

WHERE MIRACLES  
BLOOM PAGE 2

THE THIRD  
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CHECK OUT YOUR  
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RAPPAHANNOCK ELECTRIC

# Cooperative *Living*



## SPRING IN FOCUS

PAGE 10

A beautiful spring bloom captured through the lens of Mecklenburg Electric Cooperative member Nancy Moorefield of Bracey, Va.  
*Related story page 2*



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VIEWPOINT

# Put a Spring in Your Step



Springtime is in the air. Blooming flowers and warming temperatures bring a refreshing focus on outdoor activities and spring to-do lists around our homes, farms and businesses. This month's magazine is full of features to put a little spring in your step.

Our Cooperative Focus story highlights reader-submitted photos showcasing the beauty of our co-op territories. These images offer a chance to reflect on the people and places we proudly serve through our cooperatives.

This issue includes several stories about how co-ops are working to manage costs and be good stewards of the money you entrust to them. We also offer tips to save you money by reducing energy use, improving efficiency and making smart upgrades to your home or property.

Our yearlong look back at the past 80 years of *Cooperative Living* continues with highlights from 1966 to 1976. The

stories show how much has changed and how much has stayed the same as co-ops have adapted to meet the challenges of the day and better serve their members.

We spotlight people who shape our cooperative community, including Virginia's new secretary of agriculture and forestry and lifelong co-op supporter, Katie Frazier. You'll also read the story of Nancy Moorefield, whose passion for photography evolved from a hobby into a form of therapy after a cancer diagnosis. Her photos have appeared in the Say Cheese column for years and are featured in our Spring Fling article this month. (To see more of her work, visit [co-opliving.com](http://co-opliving.com).)

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not mention that April 13 marks National Lineworker Appreciation Day, as recognized by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, to honor those who work around the clock to keep the lights on. Please join me in recognizing the cooperative crews who power our communities if you see them working in your area. ●

*Brian S. Mosier*

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

# Cooperative Living

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## 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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DOLORES CABANISS PHOTO; INSET PHOTO NANCY MOORFIELD

## Where Miracles Bloom

*Bracey, Va., woman finds healing in photographing nature*

by Laura Emery, Staff Writer



**F**rom the sunroom of her Lake Gaston home in Bracey, Va., Nancy Moorefield captures the arrival of spring through the lens of her trusty Canon PowerShot SC70. Warblers and bluebirds perch on fence posts as the season stirs back to life.

The Mecklenburg Electric Cooperative member, an amateur photographer, loves observing the season's nuances.

"My backyard is a playground for all the beautiful things in nature," says Moorefield, who relocated to Bracey with her husband, Bodie, 13 years ago from Cumberland County, Va., after retiring.

Moorefield has been submitting photos to *Cooperative Living's* Say Cheese column since 2018, and she is never far from her camera. "I think I missed my calling," she says of her love of photography, which has become a source of comfort. "The camera filled a void that I didn't even know was there."

Behind the camera is a woman whose life has been touched by loss but is defined by resilience. She lost her 17-year-old daughter, Melissa, to cystic fibrosis and has recently survived stage 4 cervical cancer. "I'm a little miracle at 78 years old," she says. "The tumor was huge and was wrapped around multiple organs." The devastating diagnosis came last year on Aug. 4.

Moorefield was going to let the invasive cancer take its course. She says, "I told everyone, 'I've got more people in heaven than I've got here.'"

But she eventually changed her mind. Late last year, Moorefield underwent chemotherapy, radiation therapy, brachytherapy and immune therapy.

"The doctors and nurses at VCU Massey Comprehensive Cancer Center in South Hill, as well as in Richmond, were the best. They saved my life," she says. "On Dec. 29, they told me the cancer was gone."

Moorefield is still undergoing immune therapy treatments every 21 days, but she is happy to be back behind her camera — though not as often as before. The side effects of her treatments make her physically fragile. But just as the flowers she photographs triumphantly rise in spring, they are a reminder to Moorefield that fragile things still bloom. And the birds that return to her backyard year after year are proof of the beauty in endurance.

She says, "I enjoy sharing the joy of nature with others." ●

To see more of Moorefield's photos, visit [co-opliving.com](http://co-opliving.com).



Whether it's hands-on educational opportunities, guidance with insurance, or simply having a network of people to learn from and lean on, Virginia Farm Bureau has been a trusted resource every step of the way. I'm proud to be a member of an organization that truly supports agriculture and the families behind it.

## Candace Monaghan

Owner, Beaver Dam Farm Sunflowers  
Botetourt County Member since 2003

Candace Monaghan of Botetourt County is a trendsetter, who has helped grow her family's farm through agritourism, building a successful sunflower destination alongside their beef cattle operation.

This fourth-generation farmer utilized Virginia Farm Bureau's farm business resources to help her start the Beaver Dam Farm Sunflower Festival in 2016 as a way to diversify the farm. Today, over 21,000 festivalgoers from all over the U.S. visit!

The Virginia Farm Bureau Women's Leadership Program has helped Candace and other women support agriculture through leadership training, community outreach and learning to advocate for policies that help farmers and rural communities.

**Join us for the year-long celebration as we recognize the local and international contributions of women farmers during the 2026 International Year of the Farm Woman.**



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**WOMAN FARMER**  
2026

*Learn more about membership*

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





1966-

# A Time of Change

*Celebrating the third 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 introduced in October 1946 — began inspiring, informing and connecting electric cooperative members.

By the mid-1960s, *Rural Virginia* — the original title of this magazine — had settled into its stride. The publication's third decade, 1966 to 1976, unfolded against the backdrop of a nation in flux — a period defined by the Vietnam War, civil rights struggles, social protest and cultural transformation. While mindful of the national climate, the publication stayed true to its mission, offering uplifting, community-centered content that celebrated rural Virginia and the transformation of everyday life through electricity.

In the January 1966 issue, readers enjoyed a lighthearted feature on a young Richmond banker named James Bond. With “Thunderball” playing in theaters across the country at the time, the real-life Bond recounted the benefits and disadvantages of sharing a name with a fictional secret agent — and the humor behind working with a colleague at the bank named Charlie Brown.

In the summer of 1966, Virginia

youth had “a rollicking good time” while on the Rural Electric Youth Tour, where they met President Lyndon B. Johnson, first lady Claudia “Lady Bird” Johnson and their youngest daughter, Luci. The president praised rural electrification and challenged the students to “bring the light of education, abundance and goodwill to all the dark places in the world.”

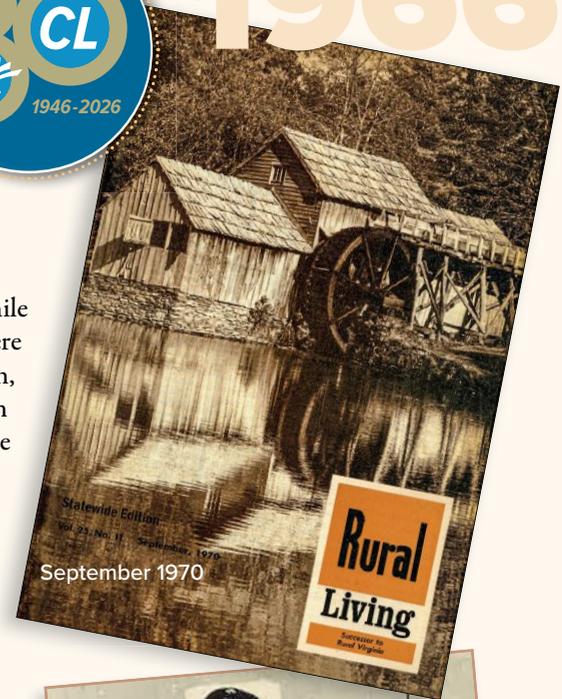
Throughout 1966, the magazine acknowledged a nation marked by the realities of war. In July, *Rural Virginia* encouraged young readers to write letters of support to soldiers serving in Vietnam. “Start your letter with ‘Dear G.I. Joe,’” the editor suggested.

While the nation grappled with global conflict, electric cooperatives continued expanding service and developing a strong presence in rural communities. In August 1966, Virginia's 16 electric cooperatives were serving about 120,000 member-consumers across more than 27,000 miles of line. What began as an experiment was now an established, growing network.

## POWERING DAILY LIFE

In January 1967, the words of Oneida Berry of Accomac, Va., underscored what statistics alone could not convey — that electricity was more than just a service. It reshaped daily routines, eased physical labor and brought a quality of life that rural families had never known.

Her poem, submitted to *Rural Virginia*, celebrated rural electrification. “No more chipping wood for the old black cooking range. Electricity heats my new white one without wood or flame. No more rubbing on the old wash board to get clothes clean. Now my wash is done while electricity runs my washing



machine,” reads a portion of her poem that concludes with the sentiment that electricity makes farm life “a dream.”

## GLOBAL INFLUENCE

As electric cooperatives became increasingly successful in Virginia, their influence extended abroad. The cooperative model, born out of rural necessity, was now part of a global conversation.

Through a nonprofit agreement between the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association and the Agency for International Development, rural electrification projects were underway in South Vietnam. In June 1967, part of *Rural Virginia's* coverage of electric cooperatives in South Vietnam was entered into the Congressional Record by U.S. Sen. Harry F. Byrd Jr. — a first for the magazine.



Luci Baines Johnson



Willie Wiredhand, Bicentennial

The founding cooperative principle of Concern for Community took on a new meaning in Jonesville, Va., in August 1967. Powell Valley Electric Cooperative Crew Leader Joe Sutton revived a 5-year-old boy using mouth-to-mouth resuscitation — a technique learned during regular co-op safety training — after the child was discovered floating unconscious in a pool.

### REACHING FOR THE MOON

By September 1967, the publication's attention turned skyward. An article titled "Moon-Struck" imagined astronauts orbiting and landing on the moon "in 1970, or thereabouts." The article was noting the role of Virginia scientists at Langley Research Center in preparation for the historic mission. "When astronauts do land on the moon," the article read, "Langley people could claim they were there first, in spirit and in simulators."

