Mont. Musicfest.org

CHINCOTEAGUE BLUEBERRY FESTIVAL

July 23-25

Chincoteague Island, Va.

The Chincoteague Island Blueberry Festival was tiny when it began in 1989, according to event organizer Sam Serio. Known as the opening act for the island’s world-famous Pony Swim, the annual event at the Chincoteague Center welcomes about 5,000 attendees. Now in its 38th year, he says, “It’s a well-oiled machine.” The July 23-25 event features about 100 exhibitors offering culinary creations, live music, arts and crafts and, of course, blueberries in many forms. Chincoteagueblueberryfestival.com

July 15-18, 2026
 EVERY DAY: Reptile Show, 13 Foot Transformer, Livestock Exhibits
 WEDNESDAY: Wrestling
 THURSDAY: Monster Truck Rides FRIDAY: Rodeo
 SATURDAY: Demolition Derby
madisoncountyfairva@gmail.com
madisoncountyfairva.com

July 17 - September 6
 Little River Band
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ChincoteagueBlueberryFestival.com
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DESTINATIONS

DINOSAUR KINGDOM II

Daily, June 6-Labor Day
Weekends through October
 Natural Bridge, Va.

If you've ever imagined a time-traveling battle between dinosaurs and Civil War soldiers — and even Abe Lincoln — you won't have to anymore. Dinosaur Kingdom II, an immersive prehistoric experience 15 miles south of Lexington, offers plenty for adventurous visitors. Kids can feed a velociraptor, discover dinosaur bones at the Dino Dig or witness a triceratops bullfight. As the attraction promises, this is not your father's dinosaur park. But find out for yourself. Dinosaurkingdomii.com

PATRICK HENRY'S RED HILL
 Brookneal, Va.

At Red Hill in Brookneal, the Patrick Henry National Memorial offers a variety of experiences that transport visitors to the crucible of American democracy. Guests can take an in-depth, self-guided tour of the estate and museum, visit historic buildings, or participate in excavation work led by professional archaeologists. Catch one of the lantern tours, witness home educators' living history days, attend "Oh, Henry! A Revolutionary Life" play and enjoy Red Hill's annual Independence Day celebration. Redhill.org

VISIT MECKLENBURG COUNTY
 Mecklenburg County, Va.

In Southern Virginia, Mecklenburg County offers a wellspring of discoveries and events all year long. In June, the Party at the Pavilion concert series opens on the second Saturday of the month and runs through September. Bluegrass in Boydton takes center stage June 27. July offers Sparks in the Park fireworks July 2 in South Hill; the Blueberry Festival July 11-12 in Skipwith; and the Virginia Lake Festival July 17-19 in Clarksville. The county's summer concert series, Lake Life Live, takes place the first Saturday of each month from May through September at Clarksville's Fifth Street Stage. Visitmeckva.com

DISCOVER HOPEWELL
 Hopewell, Va.

Located just 20 minutes south of Richmond at the convergence of the James and Appomattox rivers. Come take in a show at the historic Beacon Theater. Explore the water on foot or Kayak at the Hopewell Riverwalk. Browse the shops in historic downtown, then break for coffee or lunch at one of our cafés or restaurants. Visit historic Weston Manor and Appomattox Manor to walk in the footprints of the nation's founders. Enjoy drinks and dinner at the Boathouse at City Point overlooking the James River. Visithpg.com

VA250
 Patrick Henry's Red Hill

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Just 40 minutes south of Lynchburg, VA!

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 Brookneal, VA 24528

434-376-2044
www.redhill.org



SEE WHAT'S BREWING IN HOPEWELL

Just a short drive from downtown Richmond, Hopewell is brewing something special. Begin your visit at **Good Ship Brewing & Eatery**, located steps from the historic **Beacon Theatre**—the perfect spot to enjoy a craft beer or a bite before the show and return for another round afterward. Then sip your way through downtown favorites like **Brew and Blossom Coffee Co.**, **Manna Bakery**, and **What the Cup Coffee**, each offering artisan flavors and welcoming local charm. Beyond the brews, explore Hopewell's scenic Riverwalk, historic sites, and vibrant dining and arts scene. From morning lattes to evening pints, Hopewell invites you to slow down, savor the moment, and see what's brewing. www.visithpg.com, www.hopewelltdowntown.com, www.hopewellva.gov



HOPEWELL DOWNTOWN
 PATRICK HENRY

EXPERIENCE

More of What Matters

ALL YEAR LONG IN MECKLENBURG COUNTY!

Live music. Lakeside festivals. Hometown traditions.
Unforgettable moments for the whole family.



1

Blueberry Festival

July 11-12

White Oaks Preserve
18014 Hwy 49, Skipwith, VA



2

Virginia Lake Festival

July 17-19

Downtown Clarksville, VA



3

Lake Life Live

SUMMER CONCERT SERIES

1st Saturdays, May-Sept

5th Street Stage, Clarksville, VA



4

Party at the Pavilion

CONCERT SERIES

2nd Saturdays, June-Sept

Chase City Pavilion
36 N Main St, Chase City, VA



5

Bluegrass in Boydton

4th Saturday in June

911 Madison St, Boydton, VA



6

Sparks in the Park

July 2nd

Parker Park, 1205 Hill St, South Hill, VA



7

Jazz in the Gardens

May 10th & Sept 19th

Maccallum More Gardens
603 Hudgins St, Chase City, VA



8

South Central Fair

2nd Week in October

South Central Fair Grounds
10 Fairground Dr, Chase City, VA



9

South Hill's Hometown Christmas

IN CENTENNIAL PARK

Dec 4-5

225 E Danville St, South Hill, VA

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MONTHLY RATES

MONTHLY RATES

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	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
30	8.77	7.56	9.71	8.60	13	11	18	16	58	27.70	21.98	50.43	36.04	89	62	169	116
36	8.77	7.93	10.35	9.44	14	13	22	18	59	30.37	23.51	55.50	38.76	98	67	186	126
37	8.77	8.15	10.52	9.81	15	13	22	20	60	33.49	24.28	60.76	41.71	109	73	206	136
38	8.77	8.16	11.19	10.18	16	14	24	21	61	36.49	25.09	66.43	47.10	122	83	236	154
39	9.13	8.31	11.62	10.55	17	15	25	22	62	39.88	27.91	73.90	51.32	136	92	262	166
40	9.55	8.48	12.04	10.98	18	16	27	24	63	43.69	34.01	81.54	57.25	153	102	287	187
41	10.05	8.72	13.10	11.58	20	17	30	26	64	47.91	38.28	90.20	62.32	170	112	323	200
42	10.48	9.01	14.21	12.30	22	19	33	29	65	52.81	40.88	100.33	68.23	191	125	361	223
43	10.98	9.36	14.72	13.18	23	20	38	31	66	58.71	44.61	114.29	75.40	211	135	392	242
44	11.58	9.73	15.67	14.10	25	22	41	34	67	64.59	49.08	125.27	83.64	234	146	436	261
45	12.17	10.15	16.86	15.16	28	24	45	38	68	72.24	59.65	143.07	105.55	254	173	485	322
46	12.84	10.64	17.85	15.83	30	25	49	40	69	79.34	64.22	158.23	129.28	288	188	547	352
47	13.43	11.16	19.03	16.68	32	27	54	44	70	86.85	68.11	177.24	147.66	318	203	595	375
48	13.48	11.88	20.27	17.37	35	29	58	47	71	102.45	82.60	203.10	159.34	374	235	702	443
49	13.69	12.33	21.73	18.32	37	31	63	52	72	113.68	93.16	232.46	172.23	427	272	807	512
50	14.36	12.98	23.00	19.82	40	33	69	57	73	127.55	106.68	267.15	188.15	493	319	937	596
51	15.37	13.75	25.30	20.65	45	35	78	62	74	142.08	119.36	303.50	204.84	562	367	1074	685
52	16.36	14.87	27.63	22.13	49	38	87	67	75	159.25	140.48	346.45	224.56	644	424	1235	789
53	17.46	15.88	30.95	24.81	54	42	98	73	76	200.03	168.51	418.29	276.67	785	530	1489	982
54	18.68	16.72	33.99	26.20	60	46	110	81	77	249.54	216.74	505.52	339.94	956	658	1797	1215
55	20.70	17.50	37.13	27.85	67	50	121	90	78	310.70	268.40	613.27	418.11	1167	817	2179	1504
56	22.69	19.48	42.01	31.07	74	53	138	96	79	374.78	322.52	726.16	500.00	1389	983	2578	1807
57	24.69	20.63	45.81	33.43	81	58	150	107	80	450.50	386.47	816.15	596.78	1625	1180	3050	2164

