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DOG SHOWS PAGE 10

WINCHESTER'S WATER
STREET KITCHEN PAGE 12

SAVING THE AMERICAN
CHESTNUT PAGE 28

CHECK OUT YOUR
REC NEWS
PAGE 15

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YEARS

— 1946-2026 —



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Hard times for a lobster dinner in the Virginia mountains.

Cover: Background image, Neville Morrison; composite image, John Grott.

VIEWPOINT

Some Things Change; Some Never Will



This is the 900th issue of *Cooperative Living*, a milestone that comes as we celebrate our 80th anniversary.

Throughout 2026, we've looked back on eight decades of telling the stories of the people and communities we serve — and chronicling the evolution of rural America.

What an extraordinary journey it has been.

This month, we welcome back Richard Johnstone, who served as editor of this magazine and as president and CEO of the Virginia, Maryland & Delaware Association of Electric Cooperatives during a 36-year career. His guest column, along with Deputy Editor Laura Emery's memories of her 26 years with the magazine, offers firsthand accounts of the people, events and changes captured in these pages.

As we look ahead, we know much will change. Technology will advance. Communities and lifestyles will evolve. The ways we generate, deliver and use electricity will continue to transform.

But some things will remain the same.

The people and communities we serve will continue to depend on their electric cooperatives to power their homes, businesses and local economies. Dedicated cooperative employees — from lineworkers and customer service representatives to engineers, office staff and communicators — will continue doing the often unseen work required to keep the lights on for their neighbors.

And we will continue working together to meet growing energy demand, navigate data center expansion and affordability pressures, and manage an increasingly complex electric grid — while protecting the communities we are proud to call home.

Through it all, *Cooperative Living* will continue doing what it has done for 900 issues: telling the stories of the people and places we serve.

Eight decades have taught us that many things change. But our purpose does not.

At your electric cooperative, it has always been — and always will be — about the people we serve. ●

Brian S. Mosier

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

Cooperative Living

VOL. 81, NO. 10 • ISSN 1529-4579

OUR MISSION

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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COOPERATIVE LIVING MAGAZINE (USPS 473-300) is published 10 times a year, monthly except for combined January-February and November-December issues, by the Virginia, Maryland & Delaware Association of Electric Cooperatives. POSTMASTER, address changes should be sent to: *Cooperative Living*, 4201 Dominion Blvd., Ste. 101, Glen Allen, VA 23060, 804-346-3344. Periodicals postage is paid at Glen Allen, VA, and additional mailing offices. Subscription: \$6.49 per year for members of subscribing co-ops; \$10 per year for all others.

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Please recycle.



ODEC announced \$300,000 in grants and donations going to power line workforce training and energy-efficiency programs.

SVCC POWER LINE WORKER TRAINING SCHOOL PHOTO

Supporting Success

ODEC and partners pave the way for jobs, energy reliability

by Jack Cooksey, Staff Writer

The future of Virginia's energy security grew a bit brighter in August when Old Dominion Electric Cooperative announced a combined \$300,000 in grants and donations to support power line workforce training and energy-efficiency programs in the state.

Partnering with Gas South, an Atlanta, Ga.-based natural gas provider, ODEC announced Aug. 13 a combined donation of \$200,000 to Southside Virginia Community College's Power Line Worker Training School in Blackstone, Va.

"As a founding supporter of the Power Line Worker Training School, ODEC's renewed commitment helps ensure the communities we serve have the skilled labor to maintain the grid," says Chris Cosby, ODEC's president and CEO.

The electric utility industry faces a significant workforce challenge as experienced employees retire and demand for skilled labor continues to increase at a faster-than-average pace. Employment is projected to grow 10% from 2025 to 2035, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

"By investing in workforce development today, we support the long-term reliability and resilience of the energy systems we will depend on tomorrow," says Carley Stephens, the company's director of community affairs.

Since launching 20 years ago, the pre-apprenticeship training program has graduated more than 750 students.

"Support from industry partners like ODEC and Gas South allows us to continue growing this program and connecting students with rewarding careers," says Keith Harkins, SVCC's vice president of academic and workforce programs.

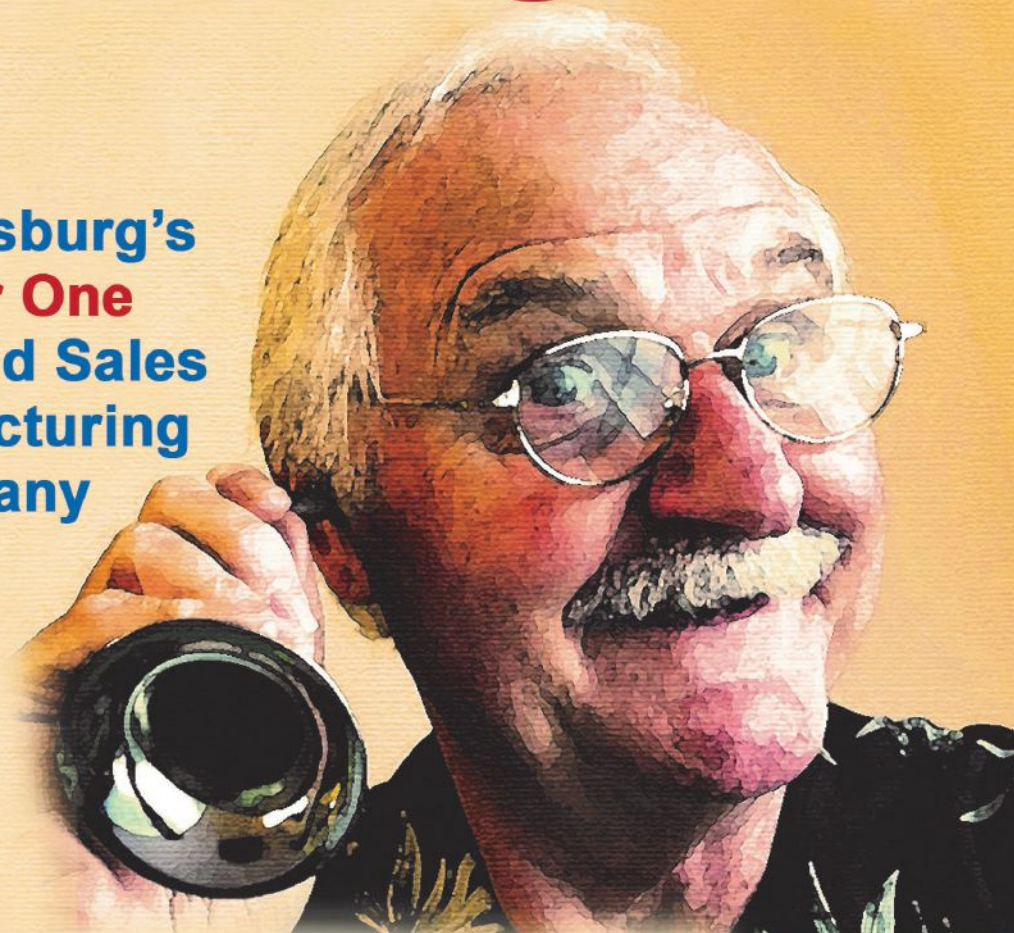
Later in August, ODEC joined with Dillwyn, Va.-based FLIPP Inc. to announce news of a \$100,000 grant from Microsoft Corporation that will be used to provide free energy-saving upgrades to southern Virginia residents in manufactured and mobile homes through ODEC's Manufactured Homes Program.

FLIPP Inc., a nonprofit organization, develops workforce programs focused on helping communities with housing quality and energy efficiency.

"This grant helps expand access to energy-efficient home improvements that make a lasting difference for families while strengthening the workforce needed to support our region's energy future," says Raye Elliott, executive director of FLIPP. ●

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— 1946-2026 —

EIGHTY YEARS

at a Glance

FOR THE LOVE OF FIRSTS

October 1946: First issue of *Rural Virginia* with a circulation of about 20,000

August 1950: Reports on Virginia's first family to receive telephone service through the REA rural telephone program

1955: First appearance of Willie Wiredhand, mascot of rural electrification, in *Rural Virginia*

1956: *Rural Virginia* uses color for the first time

August 1969: Reports on Neil Armstrong becoming the first person to walk on the moon

September 1970: *Rural Virginia* becomes *Rural Living*, the magazine's first title change

January 1981: First reader-photo contest (Say Cheese)

1997: Down Home column debuts (Victoria, Va., first stop)

January 2000: *Cooperative Living* website launches

January 2009: Reports on first African American president

January 2018: "Into the Light" is the first cover story on mental health

January 2020: Genevieve Boorman, first female electric cooperative lineworker in Virginia, featured

March 2025: Sonja Cox, first female CEO (Southern Maryland Electric Cooperative) in the VMDAEC system, featured

NOTEWORTHY NAMES



Luci Johnson, youngest daughter of President Lyndon B. Johnson and first lady Claudia "Lady Bird" Johnson
JUNE 1966



First lady Pat Nixon
NOVEMBER 1973



John Cephas
MAY 1989



Tim Reid
JANUARY 1992



President Bill Clinton
FEBRUARY 1993



Gary Clark
JANUARY 1988



Rick Mast
AUGUST 1989



Charlton Heston
JANUARY 1992



Wayne Henderson
JUNE 2013

THROUGH THE STORMS

1955-1975
Vietnam War

1969
Hurricane Camille

1972
Hurricane Agnes

1986
Chernobyl disaster

1989
Hurricane Hugo

1999-2000
Y2K

2001
Sept. 11 terrorist attacks

2001-2021
War in Afghanistan

2003-2011
Iraq War

2003
Hurricane Isabel

2011
Hurricane Irene

2012
Hurricane Sandy

2018
Hurricane Florence

2020-2023
COVID-19 pandemic

2021
Hurricane Ida

2024
Hurricane Helene

Changing TIMES

RURAL ELECTRIFICATION
ELECTRIC APPLIANCES
RUNNING WATER
TELEVISION
PARTY-LINE TELEPHONES
MICROWAVE OVENS
HOME COMPUTERS
ELECTRIC VEHICLES
RURAL INTERNET ACCESS
WORLD WIDE WEB
BROADBAND INTERNET
CELLPHONES
SMARTPHONES
SOCIAL MEDIA
SMART HOMES AND SMART TECHNOLOGY
BROADBAND EXPANSION/FIBER
MODERN ELECTRIC VEHICLES
ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

DID YOU KNOW?