Just two years later, on July 20, 1969, that vision became reality as Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin walked on the lunar surface while Michael Collins orbited above.

By the late 1960s, nearly 20 million American families shared ownership in cooperatives nationwide. As the magazine noted, cooperation continued to drive dependable service and shared progress. "Members of the 990 rural electric cooperatives financed by REA are familiar with the underlying principle of cooperation — that 5.7 million people, united in seeking the same goal, can achieve what they could not achieve by themselves," a 1967 article read.

In November 1967, members of Chesapeake Islands Electric Cooperative

— serving Tangier Island in Virginia and Smith Island in Maryland — voted to merge with Accomac-Northampton Electric Cooperative.

In April 1968, *Rural Virginia* published the results of its first readership survey, offering insight into who was turning its pages. That same year, articles explored the introduction of dimmer switches and early development of electric cars despite popular opinion at the time that the concept "would never stick."

In October 1969, electric cooperative employees were once again credited with saving a life — this time by Northern Piedmont Electric Cooperative (now Rappahannock Electric Cooperative) lineworkers. A woman sunbathing near a lake noticed her unattended vehicle begin rolling downhill toward the water. She attempted to stop the runaway vehicle, but it struck her and dragged her into the lake. An electric cooperative line crew traveling through the area spotted her and pulled her to safety.

### A NEW ERA

The first color photograph appeared on the cover of *Rural Virginia* in June 1970. In honor of National Dairy Month, it featured a man standing with one of the "finest Holsteins in the nation."

Growing international interest in rural electrification and the cooperative business model brought distinguished



Fashion of 1969



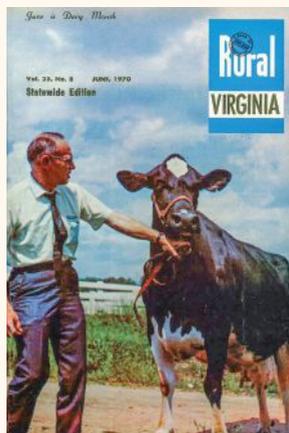
guests to Prince William Electric Cooperative (now Northern Virginia Electric Cooperative) in September that year. The guests were Imelda Marcos, wife of Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos, and first lady Pat Nixon, wife of U.S. President Richard Nixon.

Also in September 1970, *Rural Virginia* changed its name to *Rural Living* after welcoming Choptank Electric Cooperative's 17,000 consumers to its distribution list.

In June 1973, Choptank Electric Cooperative hosted a group of international trainees from Thailand, Guatemala and the Philippines as part of the Agency for International Development program. The initiative's focus was on firsthand observation of the functioning and operation of electric cooperatives.

By 1975, wholesale power and fuel adjustments, as well as dwindling fossil fuel supplies, pushed electric bills higher, prompting *Rural Living* headlines such as "Why Bills Are Higher," "Difficult Times," "The Crisis is Real" and "Fuel Adjustment Bug-a-boo."

As the publication's third decade ended, the pages of *Rural Living* served as evidence that cooperation leads to progress — and that there is enduring strength in the cooperative spirit. ●



"A Charlie Brown Christmas" debuted on the CBS television network on Dec. 9, 1965.



In July 1969, the Apollo 11 mission made history when astronauts first set foot on the moon.



In Spring 1970, Earth Day became an annual event to promote environmental awareness.



In 1976, the U.S. celebrated the 200th anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration of Independence.

# Agriculture Advocate

*Virginia's new secretary of agriculture and forestry digs in on issues facing rural Virginia*

by Jeff Caldwell, Staff Writer

**F**or Virginia's new secretary of agriculture and forestry, Katie Frazier, agriculture advocacy has been a lifelong passion. The Bridgewater native's work was seeded by her early involvement with FFA and 4-H and has grown from her Rockingham County roots into a blossoming career that has taken her to top positions at the Virginia Agribusiness Council, Farm Credit of the Virginias and now the Virginia State Capitol.

The Virginia Tech College of Agriculture and Life Sciences graduate was young when she discovered her

passion for tackling the issues facing Virginia's rural communities.

"My involvement [with the National FFA Organization] and 4-H opened my eyes to the critical

role agriculture plays in our daily lives and the importance of having passionate advocates to help tell that story," she says. That led her to a career combining her interests in policy, advocacy and leadership to address the complex issues facing Virginia's rural communities.

"I grew up in the Shenandoah Valley and saw firsthand that rural Virginia's strength lies in working lands, small businesses and tight-knit communities," she says. "Rural Virginians want practical solutions that make sense for their communities, and a seat at the table



PHOTO COURTESY KATIE FRAZIER

Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Katie Frazier on Augusta County, Va., farm tour in 2025.

so they can ensure the decisions that impact their lives, land and livelihoods are informed by the people who live and work in these communities."

In her new role as Virginia's top agriculture and forestry official, Frazier is digging in on issues that range from how climate change impacts planting and frost dates to protecting the commonwealth's open lands from

Speaking to those who have dedicated their careers to cooperative principles, she says, "You are the backbone that powers rural Virginia. Agriculture and forestry cannot function without reliable power, and rural communities cannot thrive without the stability you provide. You keep the lights on, but you also keep farms running, mills operating and families connected.

That work matters more than most people ever see."

Frazier walks the forests and fields to meet the folks who grow Virginia's crops and run its agribusinesses. She also testifies before legislators to ensure laws and policies enacted by the General Assembly and

state agencies work for rural Virginians. These actions keep her grounded in the principles that grew her childhood interests into an advocacy career.

"I still find myself returning to the FFA Creed when I need grounding and perspective, especially the final stanza: 'I believe that American agriculture can and will hold true to the best traditions of our national life.'" she says. "It's both a passion and a great honor to work each day to make meaningful progress for farmers, foresters and agribusinesses across the commonwealth." ●

**"I believe that American agriculture can and will hold true to the best traditions of our national life."**

— excerpt from the *Future Farmers of America Creed*

industrial development and advocating for economic prosperity, diversification, and growth of the agriculture and forestry industries in the commonwealth.

She is also a staunch supporter of the cooperative model.

"Having worked for a cooperative myself, I know how important they are as a business structure. Nonprofit cooperatives are owned by the very people they serve — and that structure helps create a set of priorities driven by community needs and long-term reliability."



Katie Frazier

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# Spring Fling

A collection of spring images showcasing the season's beauty as seen through the lenses of Cooperative Living readers.

by Laura Emery, Staff Writer



## WILDFLOWER WONDER

Happiness radiates from childhood like fragrance from a flower.

PHOTO SUBMITTED BY TORI NICHOLS OF STAFFORD, VA, NORTHERN VIRGINIA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE MEMBER

**FUN FACT:** Yellow wildflowers are especially attractive to pollinators because they are easy for insects to see.



## GOLDEN TRUMPET

Sunlight pours through the bright yellow petals of a daffodil, announcing that spring has arrived.

PHOTO SUBMITTED BY NANCY MOOREFIELD OF BRACEY, VA, MECKLENBURG ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE MEMBER

**FUN FACT:** Daffodils are a favorite across Virginia and Maryland because they are deer-resistant because of a toxic alkaloid called lycorine.

## PETAL PIT STOP

This tiger swallowtail butterfly's bold black markings contrast with purple flowers in this striking spring scene.

PHOTO SUBMITTED BY ROBIN MILES OF SOMERSET COUNTY, MD, CHOPTANK ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE MEMBER

**FUN FACT:** Butterflies can see ultraviolet light, helping them spot patterns on flowers that guide them to nectar.





**THE BREAKFAST RUSH**

A busy robin arrives just in time to satisfy four very hungry mouths waiting in the nest.

PHOTO SUBMITTED BY MARTIN THORN OF BLACKSTONE, VA, SOUTHSIDE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE MEMBER

**FUN FACT:** American robins can make up to 100 feeding trips a day during nesting season, keeping their hungry chicks well fed as they grow rapidly in spring.

**NO PEEPING**

Bright-eyed and alert, this hen keeps careful guard over her newest arrival.

PHOTO SUBMITTED BY TRISHA HUMPHRIES OF RAPHAINE, VA, SHENANDOAH VALLEY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE MEMBER

**FUN FACT:** Hens can recognize and remember more than 100 different faces, including humans and other chickens.



**TINY TRIUMPH**

A tender stem bends and curls, rising to meet the afternoon sun as it begins its journey toward full bloom.

PHOTO SUBMITTED BY RICK SANFORD III OF PRINCE GEORGE COUNTY, VA, PRINCE GEORGE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE MEMBER

**FUN FACT:** Many young plants begin life tightly curled, protecting their delicate leaves as they push through the soil before slowly unfolding in the sunlight.

**PEEP PATROL**

Gizmo approves of the tiny new neighbor, pending further sniffs.

PHOTO SUBMITTED BY JASON SMITH OF NEW CASTLE, VA, CRAIG-BOTETOURT ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE MEMBER

**FUN FACT:** Many dogs naturally become gentle guardians around baby chicks, using their instincts to watch over tiny animals and treat them like part of their pack.



**WE WANT TO SEE YOUR PHOTOS!**

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](mailto:saycheese@co-opliving.com). Please include your first and last name, along with a description of the photo.



PHOTO COURTESY KATHY DIXON

All year at the West Creek office in Richmond, historical artifacts that include the history of all VFBF companies over the past 100 years will be on display.

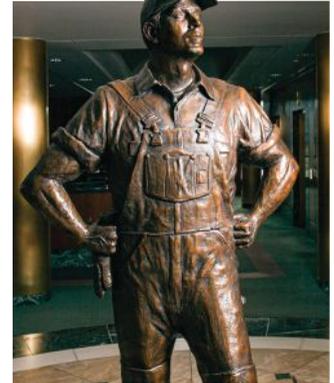


PHOTO COURTESY DAVID PROETT

## 1926-2026

# Celebrating a Centennial of Service

*Virginia Farm Bureau marks 100 years of supporting farmers and rural communities*

by Kathy Dixon, Virginia Farm Bureau Federation

**N**early a century ago, Virginia Farm Bureau made the state's farmers a promise: to protect and preserve what farmers had labored so hard to create and to ensure a bright future for generations of farmers.