* \$500,000 and \$1,000,000 monthly rates are rounded up to the nearest dollar. Therefore, actual monthly rates at \$500,000 and \$1,000,000 may be slightly less.

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90 Years of Rural Electricity

The Rural Electrification Act, signed into law 90 years ago, transformed life in places investor-owned utilities had long overlooked. The new federal program gave rural communities a way to organize, borrow money and build electric systems of their own. In doing so, it helped spark the rise of rural electric cooperatives across the country, including the local co-ops that would eventually become Rappahannock Electric Cooperative (REC). Read more on page 18.



page 16

REC Announces Scholarships Recipients

June 2026

page 18

90 Years of Rural Electricity

page 22

REC Volunteers Adopt A Highway



Fueling the Future: REC Awards Scholarships to 2026 Students

The REC Community Scholarship program is part of the Cooperative’s continued commitment to advancing education and investing in the communities it serves. These scholarships recognize high school seniors and current college or technical school students who have shown strong academic performance and meaningful community involvement. REC’s scholarship program offers 17 awards totaling \$20,000, including two \$2,500 scholarships and fifteen \$1,000 scholarships.

REC is proud to recognize the 2026 scholarship recipients.



Aidan Parker
Frederick
Virginia Tech



Aidan Loucks
Hanover
Patrick Henry H.S.



Ethan Lantz
King & Queen
West Point H.S.



Evan Taylor
Greene
William Monroe H.S.



Jacob Reichert
Clarke
Clarke County H.S.



Josephine Austin
Frederick
Sherando H.S.



Kayleigh McFarren
Spotsylvania
Massaponax H.S.



Khushi Mitchell
Frederick
University of
Wisconsin – Madison



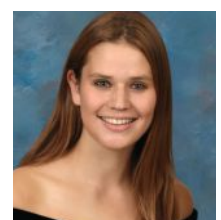
Kyndal Shuler
Fauquier
University of
Virginia



Lila Edwards
Greene
William Monroe H.S.



Lilly Grimsley
Rappahannock
Rappahannock
County H.S.



Maya Tabor
Orange
James Madison
University



McKenna Condrey
Essex
University of
Lynchburg



Miriam Oster
Hanover
Patrick Henry H.S.



Nigel Foster
Frederick
Millbrook H.S.



Owen Yarrington
Louisa
Louisa County H.S.




Paris Bacon
Essex
Hampton University

Office Closed for Independence Day

REC’s offices will be closed Friday, July 3 in observance of Independence Day. If you experience a power outage or power emergency during this time, our Operations Center is available 24 hours a day at 800-552-3904. You also can report an outage in **MyREC SmartHub**, at myrec.coop/out or by **texting OUT to 63273**.

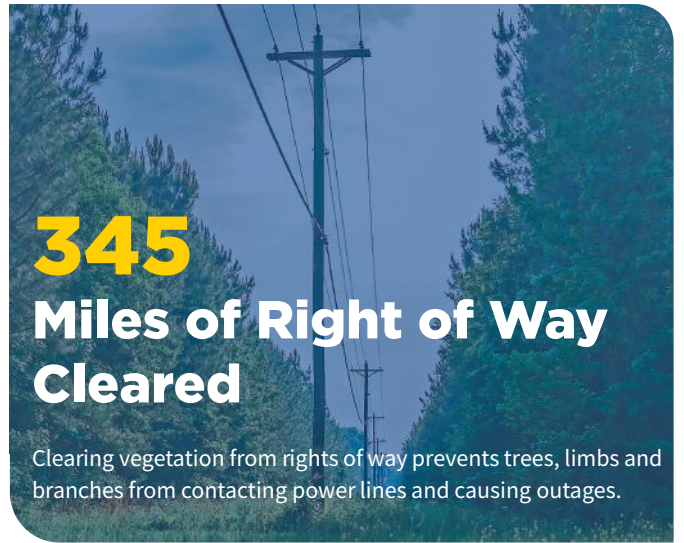
REC Reliability Upgrades First Quarter 2026

In the first few months of 2026, REC continued its proactive reliability upgrades, repairs and recurring maintenance.



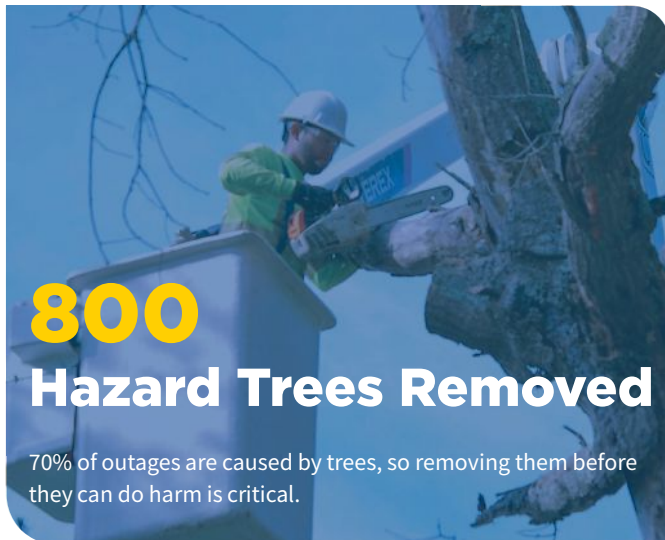
11,888
Drone Inspections

These inspections help REC catch trouble spots in hard-to-reach areas, before they become a problem and create outages.



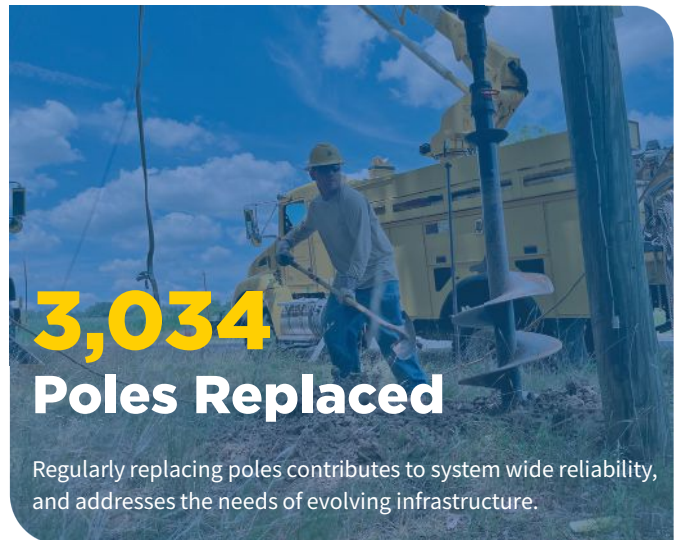
345
Miles of Right of Way Cleared

Clearing vegetation from rights of way prevents trees, limbs and branches from contacting power lines and causing outages.