Rural Virginia's debut issue reached 22,000 homes and businesses. Today, *Cooperative Living* has a circulation of more than 600,000 and reaches up to 1.8 million readers.

The publication has had three names: *Rural Virginia*, *Rural Living* and *Cooperative Living*. A fourth name also has a place in its history: In 1993, the Northern Virginia Electric Cooperative edition of *Rural Living* became *Current Living*, reflecting changes in the cooperative's service territory.

October 2026 marks the magazine's 900th issue.



BY THE NUMBERS

80

YEARS OF TELLING THE STORIES OF ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE COMMUNITIES

900

ISSUES PUBLISHED SINCE 1946

1.8 MILLION

ESTIMATED READERS PER ISSUE

13

CUSTOMIZED EDITIONS PRODUCED FOR VIRGINIA AND MARYLAND ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES

10

ISSUES DELIVERED A YEAR

3

NAME CHANGES

Look OF THE BOOK



October 1946:
Sheet-fed letter
press

1960:
Rural Virginia
switched to
magazine
format

1953:
Tabloid format

June 1970:
First color
photograph
on cover

September 1970:
Name change to
Rural Living

January 2000:
Name change
to Cooperative
Living

The Long Road Home

Reflections from a co-op childhood to a storied career serving cooperative communities

by Richard G. Johnstone Jr., Guest Columnist



My birthplace is a rural county in west-central Georgia, its red clay fields peppered with pecan groves and peach orchards, its farms powered by an electric cooperative where my great-uncle served as general manager during its early days. My homeplace is a rambling Dutch Colonial on the outskirts of the county seat. My mother's happy childhood was spent in this home, and when my father was assigned to an Army base in postwar Japan, she returned there to give birth to me.

It was a home filled with love, and with lots of family members. Three generations lived under that roof during my mother's childhood, and my arrival made me the fourth generation to share the space, with a great-grandmother, grandparents, two great-aunts and my mother.

My father's military service ended near my first birthday, and upon his return home, he began civilian life in a variety of sales jobs with large companies that moved us all over the Southeast, from Atlanta to Charleston, Tampa to Jacksonville, Charlotte to Birmingham, and finally to Richmond, where I've lived since age 15. Throughout my childhood, my happiest days were spent not in the various suburbs where we lived for short stretches, but in that small Georgia town, during summers and holidays with those family members, whom we, fondly, called "the folks."

All the folks are gone now, as is my mother, and that Georgia home was sold long ago. Other voices now fill those rooms, other feet now trod on those floorboards, other residents now make memories in those spaces. But my memories of living there are forever fixed.

Memories of Christmases in a house overflowing with friends and extended family, enjoying a sideboard filled with turkey and ham and dressing, and once-a-year treats of divinity candy, ambrosia salad and jam cake. Of summers spent working at the soda fountain of my grandfather's pharmacy, making lemonades and scooping ice cream, a dime a scoop.

Memories of August church revivals, my grandmother elbowing my grandfather when he drifted off during too-long sermons. Of hot nights without air conditioning, with relief from a cool breeze through the windows arriving only once it was time to get up. Of the tiny den crammed with seven or eight of us, watching "Gunsmoke" or "Lawrence Welk." Of stories from my great-grandmother, of her childhood in the 1880s.

Given my roots in rural Georgia, I was excited in 1985 to be hired as editor of *Cooperative Living* (then called *Rural Living*). During my 36-year tenure, I traveled from the Cumberland Gap to the Delaware shore and countless points in between, interviewing hundreds of cooperative consumers. Their values —

community, fair dealing, neighbors helping neighbors — were the values I was taught growing up.

As I reflect on my time as steward of this iconic 80-year-old publication, I am pleased that we shifted the focus from syndicated pieces on national co-op issues to original stories on people and places within our local co-ops' service areas. We also encouraged more interaction with readers, asking them to submit recipes, photos, letters and answers to various quizzes.

Home is a place, and home is also where you belong. There are many decades and many miles between that homeplace in a rural Georgia county served by an electric cooperative, and a long career working for electric co-ops in the mid-Atlantic. But that long road ended up bringing me back where I belong, back home. ●

Richard G. Johnstone Jr. served multiple roles for the Virginia, Maryland & Delaware Association of Electric Cooperatives from 1985 to 2021 — as editor of Cooperative Living, executive vice president, and president and CEO. To watch a 20-minute video reflecting on 80 years of Cooperative Living, narrated by Richard Johnstone, visit vmda.ec/cl80th.

Home is a place, and home is also where you belong.



'A Front-Row Seat'

Deputy Editor Laura Emery recounts her 26 years of giving voice to co-op stories

by Laura Emery, Staff Writer



As *Cooperative Living* celebrates 80 years, I find myself reflecting on the 26 years I have been privileged to be part of this magazine's remarkable legacy.

My introduction to electric cooperatives came in 1995, when I attended the Virginia Cooperative Council's Virginia Institute on Cooperative Education and then the National Institute on Cooperative Education.

An essay contest I never expected to win, invitations to speak at several cooperative events and, eventually, a blind response to a classified ad seeking a writer for a "trade publication" led me rather unexpectedly to *Cooperative Living*.

What followed was a career more fulfilling than I could ever have imagined, one that gave me a front-row seat to the people and places that make cooperative communities special.

I've traveled winding roads through nearly every corner of Virginia, discovering places I might otherwise never have encountered. I've spent early mornings on the Chesapeake Bay alongside hardworking watermen, toured Tangier Island by golf cart with its mayor and followed lineworkers across rugged terrain as they restored power after storms. I've ridden in combines during harvest season with farmers whose livelihoods are inextricably tied to the land. I've toured power plants, standing amid massive equipment and complex systems that help keep the lights on across co-op communities.

The stories have taken me from soup kitchens to NASA rocket launches. I've watched the weathered hands of skilled artisans coax something beautiful from wood, metal, yarn, paper and other raw materials, and I've sat with political leaders in Washington, D.C. Yet for all the places this career has taken me, it is the people and the smallest details about them that I remember most.

The past 26 years of memories come rushing back, like a montage of faces, voices, places and moments.

I remember meeting U.S. Sen. John Warner and being mesmerized by his charisma and magnetic, larger-than-life presence. And there was the time I spent the afternoon with actor Tim Reid, whom I knew from watching "Sister, Sister." I remember marveling at how surreal it felt to be sitting with him.

Just as vividly, I can recall 105-year-old Eley Demiel of Suffolk, Va., sitting in her wheelchair, afternoon sunlight falling across her face and neatly braided silver hair as she reflected on a life that touched three centuries.

I'll also never forget Matilda "Tillie" Marshall of Onley, Va., a spry 97-year-old with bright blue eyes, freshly painted pink fingernails and a tiny bow tucked into her gray curls. Barely 4 feet tall, she possessed a wit, faith and exuberance for life that seemed to defy the passage of time.

I remember Frank Harris of Ford, Va., who spent 33 years serving Southside Electric Cooperative. His positive energy was palpable, but behind his buoyant spirit was a man who had endured tremendous personal loss and, through his faith in God, chose joy.

They are just a few of the remarkable people who transformed my career into something far richer. Countless others have welcomed me into their lives and trusted me to share their stories — both extraordinary and ordinary — in the pages of *Cooperative Living*. In doing so, they left pieces of themselves with me, too.

It's hard to imagine what I thought my career would look like when I first began writing for the magazine, but all these years later, I am proud to continue to call *Cooperative Living* — and the cooperative community it represents — my life's passion. ●

Laura Emery joined Cooperative Living as field editor in 2000, later becoming associate editor and then deputy editor. For 26 years, she has helped tell the stories of people, places and communities served by electric cooperatives.

... a career
more fulfilling
than I could ever
have imagined ...





A Safe Start to Woodstove Season

Prepare now for a warm, worry-free winter

by Alice Kemp, Virginia Farm Bureau Federation

After long, chilly days on their Christmas tree farm, Ronald and Roberta Clouse enjoy warming up by a woodstove.

“When I’m plowing snow or if we’re working outside all day in the cold, it’s nice to come in and get near the woodstove,” Ronald says. “It puts out a good heat.”

With their rustic charm, crackling woodstoves offer cozy retreats during frigid winters. But that comfort comes with responsibility — without proper care, woodstoves can pose serious fire risks.

MAINTENANCE ROUTINES

The couple heats their home with two woodstoves, and they begin preparations well before the first frost. Their chimneys are inspected and thoroughly cleaned each fall, and Ronald checks the woodstoves — replacing cracked or deteriorating firebricks to keep them functioning safely and efficiently.

“I also check the chimneys about midway through the heating season to ensure everything’s still in good shape,” he notes. Each stove sits on a 4-by-4-foot stone hearth without furniture or anything that could catch fire nearby.

CLEAN CHIMNEYS

“The main issue we run into with woodstoves is chimney fires,” says Nathan Fox, chief of Tazewell County’s Clearfork Volunteer Fire Department. “Mostly they’re due to poor chimney maintenance or burning wood that hasn’t been properly seasoned.”

According to the National Fire Protection Association, heating equipment is the second-leading cause of home fires and the third-leading cause of home fire deaths. Dirty chimneys,

usually caused by creosote buildup — highly combustible residue that accumulates inside chimneys — is a leading cause of chimney fires. While small amounts of creosote are normal when operating woodstoves, burning wet or unseasoned wood causes creosote to accumulate faster and can restrict airflow. Left untreated, creosote buildup significantly increases fire risk.

A 20-year veteran of the fire service, Fox has responded to attic fires caused by neglected, cracked chimneys. He advises having working smoke and carbon monoxide detectors around the house and keeping a fire extinguisher nearby. Call 911 as soon as you think there may be a problem, he says.