Virginia Farm Bureau Federation was officially incorporated Feb. 26, 1926. It grew out of the Rockingham Cooperative Farm Bureau, which enabled farmers to pool their resources to purchase farm supplies.

Farmers soon realized that representing them in the General Assembly and in Congress would also help their farms prosper, and that's what led to the formal creation of VFBF.

Since the beginning, every president of Virginia Farm Bureau has been a working farmer, so they understand what farmers need to succeed.

Today, farmers can still purchase discounted farm supplies, have representation at the local, state and national levels, and are entitled to a variety of other benefits and services.

The organization has almost 137,000 members statewide, and the \$40 annual membership dues enable it to help families, farmers and communities thrive.

### ADVOCACY AND SUPPORT

Farm Bureau supports agricultural policies that will strengthen the state's No. 1 industry, and it has had many successes. The company lobbied for a constitutional amendment to protect property rights, and it unanimously passed. Farm Bureau also fought to repeal the Virginia estate tax; lobbied to ensure funding for voluntary, cost-share conservation practices for farmers; supported grants for large animal veterinarians; and helped enact legislation to protect prime farmland.

Farm Bureau also supports Virginia Agriculture in the Classroom, which was established in 1987 to educate teachers and students about the importance of agriculture. AITC is a part of a nationwide effort to help teachers and students

understand and appreciate agriculture — Virginia's and the nation's largest industry.

The 501(c)(3) organization has reached more than 700,000 students through an annual Agricultural

Literacy Week, other outreach efforts and providing hands-on resources, workshops and grants to teachers. Currently, more than 2,100 teachers are integrating agriculture education into core subjects such as science, math and reading.

Also to increase agricultural literacy, Farm Bureau purchased The Meadow Event Park property, where the State Fair of Virginia is held.

The organization has successfully kept the fair focused on agriculture and providing an opportunity to showcase the best of Virginia agriculture to those who may not have a farming background.



### BENEFITS FOR EVERYONE

Virginia Farm Bureau is based in Richmond, Va., but also has 104 offices in 88 counties, so that it can provide service to every part of the state.

Through county Farm Bureau staff and volunteers, the company supports local and statewide organizations, even donating more than \$200,000 in youth scholarships in 2025.

Farm Bureau members can access a robust member benefits program, which includes tangible savings on hotels, rental cars, retail establishments and more. Additionally, members are eligible for discounts on auto and truck tires through the Products Division, which celebrated its 60th anniversary last year.

Virginia Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Co. has provided members with a comprehensive line of insurance products for more than 75 years. VFBMIC was ranked the No. 1 homeowners insurance company in the country by Forbes in 2025 for the second year in a row.

Farm Bureau plans to grow and expand these programs in the next century. ●

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I had a back operation that left me dependent on a cane, significantly impacting my daily life. Simple tasks like going to the store or meeting friends became challenging, and I even had to cancel a long-awaited anniversary trip to Italy. My husband purchased a scooter for me, but it was cumbersome and uncomfortable for everyday use, leaving me feeling more constrained than liberated. However, everything changed when I came across the ATTO SPORT. This remarkable scooter proved to be a game changer. Not only is it robust and reliable, but it also conveniently splits into two pieces, allowing me to effortlessly lift it into my car trunk on my own. I was even able to stow it in the overhead compartment on the plane, enabling us to finally take that trip to Italy! I am now independent once more, able to go wherever I please and do so with a striking sense of style. In fact, I now find that my husband struggles to keep up with me!



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**Go anywhere:** Conquer any terrain with puncture-proof, shock-absorbing tires and a 4-inch ground clearance. Equipped with electronic stability control for added safety on descents and turns, it is also flight-approved, ideal for air travel and cruise ships. With a driving range of up to 12.5 miles (25 miles with the XL battery), a top speed of 6.2 MPH, and a maximum weight capacity of 300 pounds, this durable scooter is designed for longevity.

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# Lineworker Appreciation Month

They're the face of your Cooperative, especially when reliability and service are on the line. They're dedicated to our members year-round, always adding value through daily maintenance and outage restoration.

Along with cooperatives across the nation, Rappahannock Electric Cooperative (REC) recognizes their hard work and dedication during Lineworker Appreciation Month each April.

***"REC lineworkers bring consistency, safety and pride in their work every day. We appreciate the sacrifices they make, the standards they hold themselves to and the example they set for our Cooperative."***

Jason Satterwhite  
Chief Grid Operations Officer



Devin Hudson

## Celebrating Those on the Front Lines of Reliability and Service

REC lineworkers are builders and troubleshooters of the local grid. They set poles, string wire, install transformers and protective equipment, and keep the system safe and reliable every day and in the moments that matter most. When storms hit, they're the ones climbing, switching, testing and repairing in unforgiving conditions, because they can't just wait for better weather to get the lights back on.

With our Cooperative's membership growing by about 4,000 per year, it's REC's lineworkers, doing the tough, hands-on work in the field, who make that growth possible, according to Chief Grid Operations Officer Jason Satterwhite. "We're experiencing unprecedented growth, but our lineworkers keep up with the work."

Couple that day-to-day maintenance with the long hours and very real hazards of emergency restoration work, and it becomes clear that linework is no easy task. Those who perform it make significant sacrifices to deliver reliable power to REC's member-owners.

"We ask so much of them and they respond time and time again," said Darrell

Potter, senior director – operations and construction for the Blue Ridge District, in the northwest of REC's service territory. "They work around the clock for multiple days, away from their families and in extreme cold and blistering heat. They prioritize public safety and infrastructure. Following storms, lineworkers are the first on the scene to repair downed power lines and broken poles."

The earliest lineworkers built and maintained telegraph and telephone lines, climbing poles and working aloft long before rural electrification brought power to communities across the country, in the

1930s. As electric systems expanded, the craft evolved into a specialized trade that is part construction, part troubleshooting and always safety-first. Linework is built around teamwork, apprenticeship training and precise procedures. Today's lineworkers carry that legacy forward, maintaining an increasingly complex local grid while staying ready to respond when weather, accidents or equipment failures put service at risk.

"I see the long hours, hard work and pride they take in doing the job right," Satterwhite said. "It takes a special person and desire to serve others as they do."



# Grid Modernization: Strengthening the Electric System Our Members Rely On

By John Hewa, President & CEO, Rappahannock Electric Cooperative



When you hear the phrase grid modernization, it can sound abstract, like something happening behind the scenes or only relevant to engineers. At its core, grid modernization is about building a more resilient electric system.

It means using modern technology to see what's happening across the system, to isolate problems more quickly, to restore power safely and to plan upgrades more precisely — all with the goal of delivering a more reliable electric system for our members.

At REC, our mission has always been to provide safe, reliable, affordable and sustainable power. That mission hasn't changed, but the demands placed on the electric grid have.

REC member-owners use an average of about 300 more kilowatt-hours per month than they did ten years ago, driven by a surge in “always-on” technologies. The typical U.S. household with internet now has 17 connected devices, including smart TVs, at least one smart-home device and a security system, meaning more continuous background electricity is being used. In Virginia specifically, the U.S. Energy Information Administration's (EIA) Residential Energy Consumption Survey shows roughly one out of every four homes use an all-electric central heat pump as their main heating equipment.

Transportation is electrifying, too: By 2025, Virginia had roughly 903 registered electric vehicles for every 100,000 residents, placing it well above the national average. At the same time, electrification at home is accelerating. According to EIA's Short-Term Energy Outlook, the residential sector accounted for about 67% of small-scale solar capacity in mid-2023, indicating the majority of distributed solar is owned by households rather than commercial installations.

Meanwhile, businesses rely on power for increasingly digital and automated operations: EIA estimates commercial computing

(including data centers and other computing loads) was about 8% of commercial electricity consumption in 2024 and projects it could reach 20% by 2050.

At the same time, extreme weather events are becoming more frequent and more intense. From 1980 to 2024, the U.S. experienced 403 weather and climate disasters with losses greater than \$1 billion, reflecting rising extreme weather frequency and economic cost.

Grid modernization is how we meet these challenges head-on.

## What Grid Modernization Looks Like at REC

At your Cooperative, grid modernization is not a future concept — it's active work underway across our system. Over the past year, we have:

- Completed 48 grid improvement projects and advanced 17 projects under construction, including substation upgrades, automated switching and sectionalizing equipment, upgraded protection and monitoring systems, and fiber-connected facilities that improve visibility and speed up restoration.
- Expanded our fiber backbone to now include 64 substations, giving operators and crews real-time visibility into system conditions and improving communication during outages and restoration.
- Reduced outage risk through large-scale vegetation management, using advanced analytics, satellite imagery and system data to remove over 2,400 hazard trees, target high-risk areas and maintain 1,800 miles of right-of-way before storms reach our lines.

## Preparing for Growth and Change

Our region is growing, and growth doesn't look the same as it once did. Over the past year alone, REC added nearly 4,000 new electric connections across our service territory and reached an all-time system peak of more than 1,191 megawatts, reflecting both new development and changing energy use. New homes, expanding businesses and large-scale energy users all place different demands on the grid. Grid modernization allows us to plan not just for today's needs, but also for what's coming next. As more members adopt technologies like rooftop solar paired with battery storage or charge electric vehicles at home, grid modernization ensures the system can safely manage two-way power flows and increased demand without unnecessary systemwide upgrades.

With modern tools and data, we can forecast demand more accurately, operate the grid more efficiently and make targeted investments in technologies that protect and enhance reliability without placing unnecessary costs on our members.

That's an important point: Modernization is not about change for its own sake. It's about making disciplined, strategic investments that deliver long-term value and support a stable, dependable system.

## Reliability Is Not an Accident

Reliable electricity doesn't happen by chance. It's the result of careful planning, commitment of resources and people who understand both the electric system and the communities it serves.