800
Hazard Trees Removed

70% of outages are caused by trees, so removing them before they can do harm is critical.



3,034
Poles Replaced

Regularly replacing poles contributes to system wide reliability, and addresses the needs of evolving infrastructure.



1,750
Animal Guards

Animal guards enhance reliability by lowering the chance of wildlife-related faults.



148
Miles of Wire Replaced

Replacing aging or undersized lines improves reliability by reducing outage risks, increasing capacity and giving crews more flexibility to restore power.

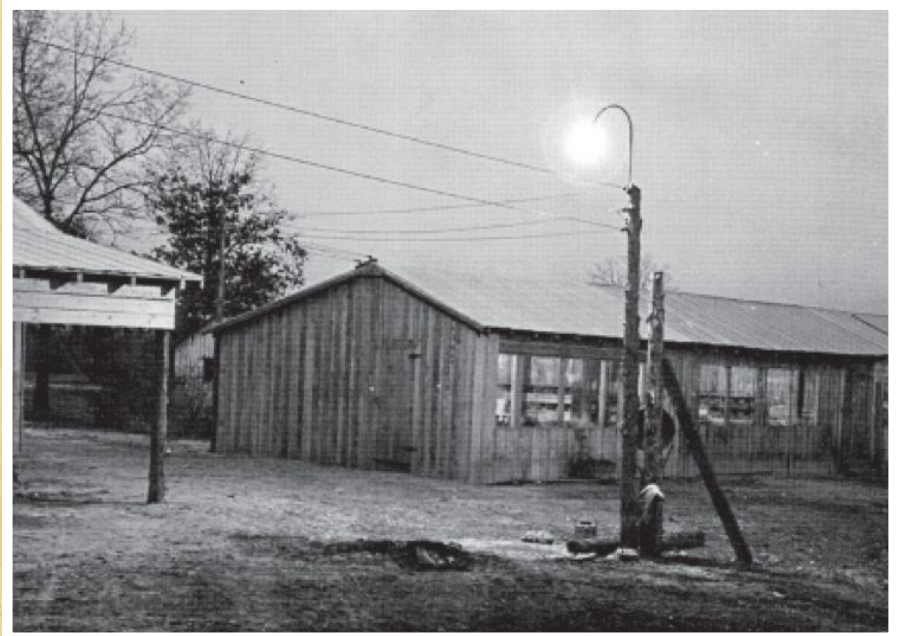
Ninety Years of Cooperative Power

Before there was a cooperative serving our area, there were two determined Virginians carrying a message from community to community: if rural families and businesses wanted electric service, they might have to build the system themselves. In 1934 less than 8 percent of Virginia farms had electricity. In 1935, Dr. J.R. Travis and Francis Pitts traveled Virginia's back roads, meeting with farmers, business owners and local families to build support for what became Farmers Rural Utilities, a nonprofit effort created to bring power to places investor-owned utilities had left behind. Their work reflected a principle that still defines electric cooperatives today: when communities are overlooked, the cooperative model may be a practical and lasting solution.

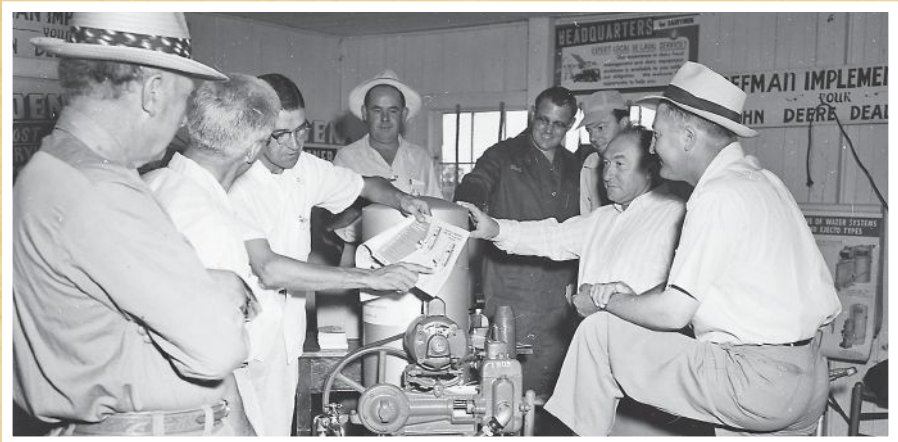
Their efforts in Virginia took shape amid a pivotal national moment. President Franklin D. Roosevelt created the Rural Electrification Administration in 1935, and Congress followed with the Rural Electrification Act in 1936, giving rural communities access to financing for electric systems of their own.

"Electricity is a modern necessity of life, not a luxury," Roosevelt said during an Aug. 11, 1938, address at Barnesville, Georgia, dedicating an REA project. He argued that it should reach "every village, every home and every farm." That vision helped reshape rural America and gave local leaders the tools they needed to turn persistence and local support into poles, wire and first service.

In Virginia, that hard work paid off quickly. Farmers Rural Utilities energized the first REA-financed line in Virginia, and on the East Coast, in August 1936. After Virginia adopted enabling legislation for cooperatives in 1938, Farmers Rural Utilities became Virginia Electric Cooperative, headquartered in Bowling Green. Soon after, Northern Piedmont Electric Cooperative began extending service in its own territory, bringing electricity to homes in Culpeper and Madison counties in 1939. Those efforts brought electric service to people who otherwise might have waited years for it, through a member-owned model organized



Virginia Electric Cooperative first house.



Northern Piedmont Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting, 1954

around service, reliability and affordability rather than profit. By 1950, more than 90 percent of Virginia's farms had electricity.

For decades, Virginia Electric Cooperative and Northern Piedmont Electric Cooperative operated in their service territories, extending power farther into rural communities and helping transform daily life along the way. Electricity changed work on the farm, life in the home and opportunity in local economies.

By the 1970s, however, the energy landscape had become more difficult.

Costs were rising, the industry was under pressure, and scale mattered more than ever. Studies found that consolidation would reduce duplication, improve efficiency and strengthen long-term service. On Jan. 1, 1980, the two cooperatives officially came together as Rappahannock Electric Cooperative.

REC's formation strengthened the same cooperative identity that had shaped its predecessors from the beginning. It remained a not-for-profit, member-owned electric distribution cooperative, governed



Virginia Electric Cooperative Lineworker circa late 1960s/early 1970s



An employee speaks with a member in the early years of REC.



REC Bowling Green dispatch tracking outage restoration during a March 2026 windstorm

June 2026

by the people it served and focused on providing service as cost-effectively as possible. In a cooperative, members are not just customers; they are the owners. When REC finds efficiencies, the benefit is not measured in higher returns for outside shareholders. It is measured in stronger service, better value and cost savings that help protect members over time.

In 2010, REC entered another defining chapter when it acquired part of Allegheny Energy, Inc., a northwestern Va. electric distribution utility, adding members across 12 counties and growing from 103,000 to 154,000 connections. That expansion significantly widened REC's reach and brought many new consumers into the cooperative model, extending the benefits of member ownership across a much larger territory.