“Time is never on your side when fighting fire,” Fox says. “It takes time for dispatch to page the fire department and for firefighters to arrive. That one phone call will get the ball rolling.” ●



WOODSTOVE CHECKLIST

- Burn dry, well-seasoned hardwood. Don’t burn wet or green wood, paper, plastic or other materials. Don’t overload woodstoves with too much wood.
- Have chimneys inspected and cleaned annually by a professional.
- Keep a 3-foot clearance around stoves — free of rugs, furniture, drying clothes or anything flammable.
- Inspect and maintain woodstoves. Check firebricks for damage, inspect door seals and stovepipes, remove ash, and replace gaskets and parts as needed.
- Use dampers and air controls properly to control air intake and regulate the burn, minimizing creosote and ensuring unrestricted airflow.
- Extinguish the fire before you go to sleep or leave home.
- Use a metal container with a lid for ashes, and place it outside at least 10 feet from your home.
- Test smoke and carbon monoxide detectors monthly and replace batteries as needed.
- Keep a fire extinguisher within reach and make sure everyone in the home knows how to use it.



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Dog-Show Days

Middle Peninsula residents find success and connections in kennel club competitions

by Audrey Hingley, Contributing Writer

The excitement surrounding the now-iconic annual Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show held in New York City each February is visceral for two rural Virginia residents who played important roles in the 2026 show. Polly Smith of St. Stephens Church in King and Queen County, Va., judged the terrier group, and Michael Faulkner of Center Cross in Essex County, Va., judged the WKC's Junior Showmanship finals where the best junior handler was selected.

Faulkner juggles his "dog career" with his job as executive director of the Ledwick-Lewis Free Clinic in Tappahannock. Smith is a retired widow with one adult son. The two have traveled intertwining routes in the kennel club community.

CHILDHOOD CONNECTION

The WKC "has been part of my total existence from early childhood until now," Faulkner says. He vividly



From left, Polly Smith and Michael Faulkner

PHOTOS COURTESY MICHAEL FAULKNER



remembers the first time he was asked to judge the sporting group, one of seven categories featured in the annual dog show.

"The evening before the competition, I went over to [New York City's] Madison Square Garden with a colleague to do a preproduction run-through because the show [airs live on television]," he says. "We were way up in the nosebleed section in a totally empty arena looking down as I reflected on the importance of the moment. Never in my wildest dreams did I think I would be there. ... And it all started with the love of dogs."

Smith also traces her love of animals

to childhood. She was introduced to dog shows by her grandparents' neighbor, who raised and showed chow chows. She recalls dressing up one chow named Chinese Jade, putting a leash around his neck and walking him around

pretending to compete in a dog show.

In the 1960s, Smith and her late husband Dr. Robert Smith started breeding and showing American foxhounds. Their kennel produced numerous champions and best-in-show winners over several decades. They also bred Welsh terrier and beagle champions, but the American foxhound remains Smith's favorite dog breed. American foxhounds are low-maintenance, good-natured hounds who get along well with children, other dogs and even cats. They are sleek hunters known for their speed, endurance and work ethic. Their large eyes have a gentle and pleading expression.

Smith is a founding member of several kennel clubs, including the Middle Peninsula Kennel Club, based in Doswell, Va. She has competed and judged at the WKC many times as an American Kennel Club-licensed all-breed judge.

"Years ago, when we got started, you were invited to be a judge," she recalls. "[My husband and I] were both exhibitors and handlers. Now you have to be a licensed judge through the AKC. You apply, do tests and are interviewed by AKC representatives [to be a] provisional judge.



Michael Faulkner shows one of his golden retrievers at the 2019 Westminster event.



You must have 12 years as an exhibitor to apply, and you must have bred three champions.”

Faulkner, a third-generation dog aficionado, says, “My grandparents had great danes, my mom had field spaniels and my aunt had collies.”

His passion for dogs has carried him through junior showmanship, a lesser-known competition in the WKC for participants ages 9 to 18 who compete for postsecondary scholarships, and he continues today through his roles as breeder, owner, handler, judge and mentor.

In addition to these roles, Faulkner has been involved in extensive breeding programs, breeding and handling golden retrievers and several other breeds, and handling multiple best-in-show winners.

“The golden is my lifelong favorite,” he says. “They are highly intelligent, kind, gentle and willing to please. The bond between human and dog is intense, and they are beautiful.”

Smith says many people get started in the dog show world through obedience training. Faulkner says many young people begin through involvement in 4-H clubs.

DOG SHOW CULTURE

To a casual observer, competing at the WKC dog show may seem uncomplicated, but the process is anything but simple.

Regarding both dog show participation and breeding, Faulkner admits, “It’s expensive. Anything you do well in will cost you money. I show my own dogs, and we also have handlers, and that is not cheap.”

WKC competitors have to consider costs such as training, grooming, transportation, travel and lodging, entry fees and marketing expenses.

Established in 1877, the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show is the oldest organization in America dedicated to

the sport of purebred dogs, as well as the second-longest continuously held sporting event in the country, behind the Kentucky Derby, which debuted in 1875. WKC predates the formation of the AKC by seven years and was the first club admitted to the AKC after its founding in 1884. It’s also the longest nationally televised dog show, broadcast since 1948. Television has allowed the public to see both the level of competition and the quality of different



breeds. It has contributed to making Westminster a serious sporting event. In addition to airing on FOX Sports, the WKC recently announced its Feb. 2, 2027, show will stream live on Netflix.

Originating as a show for “gun dogs” (primarily setters and pointers), the WKC was founded by a group of sporting enthusiasts who gathered at New York City’s long-gone Westminster Hotel bar to drink and talk about their dogs. Today, the WKC show includes more than 200 breeds and varieties recognized by the AKC. Dog entrants are divided into seven categories: sporting, hound, terrier, toy, working, herding and non-sporting.

WKC has broadened its reach over the years, and mixed breed dogs compete in some performance events, such as barn hunt, agility and obedience. Since 1987, WKC’s Westminster Foundation has awarded \$4.8 million in scholarships to veterinary students at six universities. WKC’s mission

celebrates the companionship of dogs, promotes responsible dog ownership and breed preservation.

Dogs are judged by how closely they conform to breed standards, which describe the characteristics of the ideal specimen for that breed that relate to form and function. These written conformation standards are created, maintained and owned by the national breed club for each respective breed and approved by the AKC. Most standards describe general appearance, movement and specific physical traits, such as height, weight, coat type and coat color. Competition judges conduct hands-on examinations of dogs and watch them in motion.

Dogs compete against others of their breed, with each breed’s winner moving to a semifinal judging round. Group winners advance to best in show during the televised event. The designation best in show has been awarded since 1907.

Like the canine crowned best in show, considered the highest distinction in American dog competition, Faulkner is not paid for his WKC work.

Winners are awarded trophies, such as a polished pewter trophy and The Westminster Legend Trophy, a hand-engraved Steuben crystal bowl. Winning best in show does provide opportunities. The winning dog receives sponsorships, can earn money for appearances and may see its value in breeding greatly increase.

Faulkner, who says the dog world is “extremely welcoming,” was surprised recently when he was invited to become a Westminster Club Member — the only WKC member in Virginia. He calls winning at the WKC show “the [pinnacle] of your career. ... It validates your career by winning a show.” ●

► *The Middle Peninsula Kennel Club of Virginia Dog Show, headed by Polly Smith, will be held Oct. 24 at Meadow Event Park in Doswell, Va. Spectator admission is free; parking is \$5.*

Timeless and Tempting

Atmosphere and menu pair together well in Winchester, Va.

by Peggy Hyland, Contributing Columnist

On Winchester's charming downtown pedestrian mall, Water Street Kitchen is serving up classic comfort food in a relaxed atmosphere. It is located in one of the fixtures of the Old Town historic district, where Boyd's Drug Store stood for about a century.

There are traces of the old drug store and soda fountain still present, from the tin ceiling to the ornate shelving that lines the walls. Even the name is a nod to the past, when South Loudon Street was known as Water Street. We soaked in the feeling of familiar warmth and nostalgia from the moment we stepped inside. The vintage atmosphere felt timeless, not dated. Service was friendly and helpful, especially when perusing the side dishes.

The selection of side dishes was extensive, but there was no need to pick just one. The Side Plate meal option features three sides and a piece of corn bread, perfect for sharing with friends during an afternoon of shopping and strolling. I could eat the Cajun fried okra all day long. We also tried the mac and cheese, a delectable dish with cavatappi noodles bathed in rich, creamy cheese.

Crab dip always catches my eye, and this dish was fabulous. It was a creamy indulgence, with generous chunks of

crab meat. The pimento cheese gave it a homey, southern feel, and the crumbled bacon topping added some crunch to the texture.

My companion chose the meatloaf, made with Black Angus beef and prepared in the classic style. The house-made gravy will bring back memories of visiting a favorite grandmother for a Sunday meal. He chose the freshly cooked kettle chips, a crunchy delight, and the crispy brussels sprouts, cooked just right. I could not resist the shrimp and grits, which was truly outstanding. The stone-ground grits had the perfect texture, and the mild cheddar added rich velvetiness. The sauce of fire-roasted tomatoes, peppers and onions was terrific on its own, but paired with the blackened shrimp and luscious grits,

the combination was a dream team. The grits are also available as a side dish.

With breakfast served all day, Water Street Kitchen is a great place to start — or end — your day of exploring all the shops and historic sites on the Loudon Street Pedestrian Mall. It's right around the corner from Taylor Pavilion, where a variety of free events are held throughout the year, and a half a mile from the home of Winchester's famous star, Patsy Cline. ●

Water Street Kitchen

2 S. Loudon St., Winchester, VA 22601
Monday through Friday, 11 a.m.-8 p.m.;
Saturday, 10 a.m.-8 p.m.; Sunday,
10 a.m.-3 p.m.
540-313-4680
Waterstkitchen.com

Got a restaurant
for Peggy to review?
Let us know at
editor@co-opliving.com.



Orange Crush



Cajun fried okra



Meatloaf



Crab dip

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Don't let energy vampires haunt your bill: Pull the plug on hidden energy use

A phantom load—also known as **standby power** or **vampire power**—is electricity that electronics continue to draw when plugged in even when they appear to be turned off. Phantom loads can account for **5% to 10% of annual electricity use***.

Scare away spooky phantom loads with these simple energy tips:

- **Unplug devices when they are not in use:** Physically disconnect phone chargers, gaming consoles, and other electronic devices.
- **Use smart power strips:** Plug computers and laptops into smart power strips that automatically cut power to idle devices.
- **Purchase energy efficient appliances:** Upgrade to ENERGY STAR® and other energy-efficient appliances to reduce standby (phantom) power consumption and lower your energy bills.