Grid modernization strengthens that foundation. It gives our crews better information in the field. It helps our engineers see and respond to system conditions more readily. And it improves our ability to adapt when circumstances change, whether that's severe weather, increased demand or new technology connecting to the grid.

Most importantly, it positions REC to continue doing what cooperatives do best: serving members, not shareholders, with decisions guided by long-term community benefit.

## Looking Ahead

Modernizing the grid isn't a single project or a finish line — it's an ongoing commitment built on real work already underway and continued investment in the system our members rely on every day. One that requires a clear focus on delivering reliability, affordability and dependable service for our members.

**In 2026, REC will invest approximately \$113.6 million in grid improvements and system upgrades, ensuring these dollars are spent deliberately to strengthen reliability while protecting members from unnecessary long-term costs.**

As we continue this work, our goal remains the same: to ensure the lights stay on, the system stays strong and our members can count on REC today and in the years ahead.



## Save more than ever with REC's Summer Savings Plan

The more energy you save, the greater your rebate through your Cooperative's Summer Savings Plan. While the weather may still be chilly, now is the time to sign up for the 2026 program. Sign up through your MyREC SmartHub account; it's the first menu option under "Report an Issue."

### Here's how it works

The Summer Savings Plan is a voluntary "use less when it matters most" option: On a limited number of specified summer afternoons when regional power demand is expected to be high, participants are asked in advance to reduce electricity use during the peak window. Your

rebate appears as a credit on your next REC electric bill. Beyond helping your savings add up, the Summer Savings Plan also helps stabilize REC's future wholesale power costs.

Joining the program can make a real difference. In 2025, participating members helped reduce energy use by an average of 6 kWh. Together, they earned more than \$33,500 in rebates.

Thanks to last year's results, REC is increasing the member rebate in 2026 to \$1.75 per kilowatt-hour (kWh) saved on specified days, up from \$0.75 in 2025.

Most residential members and some business members are eligible. To participate and earn rebates, members must be enrolled in the Summer Savings Plan. If you were enrolled last year, you do not need to reenroll.

### REC has increased its Summer Savings Plan rebate.



Sign up today through your MyREC SmartHub account.

## Spring into Energy Savings

Adopting savings strategies this spring can decrease cooling costs when summer's blazing heat arrives. These simple tips can help cut energy use, saving you money on your electric bill.



### Air conditioning

- Have your system serviced annually.
- Set your thermostat at 78 degrees or the highest comfortable setting. Each degree higher can save up to 3% on your electric bill.
- Install a programmable thermostat to automatically adjust the temperature to your daily schedule.
- Replace HVAC filters regularly.
- Clear air vents of obstructions.



### Hot water

- Water heating accounts for about 18% of a home's energy use.
- Keep water temperature at 120 degrees or lower.
- Insulate the water heater and its pipes according to manufacturer's instructions.
- Install low-flow shower heads.

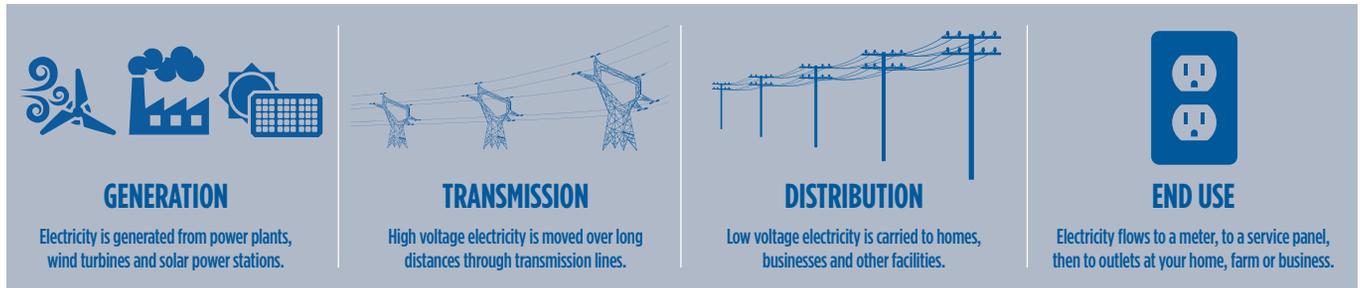


### Household

- Turn off ceiling fans when you leave a room. Fans cool people, not air temperature.
- Vacuum underneath the refrigerator to keep it working efficiently.
- Use LED light bulbs. They emit less heat than traditional bulbs.
- Look for the yellow EnergyStar label on energy-efficient appliances.
- Open windows on breezy days and cool nights.

Check out free tools, energy tips and energy-efficiency program options at [myrec.coop/save](https://myrec.coop/save). Your SmartHub account also provides a monthly summary detailing your family's electric use. Go to [myrec.coop/myrecsmarthub](https://myrec.coop/myrecsmarthub).

# Power Grid 101: How REC Delivers Your Electricity



The electricity you use doesn't start at REC — REC delivers it locally, but most of the supply is provided regionally.

It's easy to picture your electric provider as one organization that does it all: running power plants, and making and delivering electricity. In reality, it's more like a local hardware store. The store keeps the community supplied with garden hoses, light bulbs and finishing nails, but it doesn't make the products that are on its shelves. It buys hoses, light bulbs and nails in bulk from a regional wholesaler. The electric grid works in a similar way.

As a distribution cooperative, REC is the local provider: maintaining lines, responding to outages and delivering reliable service. But much of the electricity itself is purchased upstream — it's called **wholesale power**.

### Wholesale power, in plain English

Wholesale power is the bulk supply that comes through regional partners and the larger power grid, then flows into REC's local distribution system.

The regional grid matters because electricity moves through a larger network, not just one neighborhood system. That network balances supply and demand across many communities, using power plants, transmission lines and grid operators. REC takes that regional supply and delivers it reliably to local members.

### Why this matters to you

- **Wholesale power drives costs.** Sixty-five cents of every dollar of your bill is what REC pays to buy electricity in bulk from regional providers.
- **Peak demand is when power gets expensive.** The hottest summer afternoons and coldest winter mornings require the most supply across a large network and those few hours can drive a big share of overall costs.
- **Regional growth increases demand.** More homes, businesses and electrification across the region raise load, which affects both the cost and complexity of supplying power reliably.

### The practical takeaway

Wholesale power is about having enough electricity available when demand is highest — and that depends on what's happening across the region, not just locally.

### A few ways to help during peak times

- **Avoid stacking** big electric loads at once (dryer + oven + long hot shower).
- **Shift flexible use** outside peak use windows when possible (laundry, dishwasher, charging).
- **Keep heating and cooling systems efficient** (manage thermostat settings, seal drafts)

REC will always work behind-the-scenes to plan for growth, reliability and affordable electricity. Yet, understanding the complex nature of the power grid beyond REC's local network can help members understand the factors affecting their electric bills and how they can take actions to manage costs.

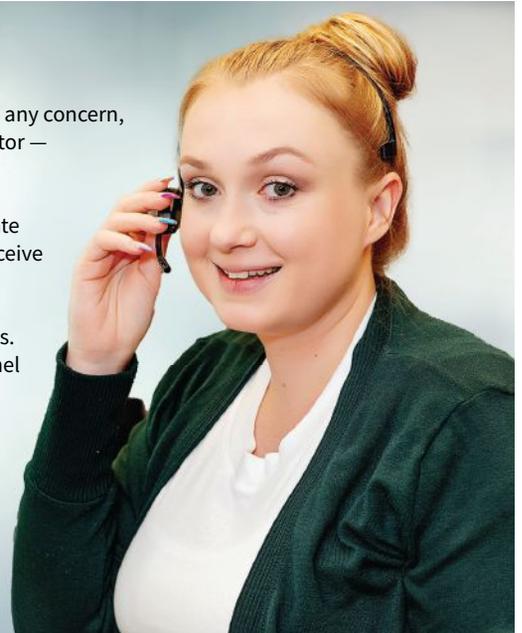
## Member Complaint Procedure

Because your Cooperative exists to serve you, our member-owner, Cooperative policies are designed to provide the best service to the most members at the lowest, practical cost. Part of this service uses an established member complaint procedure that includes local and toll-free telephone numbers, which you can find on our homepage at [myrec.coop](http://myrec.coop).

To make it easier for you to make inquiries or register complaints. Our complete member complaint procedure is on file at all four Cooperative offices. In addition, should you want to request a personal consultation, designated personnel are always available during regular business hours to receive inquiries.

"We encourage members to call us with any concern, big or small," said David Johnson, director — member services.

Members who call receive a status update within 24 hours. Emailed complaints receive a response within two business days. Inquiries requiring field research are responded to within three business days. Each REC office has designated personnel to assist members. The welcome packet accompanying members' first bill also includes complaint process information. Additionally, REC tracks and responds to member complaints sent to the State Corporation Commission, the Cooperative's regulator.





## Pruning With a Purpose

# Reducing Power Outages — One Tree at a Time

The same trees that define the rural Virginia landscape can also be one of the biggest threats to keeping the lights on if not kept out of contact with power lines. Behind the scenes, REC's year-round vegetation management program works to prevent outages before storms arrive, using data, field observations and targeted pruning to reduce risk along thousands of miles of overhead line.

For REC, the goal isn't just tree trimming. It's a reliability strategy to address the single most common cause of outages on the system.

"Because trees cause 70% of our power outages, we approach vegetation management with science, technology, member interaction, effective and long-term vendor partnerships, and communication," said Cindy Devlin Musick, senior director — vegetation management services at REC.

Each year, REC prunes approximately 20% of its 7,500 miles of overhead line. Rights-of-way generally are 40 feet wide. REC selectively follows up the next year with integrated vegetation management to keep the forest floor clear. Environmentally, this creates miles of wildlife and pollinator habitat. Practically, lineworkers can walk safely to perform maintenance or identify storm damage.

"Lineworkers are our eyes in the field. They alert us to trees that could cause outages," Musick said.

Right-of-way management has a direct impact on REC's member-owners, which is why REC responds to every one of the roughly 3,000 annual tree-related inquiries it receives.

"We know trees directly affect electric system reliability, safety, sustainability, member value and customer service levels," Musick said.