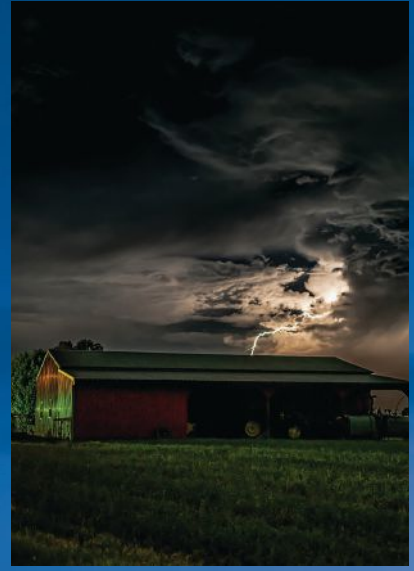
Today, REC serves 185,000+ connections across 22 Virginia counties and maintains more than 18,000 miles of power lines, and ranks second in the nation among cooperatives for miles of line and 12th in connections served. That is far beyond what those early organizers could have imagined, but the mission remains familiar. In an energy market shaped by volatility, infrastructure demands and rapid growth, the cooperative model is still centered on member value: balancing reliability with affordability, planning for the long term and making decisions with community impact in mind. Where other business models may answer first to profits, REC's responsibility is directly to the people and places it serves.

“When those early organizers went town to town and house to house, they were building more than power lines — they were building a promise that rural communities would not be left behind. In today's more complex and challenging energy market, that same responsibility still drives REC: to protect reliability, safeguard affordability and make decisions that put members first.”

John D. Hewa
CEO and President, REC

When the Storm Turns Serious

Summer weather can go sideways fast. A routine afternoon can turn into high wind, flooding rain or a tornado warning in a matter of minutes. In Virginia, hurricane season can also bring inland impacts well beyond the coast, including heavy rain, flash flooding and spin-up tornadoes. That's why the safest response is often the fastest one: pay attention early and move before conditions worsen.



If a Tornado Warning Is Issued

Go immediately to the safest place in the building:

- A basement, safe room or small interior room on the lowest level
- Away from windows and exterior walls
- With your head and neck protected

Don't wait to look outside and see what the storm is doing. Mobile homes, sheds and tents aren't safe shelter. If you're in a vehicle, the best move is to get to a sturdy building as quickly as possible.

Storm damage can also leave behind one of the most dangerous hazards of all: downed power lines. REC's guidance is clear. **Assume every downed line is energized.** Stay at least 35 feet away from the line and anything touching it, including trees, fences, vehicles or standing water. If a line falls on your car, stay inside unless there is fire, and call 911 and REC.

When the weather turns dangerous, get inside, stay informed and don't take chances with summer storms.

If a Hurricane or Tropical Storm Moves Through

If local officials have not ordered an evacuation:

- Stay indoors
- Move away from windows and glass doors
- Shelter in a hallway, closet or other interior room

If conditions suddenly calm, don't assume the storm has passed. In a hurricane, the eye of the storm can create a brief lull before dangerous winds return from the opposite direction.

If Thunder Roars, Go Indoors

Lightning safety starts the moment you hear thunder:

- Get inside right away
- Stay off corded electronics
- Avoid plumbing, porches and open garages
- Wait 30 minutes after hearing the last thunder before going back outside

That means no shower, no dishwashing and no standing in the doorway to watch the storm roll through.

Five Quick Ways to Save this Summer

As summer temperatures rise, so can your energy use. The good news is that a few simple adjustments around the house can help you stay comfortable while managing cooling costs. Here are five easy ways to save energy this summer.



Manage the thermostat: Set it to 78 degrees or the highest comfortable setting. Every degree lower can raise cooling costs by up to 3%.



Block the sun: Close blinds or use blackout curtains during peak sunlight hours to help keep your home cooler.



Shift your habits: Small changes in how and when you use energy can make a real difference over time. Using less energy during peak periods can help reduce overall energy costs and ease demand on the grid.



Upgrade your tools: Smart and programmable thermostats can help automate savings and keep your home comfortable when it matters most.



Maintain your system: Have your cooling system serviced annually and check filters monthly so your HVAC system doesn't have to work harder than it should.

For even more ways to manage your energy use, use MyREC SmartHub and complete your Home Energy Profile to unlock personalized energy tips, alerts and monthly usage insights.

**SAVE
THE DATE**

**REC's Annual Meeting
Wednesday, August 5, 2026**

As an REC member-owner, it is important to take part in the Cooperative's Director elections.

Participate by proxy or vote at the 2026 REC virtual Annual Meeting for your fellow REC member-owners who will serve as your representatives on the Board.

Visit myrec.coop in mid-June to learn about the Director candidates for **Regions IV, V and IX**. Their profiles will also appear in the July issue of *Cooperative Living*.

In early July, your proxy designation form will be mailed to you. If your current email address is on file, REC will email proxy instructions to you.

Your Voice. Your Vote. Your Cooperative.



REC Volunteers Take Action to Keep Louisa Clean

Twenty-two volunteers from Rappahannock Electric Cooperative rolled up their sleeves April 15 to clean a 3.66-mile stretch of Fredericks Hall Road in Louisa County.

Working with Louisa Clean through the Adopt-A-Highway program, REC employees collected 34 bags of roadside litter along Route 618, from Garrett’s Mill Road to Johnson Road. The effort covered both sides of the 3.66-mile stretch.

The project reflects REC’s commitment to serving the communities where its members live and work. Since adopting the stretch of Fredericks Hall Road in October 2024, REC employees have returned four times to continue the cleanup effort. To date, 67 employees have contributed 309 volunteer hours and collected 147 bags of litter.

“REC’s commitment to community extends beyond the power lines,” said Casey Hollins, managing director—communications and public relations at REC. “We’re proud of the employees who volunteer their time and effort to help strengthen the communities we serve. Projects like this show what cooperation and service look like in action.”

REC has worked closely with Louisa Clean to support the ongoing effort through coordination, supplies and guidance. Jody Korman, treasurer of Louisa Clean, and volunteer Sandy Riggs also supported the April cleanup.

“Most importantly, building and sustaining a proud community is key,” Korman said. “Everyone must do their part to help keep our roads clean.”

REC’s next Adopt-A-Highway cleanup in Louisa County is planned for September.



John D. Hewa
President & Chief Executive Officer



Board of Directors
Michael W. Lindsay
Region I



Christopher G. Shipe
Region II



Darlene H. Carpenter
Region III



Sanford Reaves, Jr.
Region IV



Randy Thomas
Region V



Linda R. Gray
Region VI



J. Mark Wood
Region VII



Eric Paulson
Region VIII



Eugene L. Campbell, Jr.
Region IX

Local Pages Editor – Casey M. Hollins, CCC

Contact Information:
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Fredericksburg, VA 22404
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RAPPAHANNOCK ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE PRESENTS

THE POWER OF COMMUNITY *tour*

JUNE

June 4
Pamunkey Regional Library:
“Unearth a Good Story”
Hanover

June 6
Autism Awareness Festival
Louisa

June 12
Culpeperfest
Culpeper

June 18
Caroline County Agricultural Fair
Caroline County

Date TBD in June
Warren/Page County Juneteenth Celebration
Front Royal

June 20
King William Juneteenth Celebration
King William

Fauquier Juneteenth Celebration
Fauquier

Clarke County Juneteenth
Berryville

June 21
Summer Solstice Celebration
King William

June 27
Lake of the Woods July Fourth Parade
Orange

June 27
FredNats Jersey Night
Fredericksburg



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Scaling Back the Fear Factor

A reptile museum in Gum Spring, Va., helps visitors warm up to cold-blooded creatures

by Amanda S. Creasey, Contributing Writer

If you thought you had to travel to Florida for an alligator experience this summer, think again.