Bust phantom loads before they haunt your bill! Discover potential savings with our Phantom Energy Calculator.



Old Dominion Electric Cooperative is a member-owned, not-for-profit generation and transmission cooperative providing wholesale power to electric cooperatives in Virginia, Maryland, and Delaware. ODEC invests in demand response and energy efficiency programming to proactively meet member needs.



National Cooperative Month 2026:

Why the Cooperative Difference Matters More Than Ever

October is National Co-op Month, a time to recognize businesses that are owned and democratically controlled by their members — often the people they serve.

Cooperatives take many forms, from credit unions and agriculture to electric cooperatives like Rappahannock Electric Cooperative (REC). They all operate around a simple idea: people can work together

to meet a common need and share in the value created.

For many households, that idea might feel especially relevant now. The cost of groceries, insurance, housing and other essentials has risen. Distributing electricity faces many of the same pressures, along with growing demand, more expensive

equipment and the work required to maintain and strengthen the grid.

The seven cooperative principles guide how REC serves members, manages money and plans for the years ahead. Read more about how REC applies the Cooperative Principles on your behalf in the **full feature on page 18.**

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CEO Editorial: Data Centers

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Apply Now for Scholarships, Youth Tour

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Meet Your Cooperative's Board



Planning Responsibly for a Changing Energy Landscape

What REC members should know about how the Cooperative is preparing for and managing unprecedented energy demand.

By John Hewa, President & CEO, Rappahannock Electric Cooperative



Across the REC service territory, few issues are generating more questions, or more concern, than the rapid growth of data centers and the amount of electricity they require. Since January of this

year, REC has energized 900 megawatts of new data center substation capacity. The amount of electricity requested to serve data centers planning to locate in our area is unprecedented for our Cooperative and much of the electric utility industry.

REC members are right to ask what this growth could mean for electric rates, reliability and the infrastructure required to serve these facilities. Members also deserve a clear explanation of REC's role and the actions we have taken.

As a regulated electric cooperative in Virginia, REC is required to provide service to all members, whether residential or business, within our territory. Our responsibility is to carefully plan for and provide that service while maintaining the safety, reliability and financial strength of the Cooperative. When a data center requests electric service, we determine what infrastructure, system improvements, power supply arrangements and financial commitments are required to serve that request safely and reliably.

Data centers can bring investment and revenue to communities that choose to permit them. They also raise legitimate questions about their potential impacts and costs. Each community decides what development or growth it wants. Our role is to explain what powering that growth will require and then manage our responsibilities as the electric service provider carefully and transparently.

Members should stay informed of proposed developments and opportunities for public input by following their county's planning commission and board of supervisors proceedings. When a project, whether a data center or something else, such as a manufacturing facility, residential subdivision or distribution center, requires rezoning, permits or other local approvals, information about the process is generally made available by the locality. Certain electric infrastructure and rate matters may also require or invite public input by state regulatory agencies, including the Virginia State Corporation Commission (SCC).

"These safeguards establish a comprehensive structure for serving data centers ... they cannot, however, insulate members from every change in the broader regional energy market."

Members have also asked why confidentiality agreements are used during the early stages of some projects. Nondisclosure agreements are common when businesses are evaluating potential locations and have not made a final decision about their plans. These agreements protect commercially sensitive information such as a company's identity, proposed location, development timeline and projected energy needs. They do not allow REC to approve a data center, bypass a locality's public process or conceal information that must be disclosed through a regulatory proceeding. When information can legally and appropriately be shared, REC is committed to providing

members with that information about the potential impacts on our electric system.

REC has spent several years preparing for this growth and establishing appropriate requirements for members with very large energy needs. Our approach addresses the infrastructure required to serve them, how their electricity is purchased, the rates they pay and the financial commitments they must make.

Data center members pay upfront for the REC distribution infrastructure constructed specifically to serve them. This may include dedicated substations, electric lines and other system improvements. Existing members are not financing facilities built solely because of a data center's demand.

Their wholesale power supply is also kept separate. REC purchases electricity for the homes, farms and businesses traditionally served by the Cooperative through Old Dominion Electric Cooperative (ODEC), a generation and transmission cooperative owned by REC and 10 other electric cooperatives. To serve data centers, REC created Hyperscale Energy Services (HES), which separately procures the significant amounts of electricity they require through the PJM Interconnection LLC (PJM) wholesale energy market. Data center members pay for all the electricity that is purchased to meet their needs, including absorbing fluctuations in market prices.

These large-power members must also provide financial assurances for their commitments. Those protections may include upfront infrastructure payments, collateral and obligations established through their service agreements. The rates they pay are set by a specialized Large Power-Dedicated Facilities rate schedule approved by the SCC. Under that rate schedule, data center members must make ongoing payments based on the infrastructure installed to serve them, regardless of their actual energy

Planning Responsibly for a Changing Energy Landscape

continued from page 16

consumption. This is another important safeguard REC has put in place to protect the Cooperative and its members from future financial risk.

Taken together, these safeguards establish a comprehensive structure for serving data centers. They are designed to prevent homes, farms and other businesses from subsidizing the direct costs and financial risks associated with serving data centers. They cannot, however, insulate members from every change in the broader regional energy market.

Reliability presents a broader challenge. REC and the utilities it relies on for transmission service carefully study every large-power request and determine what infrastructure is required to serve it safely and reliably. But Virginia's electric system is part of the larger PJM grid, which serves all or portions of 13 states and the District of Columbia.

PJM has acknowledged that demand is growing faster than new generation and transmission resources are being added. Power-plant retirements, transmission constraints and increasing energy needs in recent years have all contributed to this supply-demand mismatch. As a result, PJM is taking several steps aimed at ensuring the reliability of the grid.

Members have asked whether data center growth will lead to blackouts. PJM is responsible for balancing electricity supply and demand across the regional grid and PJM is the body that would direct rolling blackouts as a last resort. PJM is proposing changes to its emergency procedures that would require data centers to be curtailed first. Data centers typically have backup generators they can lean on in times of grid stress.

REC's role in grid emergencies is to comply with regional and/or state requirements, and to communicate clearly with members when emergency conditions arise.

We want to be clear about what REC can and cannot do. We can establish strong electric requirements for data centers, carefully plan the electric system we operate and adapt as conditions change. We cannot control every condition affecting the regional grid, and no utility can guarantee that broader energy costs will not change.

Virginia's energy landscape is changing quickly. REC will continue carefully evaluating every large-power request and keeping our members informed. Our responsibility is to provide safe, reliable service while protecting the financial strength of the Cooperative our members built and own. That responsibility will continue to guide every decision we make. We will continue to address different aspects of this complex and evolving topic in future columns, including the many ways REC is working to provide service while protecting the Cooperative and its members.



APPLY TODAY

POWER YOUR FUTURE

REC Youth Tour and Community Scholarships help local students explore education, leadership and service.



Youth Tour 2027

Represent REC during a weeklong trip to Washington, D.C. Open to eligible high school juniors.



Community Scholarships

Your Cooperative awards more than \$20,000 each year for college, university, career or technical education.

YOUTH TOUR • APPLY BY JAN. 31, 2027 • myrec.coop/youthtour

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National Co-op Month 2026:

The Seven Cooperative Principles in Action

The seven cooperative principles are a shared foundation for cooperatives around the world. During National Co-op Month, REC celebrates how those principles shape who has a voice, where financial value goes and how the Cooperative responds to the needs of its members and communities.

Voluntary and open membership: Serving the community

Before an electric cooperative served this area, two determined Virginians shared a simple message: If rural families and businesses wanted electricity, they would have to make it happen themselves.

Ninety years later, that service remains central to REC's mission. The Cooperative provides safe, reliable, affordable and sustainable electricity to more than 185,000 connections across a service territory that includes parts of 22 counties.

Membership with REC is open to anyone who lives or operates a business within its service territory. Whether serving a home, farm, business or public institution, REC provides members with access to the benefits and services the Cooperative offers.



Democratic member control: Giving members a voice

Your Cooperative is governed by a member-elected Board of Directors made up of REC member-owners. At this year's Annual Meeting in August, more than 16,500 member-owners participated in the election of three Board members, choosing the leaders responsible for setting the Cooperative's strategic direction and representing their interests.

Members' economic participation: Returning value to member-owners

As a member-owned, not-for-profit Cooperative, REC uses its margins to fund electric-system improvements and strengthen service. When the Cooperative's financial condition allows, a portion of those margins may be returned to eligible member-owners through Capital Credits.

In July 2026, REC returned \$10 million in Capital Credits to member-owners through credits applied on their bill.

Capital Credit returns are not guaranteed each year, but they can provide a trangible

benefit of cooperative ownership by returning financial value to eligible member-owners.

Autonomy and independence: Preserving member control

REC is an autonomous, member-controlled cooperative. When REC enters agreements with other organizations, including government agencies, lenders, contractors or business partners, those arrangements must preserve the Cooperative's independence and member control.

REC works to manage rising costs, strengthen the electric system and plan for long-term needs. The Cooperative also looks for grants and other sources of revenue that can help offset electric-system costs, including fiber and joint-use agreements and service provided through REC-affiliated businesses.

Education, training and information: Providing tools and information

Safety is the top priority at REC, and education is an important part of that commitment. The Cooperative works with



state and local public safety organizations, including fire departments and first responders, to share electrical safety information with member-owners and the public.

REC also shares information on safety, energy efficiency, sustainability and ways members can better understand and manage their energy use. Through community events, MyREC SmartHub and other energy-saving resources, members have practical tools to make informed choices.

That information has been especially important as higher power costs affect electric bills. REC connects members with bill-management options, energy-use tools and assistance resources, while also explaining how power-supply costs, system investments and daily energy choices can affect what members pay.

Cooperation among cooperatives: Working together to strengthen service

Cooperatives work together locally, regionally and across the country. One of the most visible examples is mutual aid, through which crews from one cooperative help another restore power after major storms. REC has received that support during major outages and has sent crews to help other cooperatives recover from severe weather and major power outages.

Cooperation also strengthens everyday service. REC's power-supply relationship with Old Dominion Electric Cooperative supports long-term planning and access to a diverse portfolio of energy resources. Other partnerships help address supply chain challenges, expand rural broadband and share expertise that benefits member-owners.