But it's not just about responding to reports from the field. REC's foresters identify environmental causes of tree-related outages by examining trees. Satellite data and geographic information system mapping reveal trouble areas. Circuit analytics assess line performance and point crews to where mid-cycle trimming may be required.

Industry leading research has collected 1,200 data points that show potential outage causes on the REC system. "This study is shaping our proactive approach to vegetation management and outage prevention," Musick said.

The statistical review, funded through a \$50,000 grant from the International Society of Arboriculture's Tree Fund, is being conducted in collaboration with West Virginia University.

### Cindy Devlin Musick: Industry Leader

Cindy Devlin Musick has earned a reputation as a utility industry leader and expert in vegetation management.

For 30 years, REC's senior director — vegetation management has been an ISA certified arborist and utility arborist.



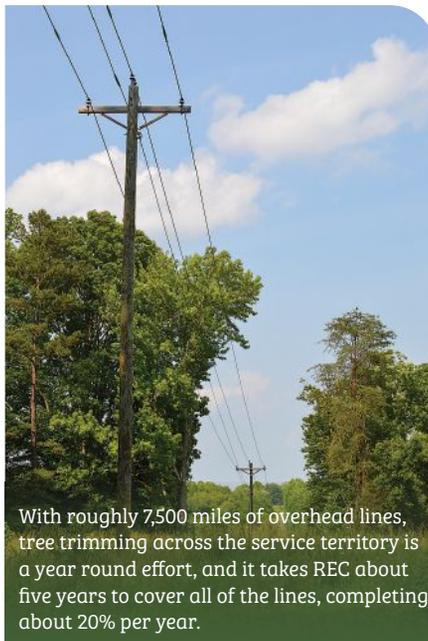
Nationally, Musick sits on the Utility Arborist Association Board of Directors and won its 2025 Presidential Award. She founded the Association of Large Distribution Cooperatives' vegetation management committee and served as its leader.

At REC, she manages nine foresters and the Cooperative's vegetation management contractors.

Musick completed her coursework toward a Ph.D. in Forestry at Virginia Tech. She's finishing her dissertation and defense at West Virginia University related to distribution power outages caused by trees.



Keeping vegetation trimmed isn't just about keeping the lights on for member-owners, it's also a lineworker safety issue. Fewer trees damaging fewer lines means fewer risky service calls, and more access and room to work when repairs are needed.



With roughly 7,500 miles of overhead lines, tree trimming across the service territory is a year round effort, and it takes REC about five years to cover all of the lines, completing about 20% per year.

### Right-of-Way Management



**1,500**  
miles of power line  
right-of-way pruned  
each year



**3,000**  
tree-related calls  
annually — REC  
responds  
to each one



**70%**  
of power outages  
caused  
by trees

*All numbers are approximate for 2025.*

Your Cooperative is critical to attracting businesses to our region — businesses who bring jobs and strengthen our local economy.

# REC to Power AstraZeneca Pharmaceutical Plant

Your Cooperative is proud to be the electric power provider for AstraZeneca's newly announced \$4.5 billion biopharmaceutical manufacturing site at the Rivanna Futures site in northern Albemarle County, Virginia. This major investment is expected to support 600 direct jobs and generate additional economic activity through construction and supply chain work.

Well before the Oct. 9, 2025, groundbreaking, REC was involved in discussions between AstraZeneca and local and state partners to clearly establish the Cooperative's readiness to support the project, which will mark AstraZeneca's largest investment in a single manufacturing facility to date.

Such advance planning ensures reliable power delivery that supports more than AstraZeneca's construction and operational timelines.

"The coordination positions REC as a strategic utility partner. We're enabling the facility's long-term success, but we're also aligning the project's infrastructure with the region's broader economic development plans," said Kayla Coleman, REC's economic development manager.

With the site now determined and the project moving forward, REC's engineering team is evaluating the Cooperative's system capacity and existing facilities, as well as the plant's electric load and infrastructure requirements. Engineers will then design the necessary upgrades to power the complex and ensure AstraZeneca has power to meet its projected load ramp and operational schedule.

REC also assigned project managers to support the pharmaceutical manufacturer throughout the design and construction phases.

"Having dedicated project managers provides day-to-day points of contact. That really simplifies the process for commercial and industrial members. They also offer consistent oversight, timeline management and coordination of long-lead time equipment ordering and delivery as the project progresses," Coleman said.

Because affordable and reliable electricity is a key component for the local economy, REC understands it has a critical role in attracting and retaining businesses. Its Economic Development



Kayla Coleman and Jeff Powell, with REC's Economic Development and Key Accounts team

Department is the liaison for the Cooperative's commercial and industrial customers.

With the groundbreaking done, and the detailed utility and transportation plans being developed, the stage is set for full-scale construction to begin. From there, the focus turns to building the campus, installing specialized equipment and ramping up hiring, with AstraZeneca projecting operations within four to five years.



## Don't be shocked by what's underground on your property — contact Virginia 811 before you dig.

- Before you start any digging project, big or small (planting trees, fence posts, mailboxes, gardens, drainage work, grading, stump removal): Request a utilities marking from [VA811.com](http://VA811.com) (it's free) — you can also dial 811 or 1-800-552-7001.
- Submit your request at least three working days ahead — weekends and legal holidays don't count.
- Expect markings in about three business days. By law, the marking window starts at 7 a.m. on the next working day after you place the request.
- VA811 will mark public utilities in the ground (approximate location to the point of service). Private lines on your property — like sprinkler systems, septic lines, landscape lighting, invisible pet fences or power to a detached garage or shed — typically will not be marked and may require a private locator.



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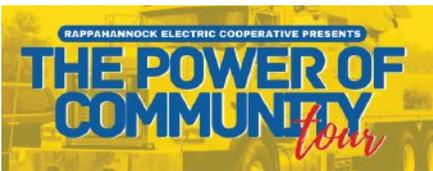


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Region IX

Local Pages Editor - Casey M. Hollins, CCC

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### APRIL

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**April 11**  
Brynmor at Culpeper Baptist  
Touch a Truck  
*Culpeper*

**April 18**  
Spotsylvania Little League -  
Opening Night  
*Spotsylvania*

**April 18**  
Sherando High School Band Booster  
Association Touch a Truck  
*Stephens City*

**April 25**  
Sperryfest  
*Sperryville*

## Now Accepting Board of Directors Nominations

The window is open for REC member-owners to declare their candidacy for Board of Directors seats in Regions IV, V or IX. Interested candidates must file completed nomination materials and a petition with the REC president's office by **5 p.m. April 24, 2026**. No nominations will be accepted at the Annual Meeting in August.

REC's Bylaws outline director qualifications and nominating procedures in Article I and Article IV. The Bylaws are in the Governance and Document Center of the My Cooperative section of [myrec.coop](http://myrec.coop).

To obtain a nomination packet, email [directorelections@myrec.coop](mailto:directorelections@myrec.coop) or call 540-891-5889.

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# Possums & Poses

*A Fredericksburg, Va., possum yoga class mixes mindfulness and marsupials*

by Amanda S. Creasey, Outdoors Writer

**W**hen I arrive at Possum-bilities Gift Shop and Gallery in Fredericksburg, Va., Karen Brace, the shop owner and a licensed wildlife rehabilitator at Awesome Possumz, greets me in a lavender-scented storefront full of whimsical, quirky merchandise. Possum earrings dangle from her ears, and she's wearing a possum-patterned shirt. Before I can return the greeting, I'm distracted by the enclosure of tiny, palm-sized quail to my left, the little birds scurrying around busily. Once I regain my attention, Brace directs me upstairs for the reason I have come today: possum yoga.

Together with Dawn Deiman, owner and CEO of Rising Dawn Yoga Studio, Brace created possum yoga. The first class took place in July 2023. "The idea of possum yoga was a little confusing to some," Brace says. "People asked if the opossums were going to be walking on



them like the goats do in goat yoga." The short answer is no. Only those listed on Brace's exhibition permit are legally able to hold the possums, so the animal ambassadors, who Brace and Deiman refer to as "Possum Yogis," snooze in their stroller during the class and then do a meet-and-greet after the class. "Folks get to pet the opossum, ask questions and take pictures," Brace says.

Today's Possum Yogi is named Eva. Deiman, a Rappahannock Electric Cooperative member, brings the tiny marsupial into the room clinging to her chest to the delighted "awws" of all in attendance. Deiman gently places Eva in her stroller at the front of the room. I'm lucky enough to be right next to her, and I can see the sunlight glinting off her silky whiskers and hear her whispery sniffs as her little pink snout explores the confines of the stroller, leaving clear mucus on the screen.

As Deiman settles on her yoga mat at the front of the room, I turn my attention to my practice, becoming mindful of my surroundings. Warm sun pours in through three large windows behind Deiman. A square of sunlight falls onto my lap, warming my legs. My fellow participants begin to settle around me. Most have come in pairs or trios, romantic couples and small groups of friends. A portion of their registration fees for today's class will help cover

## A Tail of Two Names: Possum or Opossum?

Opossums and possums are distinct marsupials found on opposite sides of the world. Here's where it gets confusing: In North America, the animal is an opossum, but many people in the U.S. casually shorten the name to possum and use the two names interchangeably, even though true possums live in Australia and are a different species altogether.



the medical and food expenses of the possums in Brace's care.

Deiman opens our practice with fun facts. She and Brace are interested in sharing information and dispelling myths about both possums and yoga.

### ADDRESSING MISCONCEPTIONS

Misconceptions about possums proliferate. Many believe the marsupials to be vicious rodents, but they are generally docile. Brace says, "They are not rabies-vector animals. They are extremely resistant, though not immune, to rabies." Many people may also believe possums to be dirty and smelly, but they are actually "very clean animals that groom just like cats do," Brace points out.