You can find one much closer to home at My Three Chambered Heart, a nonprofit reptile natural history museum in Gum Spring, Va., where Telomere, an American alligator, now lives.

The roughly 5-foot, 23-pound alligator arrived at the museum through a rescue network after being confiscated from an illegal private owner. Telomere is estimated to be between 10 and 12 years old.

“He is a bit stunted growth-wise, so he was probably cooped up and probably didn’t get enough sunlight. We are really excited to introduce him to museum patrons and to let him out into the sun,” explains Jake Pugh, co-founder and executive director of the museum. “Hopefully, he will be as happy as an alligator can be. He has become very special to us.”

Telomere will be active, awake and available for visitors to view in his outdoor enclosure from about May through November, when temperatures remain consistently above 65 degrees.

The museum, located in Rappahannock Electric Cooperative’s service area, has more than 65 unique reptile species on exhibit. In addition to Telomere, visitors to My Three Chambered Heart can enjoy seeing Goodly Chunk, a 1-year-old black-throated monitor from Africa; iguanas lurching on little green hornworms; and Thor, a one-eyed Burmese python. Selective breeding processes produced not only the python’s rare color mutation but also a birth defect: Thor hatched with only one eye.

The snake holds a special place in Pugh’s heart. He says, “Burmese pythons are really misunderstood and mistreated, even by other reptile lovers. They need all the love and support they can get.” The museum also houses turtles, tortoises, skinks and other reptiles.

Co-founder Elizabeth Riner, My Three Chambered Heart’s chief financial officer, has a soft spot for the museum’s lizards, especially Bo, short for El Garrobo, the green iguana. “He is

a super sweet guy. When you interact with him, you can see what he’s feeling. He would wear his emotions on his sleeve, if he had a sleeve. He loves interaction with people,” Riner says.

Visitors can expect a lot of interaction, or at least as much as they’re comfortable with. “There are animal meet-and-greets,” Riner says. “We’re more than a standard museum.”

Sister and brother Sage, 11, and Sully, 9, Goode had the opportunity to hold two snakes during their visit: an orange corn snake named Raleigh and a ball python named Ghana. Although initially hesitant, Sully says he enjoyed holding the snake because “he was smooth.” Moments like these are the most rewarding for Pugh and Riner. “We’re really changing people’s minds. If you come in with an open mind, even

if you don’t like reptiles, I feel like we can help you change your mind,” Riner says.

During my visit, I held a lizard, wore one snake around my neck and held another, and I can personally vouch for Bo’s endearing and serene disposition. The massive iguana — about the size of a small dog — was as majestic as a statue while I stroked his sandpaper skin. Completely trusting of the throng of children and adults entering his enclosure, he never once

even opened his eyes to see whose hands grazed his thorny neck. He simply relished the attention. Bo was Sage’s favorite part of visiting the museum because “he was so chill.”

“Reptiles, especially snakes, are commonly maligned and seen as dark and foreboding,” Pugh says. “We try to tackle that right away. It’s not the vibe of the place. We know people might come in a little guarded, and I hope people leave here with a better appreciation of what the animals are.”

The museum’s mission, he says, is to “promote science literacy while improving public perception, captive husbandry and wildlife conservation of reptiles through museum exhibits and educational outreach.” Pugh hopes people leave the museum “with a greater capacity for understanding.” ●



AMANDA S. CREASEY PHOTOS

► For more information, visit mythreechamberedheart.org.

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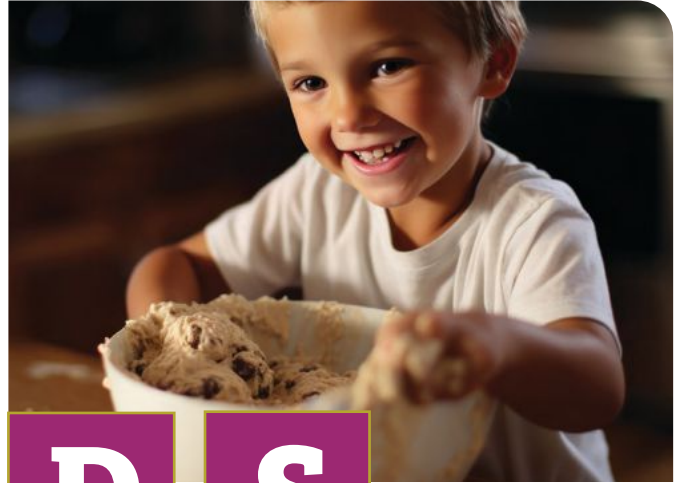
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K I D S

IN THE KITCHEN



VECTEZY PHOTOS

Fun dishes to get junior chefs cooking

Recipes courtesy of Joann Frazier Hensley, McGaheysville, Va.

French Toast Sandwiches

Ingredients:

- 8 slices white bread
- ½ cup seedless strawberry jam
- ½ cup peanut butter
- 2 eggs, beaten
- ½ cup milk
- ⅛ teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons butter

Directions:

Spread jam on four slices of bread and peanut butter on the remaining four slices. Put together to form sandwiches. In a small bowl, combine eggs, milk and salt. Melt butter in a large skillet. Dip each sandwich into the egg mixture, then cook uncovered on each side until golden brown.

Slow-Cooked French Fries

Ingredients:

- 2¼ cups canola oil
- 6 medium potatoes, peeled and sliced
- salt to taste

Directions:

Pour oil into a large saucepan, but do not turn on the heat. Add potatoes, then turn heat to medium. Cook uncovered for 30 to 35 minutes or until potatoes are golden brown, stirring once. Drain and season with salt to taste.

GOT A FAVORITE RECIPE?

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ODEC employee performs routine maintenance at ODEC's Wildcat Point Generation Facility. Electric cooperatives support grid upgrades that keep power flowing reliably.



The Electricity Road Trip

ODEC PHOTO

Electric cooperatives strategically plan for long-term reliability

by Jack McCarthy, Contributing Writer

Anyone who has ever planned a long family road trip knows the intensive preparation travel requires.

Routes are mapped out in advance. Travel times are checked. Gas prices are compared and pit stops determined. Maybe the departure time is shifted to avoid rush hour, or an alternate route is chosen in case traffic builds. The goal is simple: get where you're going safely, affordably and without unnecessary surprises.

Electric cooperatives take similar measures of strategic, long-term planning each day to ensure reliable electricity for members.

The power grid, much like the nation's intricate roadway system, usually works quietly in the background. Electricity flows where it's needed, when it's needed. But during peak times — such as hot summer afternoons or cold winter mornings — the system is under heavier pressure. Those are the grid's rush hours, and keeping electricity moving during them takes careful preparation long before demand shows up.

PRE-TRIP PLANNING

Families don't plan trips for the easiest part of the drive. They plan for the long stretches, the busy interchanges and the unexpected slowdowns.

Electric cooperatives do the same when planning for reliability.

Instead of designing systems around average days, cooperatives plan for the hardest ones, when electricity is needed most. Because electric cooperatives don't answer to shareholders seeking returns on their investments, they focus on the people they serve in their forecasting. They forecast how much electricity communities will need and the necessary infrastructure required to support the grid days, months and even years into the future. They study use patterns, weather trends, environmental policy and economic growth.

Additionally, electric cooperatives strategically invest in grid upgrades to ensure the reliable flow of power throughout the system — all the way from generation facilities to homes and meters. Each investment is made with members' best interests in mind. What's best for members is at the

heart of every decision electric cooperatives make.