REC's reliability work over the past year — from pole replacements and right-of-way maintenance to drone inspections and grid improvements — helped strengthen the system, while crews, contractors and support teams restored power after severe weather affected communities across the service territory.

Concern for community: Keeping the value close to home

REC's members live and work in the communities the Cooperative serves, and REC employees are active across the service territory and beyond. They volunteer with churches and schools, support fundraisers, coach youth sports, serve with fire and rescue organizations, and take part in projects that strengthen their communities.

That same commitment is reflected in REC's work. From reliability investments and member assistance to scholarships, Youth Tour, The Power of Change and partnerships that help expand high-speed internet access, REC works to support the long-term strength of its communities.

The Power of Change is one example of members helping members. More than



37,000 members participate by rounding up their monthly electric bills or making a recurring contribution. Together, those donations have provided more than \$1.8 million to support nonprofits and community needs across REC's service territory.

The effort to expand rural broadband reflects the same cooperative spirit that brought electricity to rural communities in the 1930s and '40s: people working together to meet a need that might otherwise go unmet.

The seven cooperative principles connect REC's history to its work today. They guide how the Cooperative is governed, how it manages resources and how it serves its member-owners — keeping the value of the cooperative ownership rooted in the communities REC calls home.





A knock at the door? Here's how to know it's really REC



REC-branded clothing, safety equipment and vehicles are usually good indicators, but if there is any doubt, you can always ask to see identification, or call REC to verify.

A marked truck in the driveway. A familiar REC logo. A friendly face stopping by to do important work.

It's a sight many members recognize — and that's exactly why scammers try to imitate it.

Scammers often rely on urgency. Someone may claim to be from REC and ask for access to your property, request immediate payment or try to collect personal or account information before you have time to think.

Legitimate REC employees and contractors should be easy to recognize. They drive marked vehicles, wear company uniforms and carry identification. If something seems suspicious, trust your instincts. Ask to see identification, then call REC at **800-552-3904** to verify the visit.

"Scammers count on people feeling rushed," said Joanie Griffiths, Director

– Member Services and Community Relations. "If something feels unusual, slow down and give us a call. We'd much rather verify a visit than have someone become the victim of a scam."

It also helps to know what REC won't do. REC doesn't use collection agencies to

contact members by phone, and Member Services representatives will never pressure you to make an immediate payment. Be especially cautious if someone asks you to pay with gift cards, prepaid cards or wire transfers.

Protect yourself by remembering a few simple steps:

- Never make an immediate payment under pressure.
- Don't provide personal or financial information unless you initiated the contact.
- Never agree to meet someone to make a payment.
- If a visitor seems suspicious, end the conversation and report the visit to REC and local law enforcement.

If you receive a suspicious call, email, text or outage notification, contact REC directly to verify it. Official REC outage text alerts come only from 63273.

A few moments of caution can make all the difference. When in doubt, slow down, verify and let REC help you separate what's real from what isn't.



Power It Forward

Neighbors Helping Neighbors with their REC electric bill.



myrec.coop/gift

Provide the Gift of Electricity to a family member, friend, neighbor, co-worker, or someone in need by applying a credit directly to their REC account — giving comfort, stability, and the power to move forward.

To give a gift, please scan the QR code.



BE READY
WITH A WHOLE-HOME
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Vividly Brighter

SALES

SERVICE

INSTALLATION

Meet the Board of Directors

REC is governed by a Board of Directors elected by member-owners to represent the membership as a whole. The board provides governance and oversight, sets policy and works with REC leadership to advance safe, reliable, affordable and sustainable energy solutions.



Michael W. Lindsay,
Region I

Region I includes Frederick and Shenandoah counties, the portion of Page County north of U.S. Route 211, and portions of Warren and Rappahannock counties west of U.S. Route 522. Lindsay has served on REC's board since 2010 and brings nearly 40 years of corporate finance experience to his role.

"My passion, my focus, is the exciting world of finance — delivering safe, reliable and affordable electricity as economically as possible, while protecting REC's financial posture."



Christopher G. Shipe,
Chair, Region II

Region II includes Clarke, Fauquier and Stafford counties, and portions of Warren and Rappahannock counties east of U.S. Route 522. Shipe brings extensive governance and leadership experience from his career in the mutual insurance industry and service on insurance cooperative boards.

"I am grateful for all we accomplish together as a cooperative that is making a positive difference in the communities where we live, work and serve."



Darlene H. Carpenter,
Region III

Region III includes Albemarle, Greene, Madison and Rockingham counties, and the portion of Page County south of U.S. Route 211. Carpenter focuses on the effect Board decisions have on members and the communities REC serves.

"My commitment to our members is, and has always been, to work hard and keep them first in all decisions."



Sanford Reaves Jr., Vice
Chair, Region IV

Region IV includes Culpeper and Orange counties. Reaves is a lifelong Culpeper resident, longtime REC member-owner and community leader who



REC Board members recently toured the service territory for a behind-the-scenes look at broadband construction, system improvements and other work underway.

has served on the Culpeper County Planning Commission for more than 30 years.

"Affordability will continue to be my No. 1 focus, and I'll work to ensure the impact on our member-owners is minimized."



Randy Thomas, Region V

Region V includes Spotsylvania County. Thomas also represents REC on the Old Dominion Electric Cooperative board,

helping to support reliable and affordable power for REC members.

"As a resident of Spotsylvania County, I share the same priorities as you: reliability, fair rates and a cooperative that remains accountable to the people it serves."



Linda R. Gray, Region VI

Region VI includes Caroline County. Gray is passionate about safety and supporting the lineworkers who serve members and restore power under demanding conditions.

"When we flip that switch, we want the lights to come on. But we also want our lineworkers to go home at the end of the day the same way they showed up."



J. Mark Wood,
Secretary, Region VII

Region VII includes Louisa County. Wood brings more than 40 years of experience as a licensed professional

engineer and land surveyor, with a focus on problem-solving, innovation and efficiency.

"We refer to problems as opportunities to rethink what we do and how we do it — and to use modern technology to help us work safer and more efficiently."



Eric Paulson, Treasurer,
Region VIII

Region VIII includes Hanover and Goochland counties. Paulson was born in Harrisonburg, and grew up working on his family's dairy farm in Port Republic. He has served as the Executive Director for the Virginia State Dairymen's Association since 2009.

"I am focused on delivering reliable and forward-thinking energy solutions for our community."



Eugene L. Campbell Jr.,
Region IX

Region IX includes Essex, King and Queen, and King William counties.

Campbell has served on REC's board since 2017 and volunteers with service-driven and economic development organizations. He chairs the King William Economic Development Authority and serves with King William Internet Connectivity Initiative.

"I have been proud to serve alongside a dedicated team committed to providing affordable and reliable energy to our member-owners."



Fall Back on Fire Safety

When you turn your clocks back this fall, take a few minutes to check another important item in your home: your smoke alarms.

Daylight saving time ends Sunday, Nov. 1, 2026, when clocks “fall back” one hour. The time change is an easy reminder to make sure the devices that help protect your family are ready to work.

Test every smoke alarm by pressing the test button and listening for the alarm. Replace batteries at least once a year and change them right away if an alarm begins chirping.

Check each alarm’s age, too. Smoke alarms should generally be replaced every 10 years, including sealed-battery models.

Make sure alarms are installed on every level, inside bedrooms and outside sleeping areas. Check carbon monoxide detectors regularly, too.



REC’s New Bill is Here

front

back

REC bills issued in October will feature a new design that makes key account information easier to find and understand.

Members will still see essential details, including the amount due, due date, energy use, payment history, current charges and account resources, now in a clearer, easier-to-scan layout.

Take a moment to review the new design when your October bill arrives.

To learn more, visit www.myrec.coop/newbill.

Local Pages Editor – Casey M. Hollins, CCC

Contact Information:
P.O. Box 7388
Fredericksburg, VA 22404
800.552.3904 | office@myrec.coop

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RAPPAHANNOCK ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE PRESENTS

THE POWER OF COMMUNITY *tour*

OCTOBER

Oct. 3

Fredericksburg Academy Touch-a-Truck
11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Oct. 3

44th Annual West Point Crab Carnival
10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Oct. 3

Wings and Wheels
Winchester Regional Airport
10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Oct. 10

Paragon Autism Services Sensory-Friendly Touch-a-Truck
Spotswood Baptist Church,
Fredericksburg
9 a.m. to noon

Oct. 10

Walkerton Day
Noon

Oct. 10

Festival of Leaves
Downtown Front Royal
10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Oct. 12

Triad Senior Health and Wellness Fair
Essex High School, Tappahannock
10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Oct. 15

Louisa County High School Homecoming Parade
6 p.m.

Oct. 17

Bowling Green Harvest Festival
9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Oct. 17

Quacktoberfest
Downtown Fredericksburg
2 to 6 p.m.

Oct. 22

Jack-o'-Lantern Jubilee
Warren County Health and Human Services
Complex
Front Royal
6 to 8 p.m.

Oct. 23

Moonlight Halloween Candy Hunt
Culpeper Sports Complex
6 to 8:30 p.m.

Oct. 24

Jouett Elementary School Harvest Festival
6 to 8 p.m.

Oct. 24

Reva Fire and Rescue Trunk-or-Treat
9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Oct. 31

Tappahannock Trunk-or-Treat
Downtown Tappahannock
3 to 5 p.m.

Oct. 31

Montpelier Library Trunk-or-Treat
5 to 7 p.m.

Additional Trunk-or-Treat Events
Multiple events throughout Rappahannock
Electric Cooperative's (REC) service territory



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A Taste of Fall

A few seasonal favorites from the archives

Turkey Dandy



appeared in December 1954 issue of *Rural Virginia*

Ingredients:

1 (4-oz.) box elbow macaroni	2 cups milk or turkey stock
¼ cup butter or margarine	1 cup turkey, cooked
¼ cup enriched flour	1 cup peas, cooked
1 teaspoon salt	1 cup carrots, sliced and cooked

Directions:

Cook macaroni in boiling salted water until tender, about 10 minutes. Drain and rinse. Meanwhile, melt butter or margarine in a saucepan. Stir in flour and salt. Gradually add milk or turkey stock and cook, stirring constantly, until thickened. Place macaroni in an 8-inch-square baking dish. Arrange turkey over the macaroni and top with carrots and peas. Pour the sauce over the mixture. Bake at 350 degrees for about 30 minutes. Makes 4 servings.