The only native marsupial in the U.S. and Canada, possums play an essential role in maintaining healthy ecosystems, serving as scavengers that keep the environment clean by eating carrion, rotten fruits and veggies, and harmful bugs and other pests. "They do their very important job without complaint and they ask for nothing in return, except to simply be left alone and allowed to exist," Brace explains. "They are the kindest, sweetest animals and so beneficial to our environment," Deiman adds. In class she tells us, "Like yogis, possums can twist and turn like I've never seen, and they're very solitary animals." Possums, Deiman says, remind her of the way yogis retreat inside for peace.

Misconceptions about yoga are also common. "It's not just an exercise program. It's a journey of self-awareness and self-love," Deiman explains. While a physical component exists in yoga and that is helpful to one's wellness, the real goal is for one to learn to love and appreciate the body and mind. "It's also not a religion," Deiman says. "Our hands at our heart center are not prayer hands; they are called a mudra, a hand posture that elicits a physiological response of balance within. Placing the palms together helps to balance the



Karen Brace, licensed wildlife rehabilitator and owner of Awesome Possumz, holds wildlife ambassador Eva, a blind Virginia opossum.

right and left hemispheres of the brain. Yoga teaches, through the poses, how to move past resistance and the busy mind chatter, bringing a more peaceful existence to the practitioner."

### MEET THE MARSUPIAL

As we continue class, our poses and flows are infused with possum facts. One of the most important: Keeping any native wild animals, including possums, as pets in the state of Virginia is illegal. (It's illegal in Maryland too.) Possum Yogis are tame, not domesticated, only serving as animal ambassadors because they are not able to go back to the wild. "The goal of wildlife rehab is to 100% get these animals back to the wild," Brace says.

She is able to care for Possum Yogis because, in addition to her permit to rehabilitate possums and skunks, she holds state and federal licenses and has permits to keep the ones that can't be released back into the wild.

"Stuart was my first non-releasable opossum and the very first ambassador

in April 2019," Brace points out. "People still tell me stories about meeting him for the first time and how that one meeting totally changed their perceptions and feelings about opossums. Stuart made them love opossums. That's the highest compliment anyone could pay us. And that's why I continue to do what I do."

Currently, Brace cares for seven possums, and has lost nine others. With an average lifespan of one to two years in the wild, possums in captivity typically live three to four years. "Our oldest ambassador, Sweet Pea, was almost 4 1/2 when she passed. She had an exceptional career. She was part of a marriage proposal and was ring bearer at a different wedding," Brace shares.

"Nugget was the first Possum Yogi," Deiman says. "Since then, we have had all of them rotate through the classes. They live short little lives, but each one has truly touched my heart."

Born without eyes, today's Possum Yogi, Eva, cannot be released back to the wild. Despite blindness, Brace says, "She's the most adventurous one we have."

Yoga is an ancient practice, and possums, Deiman tells us, have been around for 70 million years. "The adaptability and resilience of these little animals can help remind people of their own adaptability and resilience."

As I stretch, contort and breathe, I overhear two women across the room from me whispering. "This pose feels really good," one says. "Possums sure know what they're doing!" her friend responds. "Maybe that's why they've been around for millions of years!"

As the practice comes to a peaceful close, I muse on animals whose individual lives are so short, but whose species have survived for so long. We end with a chant — not quite the traditional "om," but instead, "possummm." ●

### Similar Upcoming Event:

Skunk Yoga for Skunkapalooza will be held June 14.

Learn more and register at [risingdawn yogastudio.com/schedule](http://risingdawn yogastudio.com/schedule).

A portion of ticket sales will be donated to the associated animal rescue group.



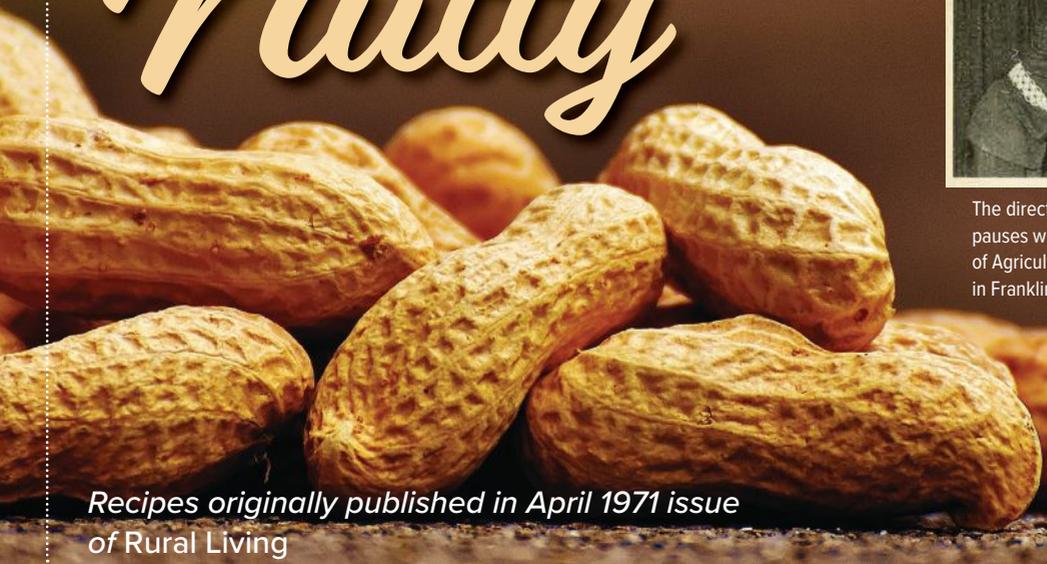


The director of Growers Peanut Food Promotions pauses with a representative of the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Commerce during a peanut festival in Franklin, Va., 1971.



Southern States representatives demonstrate a new product, Roast-A-Tron, for farmers, 1971.

# A LITTLE Nutty



Recipes originally published in April 1971 issue of Rural Living

## Virginia Peanut Soup

recipe courtesy of Hotel Roanoke

### Ingredients:

- 2 cups chicken broth
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 2 tablespoons flour
- 2 tablespoons peanuts, chopped
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ onion, diced
- 1 branch celery, sliced
- ½ cup peanut butter
- Dash celery salt
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice

### Directions:

Melt butter in saucepan; add onion and celery. Sauté for five minutes (do not brown). Add flour and mix until flour is blended well with butter. Add hot chicken broth and cook for 30 minutes. Remove from heat, strain broth. Stir the peanut butter, celery salt, salt and lemon juice into the strained broth. Sprinkle chopped peanuts on soup just before serving.

## Peanut Butter Frosting

### Ingredients:

- ¼ cup butter or margarine
- ¼ cup creamy peanut butter
- 1 cup brown sugar, packed
- ¼ cup milk
- 2¼ cups confectioners' sugar

### Directions:

In large saucepan combine butter or margarine, peanut butter and brown sugar over low heat, stirring while simmering two minutes. Add milk and bring to a boil over medium heat. Cool to lukewarm. Stir in confectioners' sugar 1/2 cup at a time, beating until smooth. If necessary, add milk, 1 teaspoon at a time, until right consistency for spreading. Frost top and sides of cake.

## Peanut Oatmeal Cookies

### Ingredients:

- 2 cups sugar
- 3 tablespoons cocoa or 1 square chocolate
- ½ cup peanut butter
- ½ cup of milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- ½ cup margarine
- 3 cups quick-cooking oats

### Directions:

Stir in saucepan over low heat until all ingredients except oats are blended and melted. Turn heat up to medium and bring to a boil. Boil three minutes and remove from heat. Add oats. Pour into buttered 10-by-15-inch baking sheet. Cool and cut into squares.

### GOT A FAVORITE RECIPE?

Email your favorite **vegetable recipes** to [cooperativekitchen@co-opliving.com](mailto:cooperativekitchen@co-opliving.com), or mail to Cooperative Kitchen, c/o Cooperative Living, 4201 Dominion Blvd., Suite 101, Glen Allen, VA 23060. Include your email address. You can also submit recipes online at [co-opliving.com/cooperativekitchen](http://co-opliving.com/cooperativekitchen).

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# Keeping the Lights On

## Understanding baseload and peaking power plants

by Jack McCarthy, Contributing Writer

**A**s Winter Storm Fern moved through the region in the early morning hours of Jan. 25, temperatures began to drop to bone-chilling levels and power demand rose. Across local electric cooperative service territories in Virginia, Maryland and Delaware, temperatures stayed below freezing throughout the week.

In each state, member-owners stayed warm with the help of dispatchable energy resources. Extreme cold and hot temperatures create a massive surge in the amount of electricity needed — or demand. It's up to local electric cooperatives and generation partners such as Old Dominion Electric Cooperative to ensure power remains reliable even through periods of high demand.

To meet those peaks when our lives rely on power the most, generation partners depend on a variety of generation sources. Two of the most important and reliable types of



A rotor used at Marsh Run. A peaking plant owned by Old Dominion Electric Cooperative, Marsh Run provides fast, flexible power that supports grid reliability during peak demand.

generation are baseload power plants and dispatchable peaking facilities.

It may sound as though the two are entirely different. They're not. Consider them as long- and short-distance runners competing for the same team to win a meet. They both power our electric grid, and they both deliver certainty to communities — but each is used in its own specific way. Together, they provide reliable electricity all day, every day.

Understanding how these types of generation work will help you appreciate why an energy portfolio complete with dispatchable and baseload power is essential to reliability.