That long-term view is essential, especially as electricity use continues to grow. New businesses, expanding communities and increasingly plugged-in lifestyles all add traffic to this proverbial roadway.

According to the North American Electric Reliability Corporation's latest Long-Term Reliability Assessment, the demand for electricity is expected to rise roughly 62 gigawatts by 2034-35 within PJM Interconnection, which coordinates power generation and movement across 13 states, including Virginia, Maryland and Delaware. That represents a significant increase in traffic on the grid's busiest routes.

Meeting that growth requires careful planning, strong partnerships and a diverse mix of energy resources to keep the grid stable and dependable.

NAVIGATING THE ROUTE

No road trip works without smooth connections between interstate and local roads — and the power grid is no different.

High-voltage transmission lines are like the interstate system of the electric grid. They move large amounts of electricity efficiently over long distances, carrying power from generation sources to where it's needed. From there, local distribution lines — much like neighborhood roads — carry electricity the final miles to homes and businesses.

Transmission plays a critical role in reliability, especially during peak demand. It allows power from various sources to flow across the grid, creating pathways to move electricity when one area is under stress. PJM supports the flow of electricity across our region and helps manages traffic along transmission lines.

But like highways, transmission lines can become congested. When that happens, the system can't always move the lowest-cost electricity to where

demand is highest. During peak times, that can mean relying on more expensive generation to keep the lights on. Long-term transmission planning helps reduce those bottlenecks and keeps power moving more efficiently.

MANAGING COSTS

Smart travelers don't just think about shaving time off their ETA; they also think about cost. They fuel up when prices are lower, choose efficient routes and avoid unnecessary detours.

Electric cooperatives, often in partnership with generation partners like ODEC, use similar forward-looking strategies to manage these costs.

Some people may have experienced this same concept when using ride-sharing apps. During a storm, a major event or rush hour — electricity prices increase as demand grows.

Long-term planning includes tools

to manage fluctuating fuel prices, such as securing future fuel supplies and making investments that help keep costs predictable for members. Instead of generating power or buying fuel at whatever the PJM market price happens to be that day, electric cooperatives often lock in prices in advance for a portion of the electricity they expect to need in the future. Called a "hedging strategy," this approach helps shield members from surge pricing during periods of extreme demand, such as heat waves or cold snaps.

This strategy has grown even more important as reserve margins — the cushion of extra power generation that protects against power shortages — tighten due to power plants retiring faster than new ones can be built.

These efforts may not be visible on a monthly bill, but they play a critical role in protecting members from

sudden price swings and supply shortages — especially during peak demand. Reliability, affordability and responsibility are not separate goals. Like any good trip plan, they must be balanced together.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Most members never see this planning in action — and that's exactly how it should be.

When electricity is available during the hottest days and coldest nights, it reflects years of preparation, coordination and foresight. Just like a well-planned road trip, success often looks uneventful from the passenger seat.

Electric cooperatives have taken a long-term view for generations. As demand grows and the road ahead becomes busier, a steady, member-focused approach remains one of the strongest tools for keeping the lights on. ●

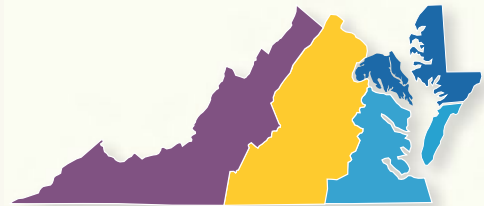
HAPPENINGS

Events Around the Area

Editor's note: All information is believed to be accurate as of press time.

Before attending, please use the contact information to verify the status of an event.

Listing an event does not constitute an endorsement.



BLUE RIDGE WEST

JUNE

14 WINCHESTER. 5th Annual Juneteenth Celebration. 901 Amherst St. 12 p.m. Naacpwinchesterarea.org

20 WOODSTOCK. Shenandoah Celebrates 1776! 103 N. Main St. 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Sc250.shenandoahhistory.org

JULY

4 NEW CASTLE. July 4th Parade. Downtown New Castle. 10 a.m. 540-580-3745.

4 MIDDLETOWN. July 4th Celebration. Historic Main Street & Middletown Park. 540-869-2226. Middletownva.gov

PIEDMONT

JUNE

20 CHASE CITY. Farmers Market. 36 N. Main St. 8 a.m.-1 p.m. Chasesitychamber.com

26-28 MANASSAS. ARTfactory's Disney's The Lion King JR. 9419 Battle St. Times vary. Info@virginiaartfactory.org. Virginiaartfactory.org

27 STAFFORD. 20 Year Reunion for Colonial Forge High School Class of 2026. Email for ticket details. Cfhs2006reunion@gmail.com

TIDEWATER

JUNE

20-21 CAPE CHARLES. SailFest. Cape Charles Fairgrounds. 12-6 p.m. Sailfestcapecharles.com

22-27 DELTAVILLE. Family Boatbuilding Week. Deltaville Maritime Museum. 8 a.m.-2 p.m. Deltavillemuseum.com

27 DELTAVILLE. Groovin' in the Park. Deltaville Maritime Museum. 5-8 p.m. Deltavillemuseum.com

27 DELTAVILLE. Holly Point Market. Deltaville Maritime Museum. 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Deltavillemuseum.com

MARYLAND

JUNE

20 MASSEY. Antique Airplane Fly-In. 33541 Maryland Line Road. 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Free admission. Masseyaero.org

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Ribbon-Ready Efforts

Showcase your talents in State Fair of Virginia's many contests

by Christina Amano Dolan, Virginia Farm Bureau Federation

Caroline County Public Schools art teacher Katie Boltz has encouraged her high school students to enter State Fair of Virginia contests for more than 16 years.

Her students' creations often take center stage during the school's annual field trip to the fair, and they span "just about any media" — from papier-mâché, ceramics and fine arts categories to bookmaking, stained glass and embroidery.

"I love the opportunity to get my students' artwork out in the public," Boltz says. "It helps them build all kinds of confidence in their abilities, and it sparks them to work a little bit harder and make it to the next level."

A STEP AHEAD

Through the years, Boltz has proudly watched her students claim countless blue ribbons, pursue careers in the arts and put awarded scholarship money toward college degrees.

Since 2013, the State Fair of Virginia Scholarship Program has awarded more than \$1.1 million through 2,903 individual scholarships. Some awards come through an application process, and some are won in fair competitions. Yet others come from the fair's Sale of Champions, an annual auction of livestock displayed by young 4-H and FFA members.

And it's not just high school students who can get involved in the state fair competitions. Any Virginian with a special skill or hobby can enter to earn a coveted blue ribbon.

Each year, hundreds of bakers, gardeners, cooks and crafters from across the commonwealth enter the arts, horticulture and culinary competitions at the State Fair of Virginia.



Jay Kelleher



Travis Hoyt

"Art is not meant to be made and then put in a drawer somewhere. It's meant to be shared."

— Katie Boltz, art teacher, Caroline County Public Schools

Competition guides, deadlines and category descriptions are available at statefairva.org.

"You don't have to be an experienced hobbyist to be extraordinary," says Sarah Jane Thomsen, the fair's manager of agriculture education and strategic programming partnerships. "We all have something to show off and be proud of, and the fair is the perfect opportunity to do that — whether it's baked goods, preserved foods, homegrown produce or creative arts."

The contests are open to youth and adults of all skill levels, and winning at a county fair isn't a prerequisite for entering.