Baked Apples



appeared in October 1988 issue of *Rural Living*,
recipe courtesy of Francis and Ann Wilmer of Maryland's Eastern Shore

Ingredients:

6 medium tart apples	2 teaspoons butter
½ cup brown sugar	1 tablespoon lemon juice,
1 teaspoon cinnamon	water or apple juice
½ teaspoon lemon zest	

Directions:

Peel the top half of each apple and remove cores. Place apples in a flat baking dish. Combine brown sugar, cinnamon and lemon zest. Divide the mixture evenly among the apples, filling the hollow centers. Top each apple with a small pat of butter. Pour about ½ inch of water or apple juice into the baking dish, then add the lemon juice. Sprinkle any remaining sugar mixture over the liquid. Bake at 375 degrees for 45 minutes or until the apples are tender, basting occasionally. Serve warm with cream.



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.hopewelldowntown.com, www.hopewellva.gov



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If your photo is published as part of the Say Cheese column in *Cooperative Living* magazine, we will send you a \$20 Amazon gift card!



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ROAD SHOW**



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SHOW**

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Understanding RGGI

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An overview of the regional carbon program

by Jack McCarthy, Contributing Writer

With Virginia's return to the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, as of July 1, 2026, ratepayers in Virginia, Maryland and Delaware now all participate in the regional carbon program.

State energy policy shapes how electricity is produced, priced and delivered across the region. One such policy, the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, commonly known as RGGI (pronounced "Reggie"), is a program that has significant effects on energy and affordability. While Maryland and Delaware have participated in RGGI since the program's early years, Virginia rejoined the program July 1, 2026, after participating from 2021 through 2023. Here's a look at what RGGI is, how it works and where things stand today.

WHAT IS RGGI?

The Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative is a multistate program designed to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from power plants across

participating Northeast and mid-Atlantic states. Often described as a cap-and-trade program, RGGI places a limit on carbon emissions from power plants in participating states.

Each year, the number of allowances available is gradually reduced, limiting the supply over time. Under the program, power plants subject to RGGI must buy carbon allowances based on the amount of carbon dioxide they emit. Allowances from participating states are primarily sold through quarterly RGGI auctions, although they can also be bought and sold on a secondary market. The auction price can change based on the number of allowances available and demand, including from power plants that need allowances to meet RGGI requirements. RGGI is designed to encourage greater use of low- and zero-carbon generation sources that require fewer or no allowances.

Revenue generated from the sale of allowances is distributed to participating states, which decide how the funds

Wildcat Point, an ODEC-operated power generation facility in Cecil, Md.

will be used. For utilities with power plants subject to RGGI, the required purchase of allowances is an additional compliance cost that increases the cost of generating electricity that is passed on to the ratepayer. How the revenue is used varies by state and may include energy efficiency, weatherization, flood mitigation, consumer assistance or other efforts to help offset some of the costs for customers, including bill credits.

Today, RGGI states include Virginia, Maryland and Delaware — the three states served by Old Dominion Electric Cooperative's member co-ops — as well as Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island and Vermont. Maryland and Delaware have participated in the program for many years. Delaware was one of the original states to sign the RGGI agreement in 2005, Maryland joined the agreement in 2007 and the program's first compliance period began in 2009.

RGGI is one example of how energy and environmental programs can influence the cost of producing and delivering electricity.

VIRGINIA'S HISTORY WITH RGGI

Virginia's involvement with RGGI has changed several times over the past six years.

In 2020, the Virginia General Assembly passed legislation directing Virginia to participate in RGGI, and the commonwealth began participating in the program in 2021 under Gov. Ralph Northam. Under Gov. Glenn Youngkin, Virginia pursued a regulatory withdrawal from RGGI and ended its participation after 2023.

That action was challenged in court, and in 2024, a circuit court ruled that the regulatory repeal was unlawful. The state appealed the ruling, and Virginia

remained outside RGGI while the appeal was pending, which was officially withdrawn in March 2026. Following action by the Virginia General Assembly and Gov. Abigail Spanberger earlier this year, Virginia rejoined RGGI, with compliance obligations resuming July 1, 2026.

WHERE THINGS STAND TODAY

As of July 1, 2026, Virginia is once again participating in RGGI, making compliance with the program a requirement under state law. The resulting compliance costs become part of the overall cost of providing electricity.

The price of RGGI allowances can change from one auction to the next based on the number of allowances available and demand. In the June 2026 auction, allowances sold for \$35 each. That compares with \$14.88 per allowance in December 2023, the final auction held during Virginia's previous participation in the program. The allowance cost will continue to increase based on RGGI's further allowance reduction goals.

RGGI is one example of how energy and environmental programs can influence the cost of producing and delivering electricity. As the energy landscape continues to evolve, electric cooperatives remain focused on keeping members informed, managing costs wherever possible and ensuring the reliable, affordable electricity our communities depend on. ●

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Restoring the American Chestnut

Uniting generations, preserving Appalachian history and culture

by Amanda S. Creasey, Outdoors Writer

When I arrive at the chestnut orchard in Lesesne State Forest, one tree immediately arrests my attention. With lush blooms, healthy foliage and symmetrical branches, she stands tall and proud amid the pastoral scene. Later, I will learn this stunning beauty has a name: Gladys. Referring to her as female, though, isn't exactly accurate.

John Scrivani, chair of restoration science for The American Chestnut Foundation, explains that chestnuts are monoecious, producing both male and female flowers. He gently pulls a low branch lower, allowing me to inspect its flowers. The male blossoms, catkins, look like furry fireworks, the female flowers like tiny, upside-down pineapples.

Scrivani leads me toward a utility truck, its bucket extended so the woman perched inside can reach the canopy of another impressive chestnut. Central Virginia Electric Cooperative has donated bucket truck services in the past, when the Virginia Department of Forestry trucks are unavailable, he tells me. Cassie Stark, director of science implementation for TACF, is poised in the bucket, hand-pollinating the tree. After a few minutes, Scrivani calls up to her, the bucket is lowered and Stark hops out. I notice some linework on her forearm — a delicate chestnut leaf is tattooed there.



Cassie Stark, director of science implementation for The American Chestnut Foundation, hand pollinates a chestnut tree.

RADIANT SNAPSHOTS PHOTO

with American chestnut trees. The resulting offspring will be hybrid chestnuts with varying levels of disease resistance inherited from Chinese and Japanese chestnut, an important trait for competing in a forested setting.

The hand pollination happening in the orchard today is not a long-term solution to the American chestnut's struggle to survive, but a bridge to hopeful restoration. The process currently in use is an industry standard known as recurrent genomic selection. Stark explains that researchers breed

high-performing trees and then breed their offspring in subsequent generations, gradually strengthening selected traits.

It's a slow process.

Scrivani laughs as he says, "We're always reminding ourselves that we work on tree time, generation by generation. Our progress can take

A bucket truck gives pollination workers necessary access to the higher reaches of the American chestnut trees.

10 to 15 years to evaluate. The department of forestry has been working on restoration for 40 years."

Hand pollination is a key part of the process, allowing the team of staff and volunteers here today to make the correct crosses. To control pollination, volunteers and TACF staff cover female flowers with paper bags in early June before they become receptive, preventing unwanted pollen from reaching them. Once the flowers are ready, pollen from the selected tree is applied and the bags are replaced to prevent contamination. They return in the fall to remove the bags and harvest the seeds, only then learning how successful the crosses were.

Stark and Scrivani introduce me to a squad of volunteers in the orchard today to help. Among them are David Crouch, Neal Grandy and Laura Podyma, all

"We're always reminding ourselves that we work on tree time, generation by generation."

—John Scrivani, chair of restoration science for The American Chestnut Foundation

A SCIENCE OF PATIENCE

From Stark, I learn TACF is breeding Asiatic disease-resistant chestnut trees





An empty chestnut burr



Bags cover the female flowers of a chestnut tree to control pollination.

retirees, as well as Carter Newsome, a recent college graduate. The team spans several generations. Gathered in this orchard are people ranging from a 20-something college graduate to those in the prime of their careers and those who have been retired for decades — all brought together by a common interest: one remarkable tree.

MORE THAN A TREE

What's so special about the American chestnut? A lot, it turns out.

Before the blight, the American chestnut was an important source of food and income throughout Appalachia, explains Zoe Bergman, Virginia Department of Forestry research program manager. Long before European settlers arrived, Native Americans relied on the tree for nuts, wood, tanning bark, shelter and wildlife habitat.

Though less mainstream than it once was, the chestnut remains a food source today. Bergman says its texture differs from walnuts and pecans, while Stark describes its flavor as sweet and earthy. Raw chestnuts are mildly flavored and somewhat starchy, Scrivani says, but roasting brings out their sweetness and nuttiness.

The chestnut was also ecologically important. As a foundational species in oak-chestnut forests, it helped shape forest structure and nutrient cycling while providing a reliable food source for wildlife. “[They were] a fast-growing, high-yield tree that produced nuts for bear, turkey, deer and songbirds alike,” Bergman says. Their rapidly decomposing leaves contributed to soil fertility, while their rot-resistant wood

stored significant amounts of carbon. Their greater combustibility also encouraged lighter understory fires, helping prevent more devastating canopy fires.

A FRIENDSHIP TAKES ROOT

Bergman values the trees on a personal level, too. They provided the foundation for her friendship with Stark. Bergman refers to the American chestnut as the friends’ “gateway tree.” Bergman and Stark first worked together as young researchers studying hybrid American chestnut restoration at James Madison University under Dr. Heather Griscom. They spent hundreds of hours in the West Virginia mountains measuring chestnut seedlings and became lifelong friends.

Today, they have matching American chestnut tattoos, and Bergman was a bridesmaid in Stark’s wedding. “I love her dearly and truly have the American chestnut to thank for introducing us,” Bergman says.

The orchards in Lesesne offer some of the oldest and largest trees TACF uses in collaboration with DOF as a

part of its breeding program. The state forest boasts a 58-year-old, 10-acre, closed-canopy stand of hybrid American chestnuts, possibly the only one in the U.S., according to Scrivani.