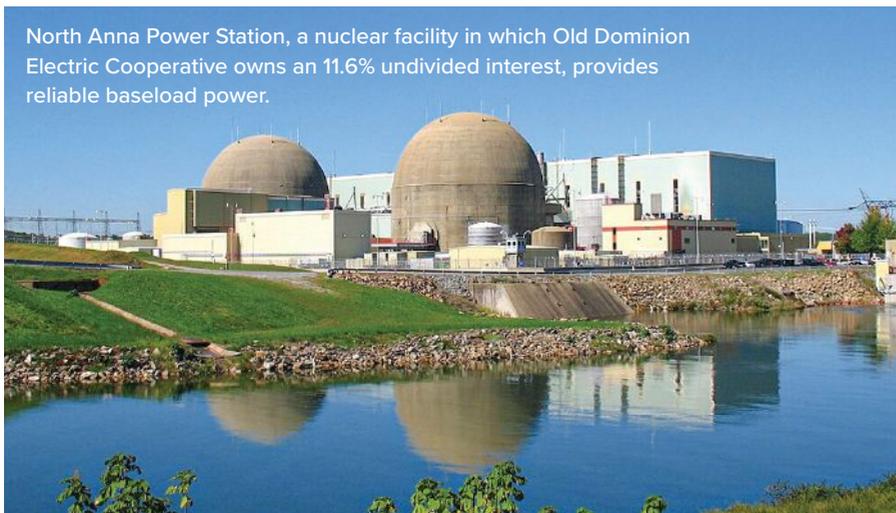
### GRID'S FOUNDATION

Baseload power plants provide a steady supply of electricity around the clock. They're the long-distance runners of a generation fleet. These plants run most of the time and supply the steady power needed to meet everyday demand. Often fueled by nuclear, natural gas and coal, baseload power plants form the backbone of the electric system.

Because baseload plants operate continuously, they are designed to be dependable and cost-effective over long periods. They help provide stable electricity for homes, schools, hospitals and businesses, no matter the time of day.

Today's baseload power plants are becoming cleaner and far more efficient. One of the biggest advancements is the combined-cycle natural gas plant. Instead of producing electricity just once from a single burn of fuel, or "cycle," these plants generate power in two stages. First, natural gas spins a turbine to create electricity. Then, rather than letting the hot exhaust escape as waste, the plant captures that heat to produce steam, which spins a second turbine and generates even more electricity. By making use of energy that would

North Anna Power Station, a nuclear facility in which Old Dominion Electric Cooperative owns an 11.6% undivided interest, provides reliable baseload power.



otherwise be lost, combined-cycle plants can reach efficiency levels above 60% — meaning more electricity comes from the same amount of fuel and lower emissions per megawatt-hour.

### HIGH-DEMAND MOMENTS

Baseload power needs additional support from peaking power facilities during times of high demand. When demand begins to rise, peaking power facilities are called upon to provide a cushion against additional electricity use.

Like a runner who specializes in the 100-yard dash, these “peakers” are designed to start quickly and provide power during short periods of high demand. They act as a safety net for the grid, helping prevent outages when electricity use spikes.

Peaking power plants such as the

Louisa Generation Facility and Marsh Run Generation Facility, both owned and operated by ODEC, are typically fueled by natural gas. Many peaking plants also have a backup fuel source, which allows the plant to run even in rare instances when natural gas is unavailable. While peaking plants typically operate for fewer hours, they are critical for maintaining reliability when members need it the most.

### NEW RELIABILITY CHALLENGES

Keeping the electric system reliable has become more complex. After nearly two decades of stable electric load growth, our grid is experiencing an unprecedented surge in electricity demand — the largest growth the country has seen since World War II.

As demand grows, maintaining a reliable mix of generation resources has

become more important than ever. During Winter Storm Fern, for example, dispatchable generation accounted for more than 90% of the resources responsible for keeping communities warm.

By maintaining a diverse mix of peaking and baseload power resources, generation partners such as ODEC work to ensure local electric cooperatives have dependable electricity during normal conditions and during times of peak demand.

Just like the different types of runners — both of which are essential to win a meet — many types of generation are needed to win the supply-and-demand race. Baseload and peaking plants may operate differently, but they share the same goal: maintaining reliable service for communities when it’s needed most — today and in the future. ●

## Harness the power of the Earth with these low cost & no cost energy saving tips



### Air-dry clothes

Consider line drying or using a drying rack instead of the dryer.



### Air-dry dishes

Skip the dishwasher’s heat-dry cycle and let dishes air dry using ambient air.



### Use natural shade

Landscaping can help your HVAC run more efficiently. Planting bushes or shrubs three feet from the unit provides shade and can reduce the strain on the motor.



### Turn off lights

Take advantage of the Earth’s natural light by opening blinds and curtains during the day.

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April 22nd is Earth Day

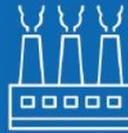
Get more tips at [odec.com/waystosave](https://www.odec.com/waystosave)

# How do various energy resources differ in output?



## Nuclear Facility

100 MW capacity  
91% capacity factor\*  
**797,160 MWh annual energy generated**



## Coal Facility

100 MW capacity  
43% capacity factor\*  
**376,680 MWh annual energy generated**



## Natural Gas Facility

100 MW capacity  
61% capacity factor\*  
**543,360 MWh annual energy generated**



## Solar Farm

100 MW capacity  
23% capacity factor\*  
**201,480 MWh annual energy generated**

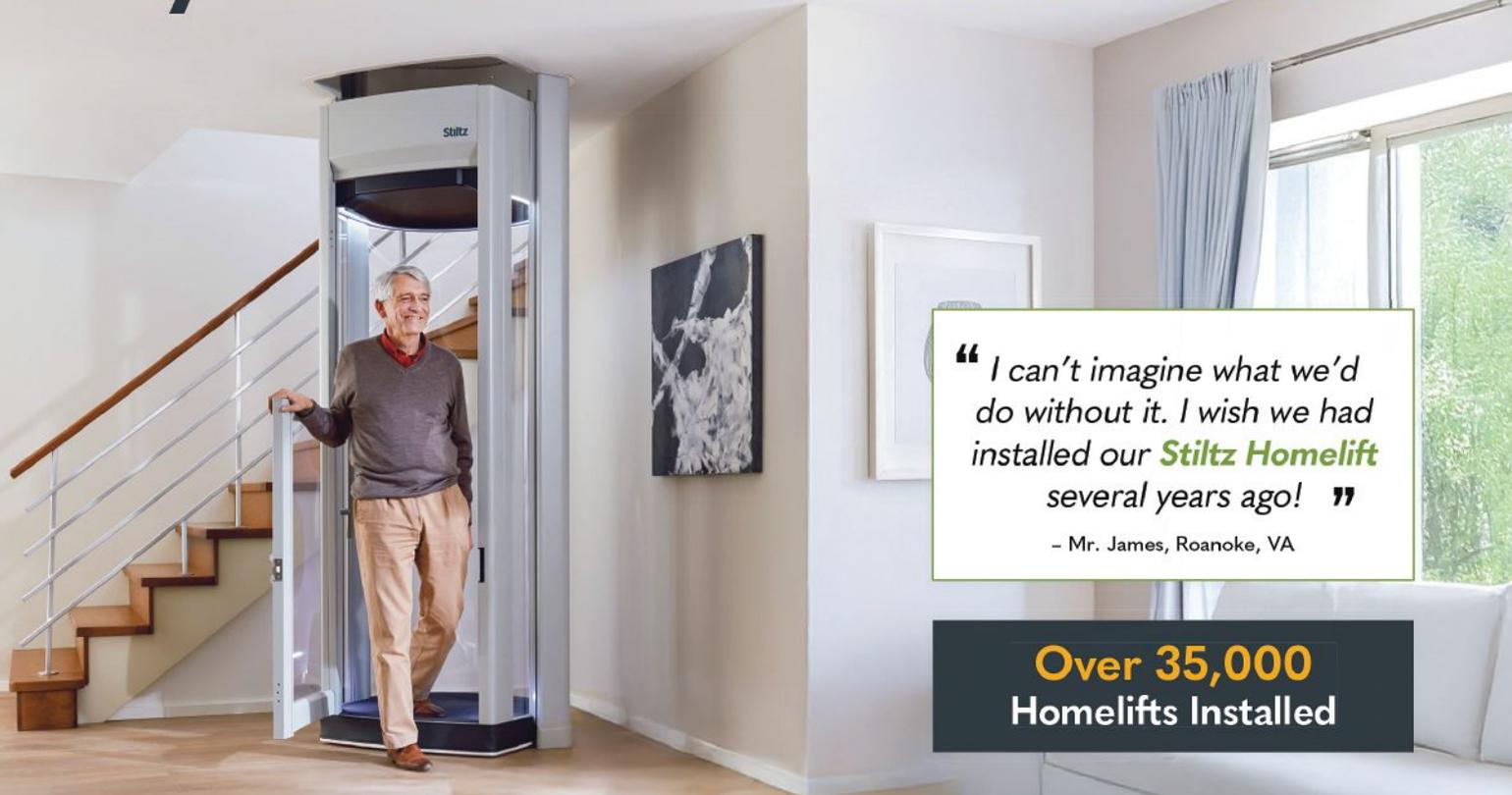


**Capacity Factor—how often a plant runs in real world conditions —influences how much energy a resource actually produces.**

*\*Capacity factor values based on EIA's 2024 Capacity Factors for Utility Scale Generators*



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# An April State of Mind

*A speaking invitation, a gardening 'tip' and a porch with a story*

by Margo Oxendine, Contributing Columnist



It has been said that April is the cruelest month. But I have no idea why. So it snows on the newly blooming tulips.

So what?

I am happy there is some color other than icy white finally coming back to my yard. April is a month that lifts my spirits.

I can't forget my favorite April ever. Out of the blue, I got a call from a *Cooperative Living* reader inviting me to speak to a gathering of garden club ladies from across Virginia. This was one of the kick-off events of the Shenandoah Apple Blossom Festival. There were hundreds of garden-savvy ladies at the luncheon. And then there was me, someone with no talent for gardening whatsoever.

My go-to gardening "tip" back when I was buying and planting flowers was to spend all day bent over the pots and digging the holes, plop the flowers in and then head back to the deck. On my way inside, I'd turn around, looking

proudly at the pots, and call out, "You're on your own!"

Once summer kicks in and temperatures rise, I am no longer interested in going outside for any reason. The closest I get is my screened front porch. I read, eat and, yes, doze off out there from April to November. I love my porch!

I live in the house my mother bought after my father died. She paid for the house, but it did not have a porch. "Oh," she'd said. "I wish I had enough money to put on a screened front porch. That's the only thing this house lacks."

Funny thing, but just a few weeks later, we got a call from a person in Connecticut we did not know. A lot of relatives still lived up there. And Daddy was born and grew up there.