While some categories award small cash prizes and scholarships, the real rewards are bragging rights, seeing your work celebrated and appreciating "the simple things that bring us joy," Thomsen adds.

COUNTLESS CATEGORIES

Gardeners and growers can vie for top honors in horticulture and field crops competitions spanning flowers and succulents, row crops, fruits and vegetables, including the fair's annual

Giant Veggie Weigh-Off for the heftiest homegrown entries.

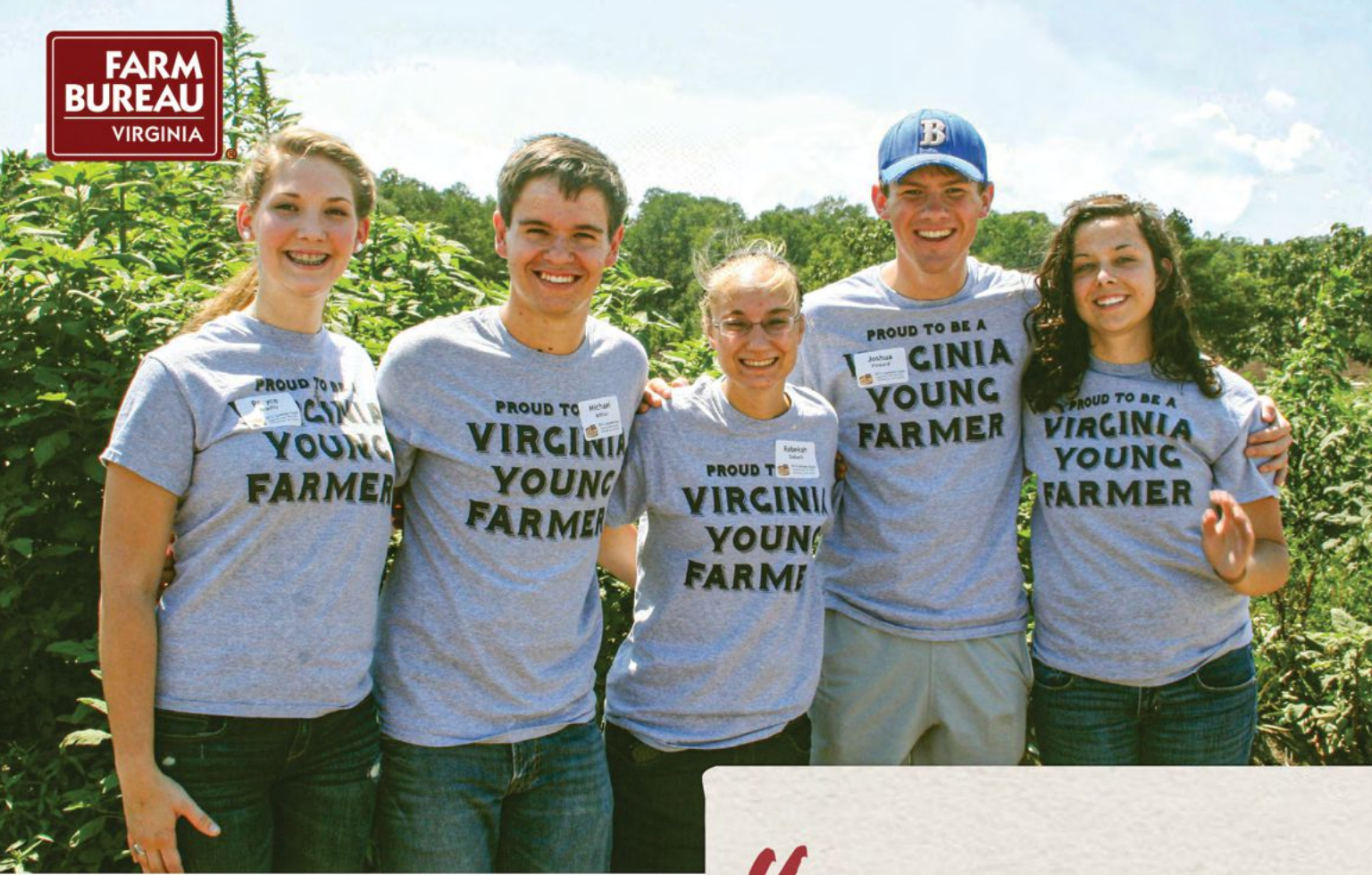
Home cooks and culinary creatives can show off their breads, cookies, jams, sauces, syrups, pies and more in the culinary arts competitions.

From paintbrush to pottery wheel creations, there are endless opportunities for showcasing artwork in the fair's creative arts competitions. Artisans can exhibit their skills in photography, quilting, jewelry making, glassblowing, woodcrafts and more.

Have a Virginia Farm Bureau antique or interesting object? You can display that, too, in celebration of the organization's 100th anniversary this year.

Boltz, who demonstrates wheel-throwing at the fair each year, is often surrounded by heartwarming scenes of fair contestants showing off their exhibited creations to friends and family.

"Art is not meant to be made and then put in a drawer somewhere. It's meant to be shared," Boltz remarks. "You don't have to be the best artist to participate in the fair. If you want to be in it, put your work out there — everybody's a winner that way." ●



Are you between the ages of 18 and 35 and want to make a difference in the lives of Virginians?

Then Virginia Farm Bureau Young Farmers want you!

Young farmers work full- or part-time in the industry, have a job supporting agriculture, or just simply want to be an advocate for farming.

Young farmer committees exist in most counties of the state, and they are led by a statewide committee of young farmers who are appointed by the Virginia Farm Bureau Federation president and represent 14 state districts.

State committee members plan and host annual events, conduct statewide contests, organize new member recruitment and work toward increased involvement in the VFBF grassroots process. Many also serve as county board members, presidents or chair for other committees.

County-level committee members and groups work on local issues, assisting county Farm Bureau boards with agricultural education and outreach to the public, and participating in various community activities.

For more about Young Farmers, visit: vafb.com/youngfarmers

“The Virginia Farm Bureau Young Farmers Program has helped me be a better advocate for Virginia’s largest industry—agriculture.”

Rebekah Slabach

Halifax County Young Farmer

Learn more about membership

See how Virginia Farm Bureau members have shaped local agriculture for over a century.



Caps, Cameras and Cheers

A hometown auditorium fills each year for a milestone that never gets old

by Margo Oxendine, Contributing Columnist



It's that time of year again: graduation season.

Do you remember your own graduation? I do, but only vaguely.

As a retired reporter who still writes, I volunteer each year to cover graduation at our local high school.

For most of the year, the auditorium feels excessively large. Except for graduation. Then, every one of the more than 800 seats is filled with families and friends. The graduation class may be only about 40 students, but add in moms, dads, siblings, aunts, uncles and friends, and you've got a glut of a crowd.

No family member, it seems, is too small to be brought to graduation. I've seen babies still in receiving blankets brought into the auditorium. I'm not saying these infants are not a squirming distraction, although many of them are perfectly behaved. But some are scared by the big, noisy crowds and make their displeasure known.

They squawk and squeal, but no one

is really bothered by it. It's graduation!

Traditional graduation gowns being what they are, about the only opportunity for a graduate to show his or her individuality is in footwear.

And, I've seen it all: dusty, soil-caked work boots; ubiquitous sneakers; the highest of high heels, which sometimes make for a teetering gait; ballet flats in black or white; silver flip-flops.

Another decoration students display is on their caps. Some are very creative, some humorous, all worthy of smiling scrutiny.