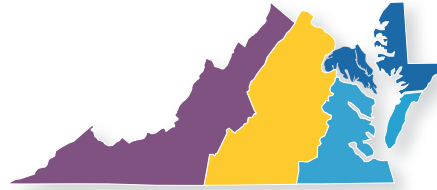
“Lesesne is more than a stand of beautiful trees. It is a living bridge between decades of breeding, public forestry, volunteer commitment and modern genomic science, and it shows us what the future of the American chestnut could be,” says Michael Goergen, president and CEO of TACF. Visitors are asked to be respectful, refrain from removing any flagging and avoid marking any trees.

Podyma, drawn to volunteer in the chestnut orchards by a childhood fascination with the trees, says the plentiful chestnut carcasses in the woods were always “a point of curiosity” for her.

Prior to the blight, an estimated 4 billion American chestnut trees thrived in the U.S., though that figure is not well documented, and perhaps 25% of timber came from American chestnuts. Today, an estimated 300 to 400 million wild American chestnuts remain in the U.S. By comparison, a similar tree, the tulip poplar, numbers around 1.5 billion. If restoration efforts succeed, a generation or two from now, more than chestnut carcasses will populate the woods. Majestic, healthy trees like Gladys may once again lift their branches high into the forest canopy. ●



The June pollination project team, from left: Carter Newsome, David Crouch, Jack Kauffman, Cassie Stark, John Scrivani, Neal Grandy and Laura Podyma



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

OCTOBER

17 MIDDLETOWN. Lighting of the Luminaries. South End of Historic Main Street. Begins at dusk. 540-869-2226. Middletownva.gov

17-18 MIDDLETOWN. 162nd Battle of Cedar Creek Reenactment. Bell Grove Plantation. Bellegrrove.org

24 WARM SPRINGS. Warm Springs Village Ghost Walk. 6-9 p.m. Courthouse Hill Road. Preservationbath.org

NOVEMBER

11 MIDDLETOWN. Veterans Day Ceremony. Middletown Veterans Memorial. 1 p.m. 540-869-2226.

14-15 FISHERSVILLE. 2026 Fall Arts & Craft Show. Times vary. Augusta Expo. Expocraftshow@gmail.com.

PIEDMONT

OCTOBER

10 FARMVILLE. Antique Fire Apparatus Muster. 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Wilck's Lake Park. Odhfs.org

17 MONTPELIER. Annual Fall Bazaar. Church of Our Saviour. 8 a.m.-2 p.m. Patwdougan@gmail.com.

16-18 DINWIDDIE. Dinwiddie County Fair. Virginia Motorsports Park. Discoverdinwiddie.com

17 PRINCE GEORGE. Virginia Czech & Slovak Folklife Festival. Prince George Co. Regional Heritage Center. 11 a.m.-4 p.m. Bestpartva.ocg

17 CHARLOTTESVILLE. Farm Day. 11 a.m.-3 p.m. 1780 Earlysville Road. Kathy@ivycreekfoundation.org.

17-18 GOOCHLAND. Rassawek Pro Rodeo Autumn Festival. Rassawek Vineyards. Times vary. Rassawek.com

23 POWHATAN. Wellness & Aging Expo. 10 a.m. Pocahontas Landmark Center. Powhatanva.myrec.com

23-25 MANASSAS. Holiday Bazaar. Sudley United Methodist Church. Times vary. Sudley-methodist.org

24 BLACKSTONE. 11th Annual Wine and Beer Festival. 201 N. High St. 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Blackstonewineandbeerfestival.com

31 BOYDTON. 50th Annual Boynton Day. 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Downtown Boynton. 434-738-6344.

NOVEMBER

6 FARMVILLE. Christmas Market. 9 a.m.-1 p.m. 212 High St.

6-7 LYNCHBURG. Heart of Virginia Charity Quilt Show and Sale. 10 a.m.-4 p.m. 219 Breezewood Drive. Jpandjon@aol.com.

TIDEWATER

OCTOBER

10 CHINCOTEAGUE ISLAND. 53rd Annual Oyster Festival. 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Tom's Cove Park Campground. Chincoteaguechamber.com

17 EXMORE. 10th Annual Exmore Town Park Auto Show. Registration: 8:30-10 a.m. Show: 10 a.m.-3 p.m. 3398 Main St. 757-414-3025.

17 DELTAVILLE. Festival honoring Virginia's 250th. 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Deltaville Maritime Museum. Deltavillemuseum.com

31 DELTAVILLE. Scary Halloween in the Park. 6:30-8 p.m. Deltaville Maritime Museum. Deltavillemuseum.com

31 FRANKTOWN. Franktown Art and Food Festival. 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Franktown Church. 757-442-3481.

MARYLAND

OCTOBER

16-17 OCEAN PINES. Star Spangled Quilt Show. Times vary. Ocean Pines Community Center.

24 EASTON. Col. Tench Tilghman Week. 9 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Talbot County Free Library. Facebook.com/coltenchtighman

PRINT DEADLINES: Nov. 1 for Jan. 15-March 15
Jan. 1 for March 15-April 15

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Rural Lobster

Memories of adventure and a delicious surprise in rural Virginia

by Margo Oxendine, Contributing Columnist



Do you like lobster? I am in the “love” zone. I’ve loved lobster since my very first buttery, unforgettable bite,

maybe 50 years ago.

It’s not as if I’ve been able to have as much lobster as I might like. Shoot — I’d like to have some every day! For a while in Key West — when I first arrived — I was a “lobsterette” at the A&B Lobster House at the foot of Front Street. I’d sneak lobster whenever I could manage it. All us lobsterettes did. It wasn’t easy, but it sure was delicious!

After the A&B, I went to work for Treasure Salvors. We spent our time at sea, looking for remains from the 1622 Spanish almiranta (chief treasure galleon), the *Nuestra Senora de Atocha*. It was the adventure of my life.

What we salvors did in our spare time was spend more time out on the water.

I was one of just three women; the rest were very manly men. We were all buddies. About nine of us lived a stone’s throw from each other. Several of us had boats — little Boston Whaler runabouts. These were great little boats.

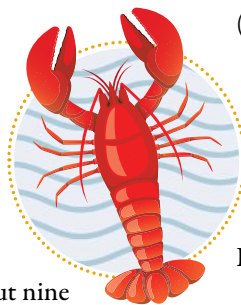
On good “sea days,” we’d all gang into the Whalers and head out to sea. There was a spot in the Gulf of Mexico that we called “The Supermarket.”

We hardly made any money at this job (before we hit the motherlode sometime later), but we knew our way around anything maritime.

One Thanksgiving Day, we had no money, of course, but we sure would have welcomed a great meal. So, we piled in and headed to The Supermarket with masks, fins and snorkels.

On that record day, the gang of us snagged 88 “bugs,” Florida lobsters some called crawfish. That may have been unlawful, but we were hungry!

For our big dinner, we each brought anything we might find in our kitchens or pantries. I remember, I brought lots of butter, and oddly, some turnips.



(With no potatoes to mash, we all decided we liked turnips after all!)

It was quite the feast, and I’ll never forget it.

Around here in the rural mountains of Virginia, lobster is pretty hard to come by. And when I do see it, I can’t really afford it.

So, I was shocked one day last week when I drove through the little burg of Mitchelltown, near Hot Springs, to see a big crowd of people milling about in front of a large, black food truck emblazoned with Cousins Maine Lobster. I made an illegal U-turn and zipped back. Lobster! In Bath County!

I bought as much as I could afford. It was delicious!

I went online to find out when, if ever, the truck would be near me. Sadly, I couldn’t find another stop nearby in the future. So, I signed up for their email list. Maybe I’ll get lucky someday. Someday soon ...

Then, I can order Maine lobster, Connecticut lobster, garlic butter lobster, lobster mac and cheese, lobster grilled cheese, lobster tacos, lobster tots, lobster bisque — really, just about any type of lobster I might have a craving for (which is all of it!).

You can even order it from the site, although it is probably frozen. Why have frozen when you might stumble onto fresh some happy day?

We’re all in the same (lobster) boat around these parts. So, get online. Believe me, a two-hour drive is worth it! I guess there’s always a Red Lobster somewhere, but why not go for the real thing? •



WHEREZ IT?

Look for a tiny version of the CL logo 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 **October 20**. The winner will receive a \$25 Amazon email gift card.

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HOME & SHOP ON 52.41 ACRES. Appomattox, Va. 3 Bedrooms, 2,006-square-foot home. 1,200-square-foot shop building. Bidding begins Friday Oct. 2, 5 p.m. Auction Closing Date, Friday, Oct. 16, 5 p.m.

ESTATE OF HARLEY SHAFFER. Appomattox, Va. Bidding begins Friday, Oct. 2, 6 p.m. Auction Closing Date, Friday, Oct. 16, 6 p.m.

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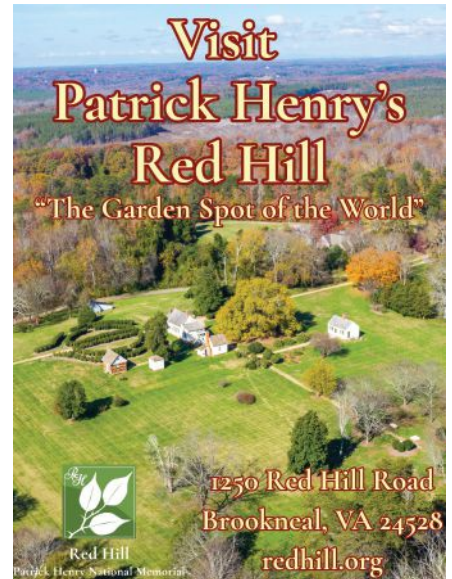
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RATES: Non-business: \$80 per 25-word block plus \$5 per word over 25; OR "Mini" ad - \$5 per word (max. 10 words). Business, agent and broker ads: \$150 per 25-word block, plus \$5 per word over 25. Display Real Estate: \$299 per block.

DEADLINE: Oct. 5 for November-December issue; Publisher reserves the right to designate classification or reject any ad. No personals, please.



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Stay cozy and comfortable this fall with Slow Cooker Chili

Did you know a slow cooker consumes less power compared to an electric oven? Explore slow cooker recipes to conserve energy, save money, and plate a warm, healthy meal.

Ingredients

- 1 lb. ground beef or turkey
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 1 tsp. garlic powder or 2-3 cloves minced garlic
- 1 can (15 oz) tomato sauce or diced tomatoes
- 1 can (15 oz) kidney beans, drained
- 1 green pepper, diced, or chili peppers
- 1 packet chili seasoning mix, hot or mild
- 1 tsp. ground cumin

Directions

Cook the ground beef or ground turkey, add diced onion and garlic powder or minced garlic in a skillet over medium heat until the meat is fully browned. Drain excess grease.

Combine: Transfer the beef mixture into your slow cooker.

Mix: Stir in the diced tomatoes or tomato sauce, kidney beans, chili seasoning mix, ground cumin, and diced green or chili peppers.

Slow cook: Cover and cook on low for 6 to 8 hours.

What makes slow cookers energy efficient?

Low-wattage operation: Slow cookers use about 75–150 watts on low and 150–210 watts on high, while standard ovens require more energy to heat and maintain high temperatures.

Contained heating environment: The heavy stoneware pot and tight-fitting lid keep heat concentrated around the food, reducing heat loss into the kitchen.

No preheating required: Slow cookers begin cooking from a cold start, avoiding the energy use of a preheat cycle.



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Old Dominion Electric Cooperative is a member-owned, not-for-profit generation and transmission cooperative providing wholesale power to electric cooperatives in Virginia, Maryland, and Delaware. ODEC invests in demand response and energy efficiency programming to proactively meet member needs.

IT'S FALL, *Y'all!*

by Laura Emery, Staff Writer

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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.

FELINE FESTIVE ▶

Blair adds a little purr-sonality to the fall decor.

PHOTO SUBMITTED BY
MELISSA RICE



APPLE-SOLUTELY ADORABLE ▼

Montgomery can hardly contain his excitement over his fruitful find.

PHOTO SUBMITTED BY TAYLORE LIFE



▲ LEAF ME HERE

Baxter has officially fallen for fall.

PHOTO SUBMITTED BY
ANGIE HOWARD



FALL CRAWL ▼

No wings? No problem.

PHOTO SUBMITTED BY
CATHRYN HART



AUTUMN 101 ▲

This school's sunset earns straight A's.

PHOTO SUBMITTED BY LAUREN HAMILTON



RACK STAR ▲

This buck is clearly the headliner of the fall season.

PHOTO SUBMITTED BY
LYNN PETERS



Virginia Czech & Slovak Folklife Festival

October 17, 2026 | 11:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Prince George County Regional Heritage Center
6406 Courthouse Road, Prince George, Virginia

- Celebrate Czech & Slovak Heritage with authentic foods, pastries and Czechvar beer.
- Enjoy music and dance brought to us from the heart of Eastern Europe.
- Explore exhibitions of local agriculture and culture as well as those of the National Czech and Slovak Museum.
- Children of all ages will enjoy the petting zoo and games on the lawn.
- Discover the treasures of the Museum and its museum shop.



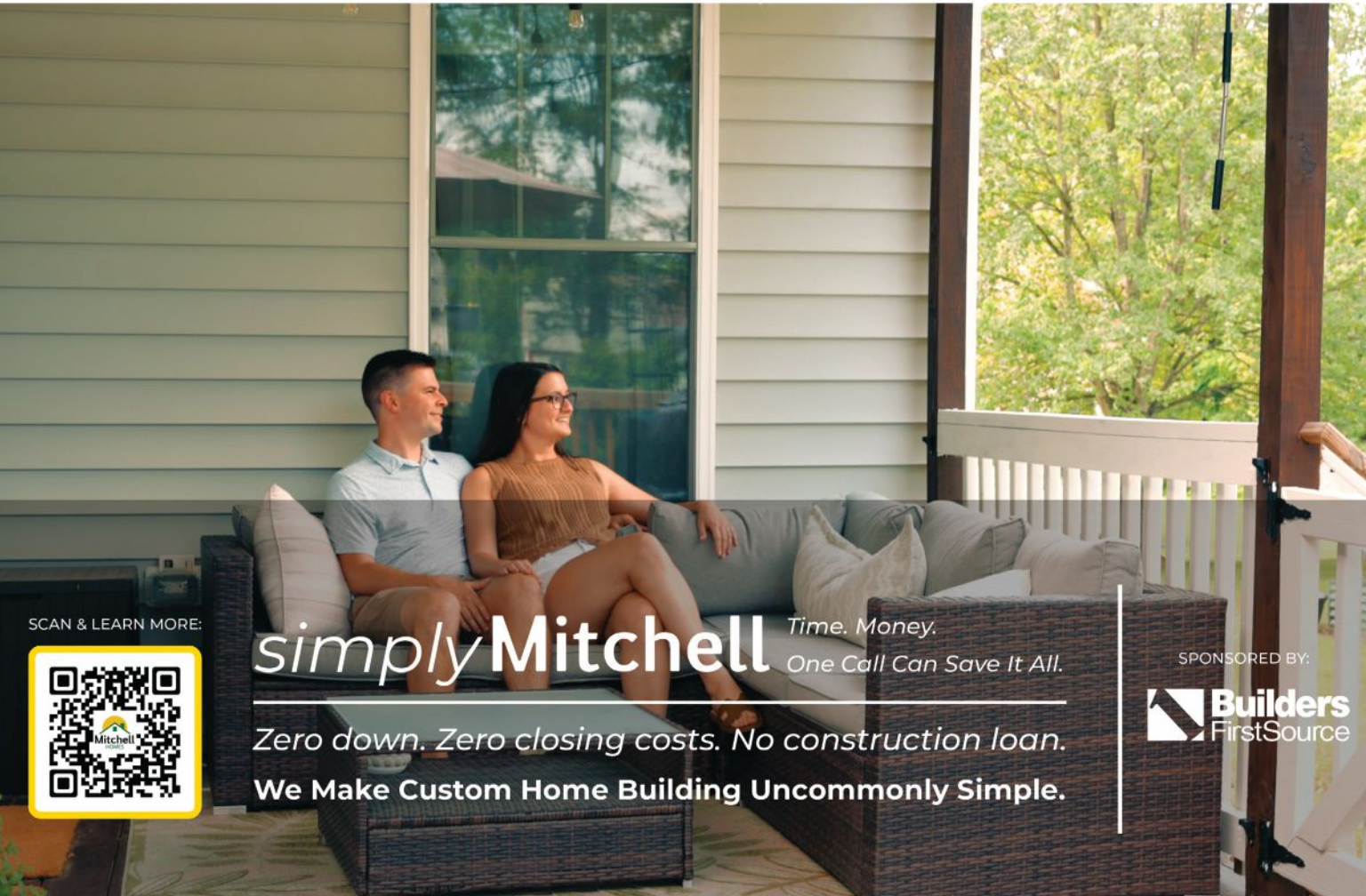
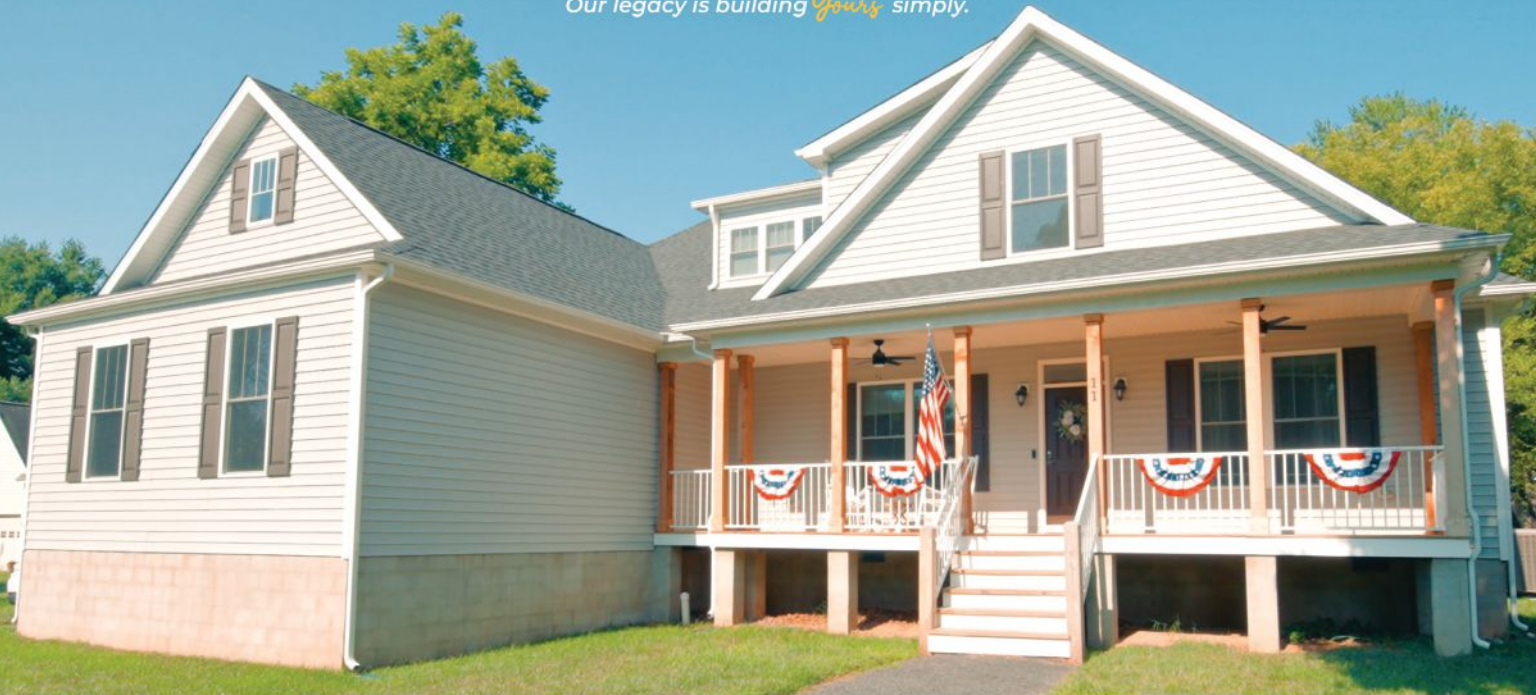
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