And I must say, I really enjoy being in the audience. Never having had offspring of my own, this is my opportunity to take a part in a rite of passage. I love to sing the national anthem, recite the Pledge of Allegiance and clap appreciatively as each student goes up to grab a diploma that will end his or her time at Bath County High School.

It's fun to listen to the salutatorian and valedictorian deliver their addresses. They are always respectful, sometimes funny and full of gratitude. The speeches make vague references to certain teachers, students and high school shenanigans that only fellow graduates will understand

and probably giggle at.

Something I really like about our local graduation is that there is no special speaker. Don't we all remember our graduation speakers? No, we do not.

About the only graduation speech I've enjoyed is one I read, supposedly delivered by famed writer Kurt Vonnegut Jr. — only I found out later that it was widely misattributed to him, and was actually written by Mary Schmich in a Chicago Tribune column. It began with one of my favorite quips: "Enjoy the power and beauty of your youth. Oh, never mind. You will not understand the power and beauty of your youth until they've faded."

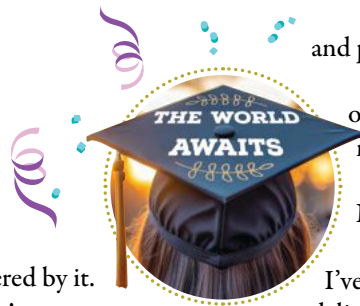
The speech closed with some of the most valuable advice anyone can receive: "Always wear sunscreen." What more needs be said?

There's always a mob scene in the auditorium atrium after the ceremony. It's one of my favorite parts of the evening: clusters of friends and family gathered close, smiling big and, of course, even a little teary. I know this is where I will take my best pictures for the paper.

And, oh yeah, at the very end of the ceremony — just before the graduates leave the stage — when they spray the principal and classmates with silly string and toss those carefully decorated caps in the air.

It's over. And it's just beginning. Congratulations, Class of 2026! ●

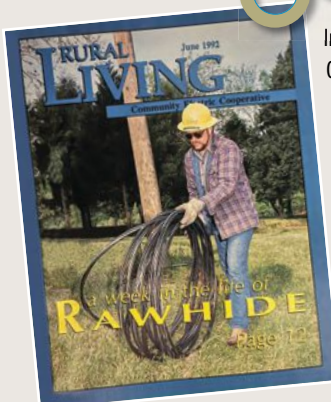
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CELEBRATING



JUNE 1992 COVER



In June 1992, *Rural Virginia* followed a Southside Electric Cooperative lineworker through a typical week, offering readers a behind-the-scenes look at the demanding, unpredictable work of restoring and maintaining electric service. The article highlighted the importance of teamwork among line crews and the pride lineworkers take in keeping power flowing for their communities.

Know someone turning 80 this year?

Nominate them to be featured in *Cooperative Living* by emailing saycheese@co-opliving.com. Please send a photo of the individual being nominated, along with their birthdate and a short description about them.



WHEREZ IT?

Look for the CL logo, like the one above, in the pages of this issue of *Cooperative Living*. Submit the page number where you found it, along with your name, email and phone number to **WherezIt**, c/o *Cooperative Living*, 4201 Dominion Blvd., Suite 101, Glen Allen, VA 23060 or go online at co-opliving.com under "Contests." Deadline is **June 20**. The winner will receive a **\$25 Amazon email gift card**.

Electric Infrastructure: Designed for Rush Hour Demand

Much like a highway at rush hour, electric infrastructure is designed to support usage during the busiest times. Transmission lines and distribution lines are built to carry electricity to homes even during times of high traffic when everyone is using electricity at the same time. Planning your electricity use outside of popular times can help avoid strain on the grid and delay the need for new generation.



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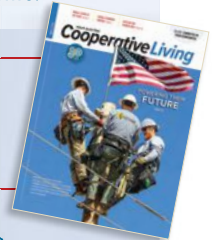
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Email: editor@co-opliving.com
Or call: 804-346-3344

SUBMIT: We accept classifieds by email (classifieds@co-opliving.com), telephone (804-297-3429) or mail to: Classifieds, 4201 Dominion Blvd., Suite 101, Glen Allen, VA 23060. Please type or print your ad as you would like it to appear and how many months it should run. Include your name, street, email address and pre-payment. Checks should be made to Cooperative Living. Ads with incomplete information will be returned to the sender.

RATES: Non-business: \$80 per 25-word block plus \$5 per word over 25; OR "Mini" ad – \$5 per word (max. 10 words). Business, agent and broker ads: \$150 per 25-word block, plus \$5 per word over 25. Display Real Estate: \$299 per block.

DEADLINE: June 5 for July issue; Publisher reserves the right to designate classification or reject any ad. No personals, please.

Statement of Nondiscrimination

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at 202-720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at 800-877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form.

To request a copy of the complaint form, call 866-632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

- (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) fax: 202-690-7442; or
- (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender.

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Calling all photographers!

ODEC wants your images for the 2027 Energy Efficiency Calendar! We're looking for photos showing your favorite shots of landscapes, people, wildlife, and flora in our beautiful region, as well as patriotic pride.

Submission Requirements:

- High resolution (3,000 pixels)
- No editing
- Landscape (horizontal) submission
- Location required

Send submissions to
EnergyTips@odec.com
no later than July 1!

Dog Days of Summer

by Laura Emery, Staff Writer

WE WANT TO SEE YOUR PHOTOS!

Submit a photo for a chance to win a \$20 Amazon gift card!

If your photo is published in this column, we will send you a \$20 Amazon gift card credit via email. Send your high-resolution images to saycheese@co-opliving.com. Please include your first and last name, along with a description of the photo.

You may also mail your photo(s) to: Say Cheese, 4201 Dominion Blvd., Suite 101, Glen Allen, VA 23060. Do not send originals; photos cannot be returned.



◀ A-BOAT TIME!

Oakley is ready to go out on the boat.

PHOTO SUBMITTED BY KANDI HANNA

IT'S A TOSS-UP ▶

Merle can't decide whether he wants to swim or play fetch — but he's ready for both.

PHOTO SUBMITTED BY LESLIE ABERNATHY



◀ PAW-TY FLOAT

Hardy and Morgan are ready to make waves.

PHOTO SUBMITTED BY MELISSA MYERS



SUN'S OUT, TONGUE'S OUT ▶

Ollie came for the beach and stayed for the sand.

PHOTO SUBMITTED BY ABBY PURYEAR



◀ COOL TO THE MAX

Max takes the whole "stay cool" thing very seriously.

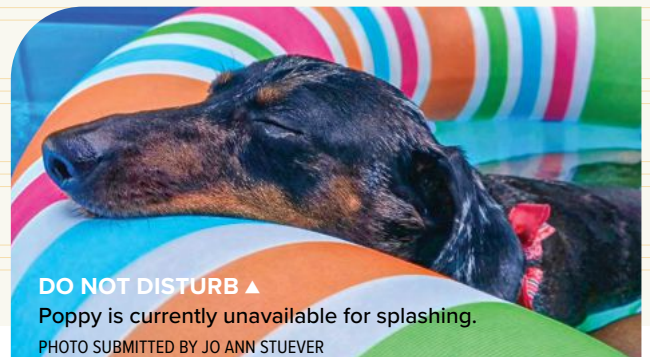
PHOTO SUBMITTED BY KAY LISTER



◀ BEACH BUM

Willow gave the beach two paws up and then promptly fell asleep.

PHOTO SUBMITTED BY LAUREN WHITTINGTON



DO NOT DISTURB ▶

Poppy is currently unavailable for splashing.

PHOTO SUBMITTED BY JO ANN STUEVER



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