The man who called had bought my grandparents' house. He said, "I keep getting mail from an insurance company for David McCollum Jr. Would you happen to know who that is?"

"Why, David was my late husband," Mom replied. So, the caller got our address and forwarded the mail he'd

been saving. Here's where the story gets quirky and interesting: The insurance company had a policy my grandmother had taken out on Daddy, way back when he left to join the Navy during WWII instead of heading to the University of Connecticut. Family lore says Gramma paid a dime a week for this life insurance policy.

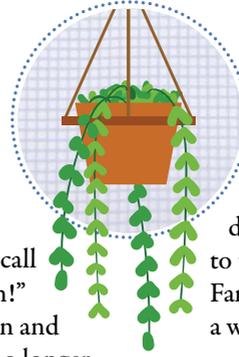
Time marched on and the war ended. Daddy came back home, and apparently everyone forgot about that insurance policy. Until the day a stranger living in my grandparents' house decided to try to track down someone named McCollum.

By a weird and wonderful twist of fate, there was the money my mother needed to build the porch I enjoy to this day. She had plenty left over to buy a bunch of azalea bushes to plant around the outside perimeter. Every year in April, they start blooming. The pink, orange and white bushes bloom in stages, one after the other. How wonderful!

Not a "porch day" goes by that I don't think of the serendipitous gift from beyond that made our April one to remember through the ages.

I hope your April is far from cruel. Maybe something special will happen! ●

*To order a copy of Margo's "A Party of One," call 540-468-2147 Mon.-Wed., 9 a.m.-5 p.m., or email [therecorderoffice@gmail.com](mailto:therecorderoffice@gmail.com).*



## CELEBRATING

### Happy birthday, Edwin!



Edwin VanPelt, of Mount Crawford, Va., joins *Cooperative Living* in turning 80 this year (on April 27)! VanPelt, a member of Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative, cherishes time with his family, including his four daughters, eight grandchildren and great-grandson. He also enjoys spending time in his workshop, often fixing and restoring items for friends and neighbors. Always willing to lend a helping hand, VanPelt is a generous and dedicated member of his community.

#### Know someone turning 80 this year?

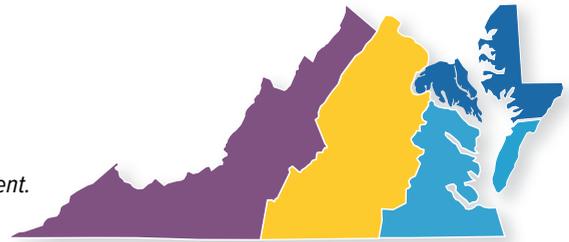
Nominate them to be featured in *Cooperative Living* by emailing [saycheese@co-opliving.com](mailto:saycheese@co-opliving.com). Please send a photo of the individual being nominated, along with their birthdate and a short description about them.

## CL 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](http://co-opliving.com) under "Contests." Deadline is **April 20**. The winner will receive a **\$25 Amazon email gift card**.

# 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

### APRIL

**17 FRONT ROYAL. Blue Ridge Singers Spring Concert Series: The French-American Connection.** Highlandcounty.org

**18 BROWNTOWN. Browntown Redbud Festival.** 96 Browntown Road. 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Browntowncommunity.com

**19 WINCHESTER. Blue Ridge Singers Spring Concert Series: The French-American Connection.** First Baptist Church of Winchester. 3 p.m. 540-635-6947. Blueridgesingers.org

**25 PENN LAIRD. Heroes and Dreams.** James River Ringers. Massanutten Presbyterian Church. 4:30 p.m.

**26 UPPERVILLE. Blue Ridge Singers Spring Concert Series: The French-American Connection.** Trinity Episcopal Church. 3 p.m. 540-635-6947. Blueridgesingers.org

### MAY

**1 HARRISONBURG. Heroes and Dreams.** First Friday Concert. Asbury United Methodist Church. 7 p.m.

**2 SPOTSYLVANIA. Gospel Sing.** 6823 Partlow Road. 6 p.m.

**9-10 BOYCE. Mother's Day Weekend Garden Fair.** 400 Blandy Farm Lane. 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Blandy.virginia.edu/garden-fair

**11 HUDDLESTON. Bingo.** 12253 Smith Mountain Lake Parkway. 6:30 p.m.

## PIEDMONT

### APRIL

**14 HAYMARKET. Rhythm in the Garden.** 3510 James Madison Highway. 1:30-4 p.m. Htcgardenclub.com

**19 WARRENTON. Big Event Commuter Lot Cleanup.** Corner of Route 605 and Routes 15 & 29. 1 p.m.

**21 MANASSAS. Blue Ridge Singers Spring Concert Series: The French-American Connection.** All Saints Catholic Church. 7:30 p.m. 540-635-6947. Blueridgesingers.org

**25 OAK GROVE. Bloom & Grow Festival Plant Sale.** Ingleside Vinyards. 4-7 p.m. Nnmg.org

### MAY

**2 MINERAL. Yard Sale.** St. Jude Catholic Church. 7 a.m.-1 p.m. Louisacatholics.org.

**9-10 MANASSAS. ARTfactory's Lionel Bart's Oliver.** 9419 Battle St. Times vary. Info@virginiaartfactory.org. Virginiaartfactory.org

## TIDEWATER

### APRIL

**16 MELFA. Eastern Shore Literacy Council Spell-Rite "Bee for Literacy."** Eastern Shore Community College. 5-9 p.m. 757-789-1761. Shoreliteracy.org

### MAY

**2 CHINCOTEAGUE ISLAND. 56th Annual Chincoteague Seafood Festival.** Tom's Cove Park Campground. 8128 Beebe Road. 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Chincoteaguechamber.com

**9 COURTLAND. Heritage Day.** Heritage Lane. 9 a.m.-4 p.m. 757-654-6785.

**15-16 CAPE CHARLES. ChamberFest.** Cape Charles Waterfront. 3 p.m. Esvachamber.org

## MARYLAND

### APRIL

**25 POCOMOKE CITY. Pocomoke Stampede.** Great Pocomoke Fairgrounds. 2037 Broad St. 1 p.m. Thegreatpocomokefair.org

**PRINT DEADLINES:** May 1 for June 15-July 15  
June 1 for July 15-Aug. 15

**Email:** happenings@co-opliving.com  
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# From Pit to Pier

*Farmville's The Fishin' Pig features a menu that bridges two Southern favorites*

by Peggy Hyland, Contributing Columnist

**A**fter hearing wonderful things about The Fishin' Pig from a Longwood University alum, we headed out to Farmville to see for ourselves. The Fishin' Pig was born from the merger of two restaurants: one rooted in Memphis-style barbecue, the other in fresh seafood. They feature diverse food offerings and multiple locations throughout Virginia.

The atmosphere was laid-back and family-friendly, with a larger kids menu than most restaurants. The service was quick and welcoming. Our server was able to answer all our questions and guide us to some favorites.

The Better Than Bang Bang Shrimp was a great start: lightly breaded, cooked just right, with a pleasant kick. The creamy mustard sauce complemented them superbly. Hush puppies so often become dense, but here they were perfectly tender with a crispy exterior. Do not skip the accompanying honey butter. We were unable to resist the fresh-fried pork rinds, which arrived still sizzling and popping with the perfect amount of seasoning. They came with The Fishin' Pig's own barbecue ranch sauce. We started gobbling them down before deciding we should save room



House-blend barbecue sauces

Fresh-fried pork rinds

for our main courses. We managed to resist snacking on them on the drive home and were thrilled to discover they were still good the next day.

I was drawn to the Chesapeake Burger, featuring Old Bay and a creamy crab claw sauce. It was delightfully delicious, with a generous amount of the luscious sauce oozing out the sides. The brown sugar and black-peppered bacon added the right amount of crunch and salty sweetness. I paired it with zesty, tangy baked beans, which were exceptional — truly some of the best I have ever had.

My companion could



Got a restaurant for Peggy to review? Let us know at [editor@co-opliving.com](mailto:editor@co-opliving.com).

not decide between several different smoked meats, so he chose Grady's Smoke Shack Sampler, a robust offering of ribs, brisket, pulled pork, smoked wings and smoked sausage. It came with a crispy slaw that provided a nice fresh balance for the meats. The wings were very juicy, with a sauce that was sweet but not sugary. The beef sausage had great texture and flavor, without feeling heavy or greasy. The pulled pork was skillfully done, the right balance of smoky and juicy. A truly great pulled pork does not need sauce, and this one was a star without it. However, it also went great with the several sauce choices available. My favorite was the Carolina-style, but the sweet Memphis-style one was a close second. The tender brisket can also stand on its own or pair beautifully with any of the sauces. The ribs had a hearty crust over delicate, tender meat. Seafood lovers can also try Billy's Seafood Platter, with shrimp, pollock and catfish.

The desserts come from a local bakery. We were too full for dessert but ordered some to take home for later — an outstanding carrot cake and a decadent chocolate galaxy cake.

With five locations throughout Virginia, and one more coming soon, you shouldn't have to drive far to check out The Fishin' Pig, but it is worth the drive. Don't forget to get some extra pork rinds for the drive home. ●



Grady's Smoke Shack Sampler

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[fishinpig.com](http://fishinpig.com)

# Cost-Conscious Action

*How your electric cooperative works to save you money and empower member communities*

by Jeff Caldwell, Staff Writer



CL

In last month's Grid Watch, we looked at the impact of rising costs and how that translates into your power bill.

Your cooperative — which is member-owned and managed by boards elected from your community — knows that rising prices are a significant concern for you and your family, because they are to our families too. That is why we work to reduce costs, return any profits made back into the wallets of member-owners, and foster economic development and jobs in the communities we serve.

For the nearly 2 million people served by Virginia, Maryland and Delaware's 16 electric cooperatives, examples abound where co-ops are leaning into affordability issues.

Electric cooperatives are working on behind-the-meter tools that empower members to reduce energy use and lower bills, including:

- Promoting energy efficiency programs
- Partnering with businesses and other co-ops to offer discounts on smart thermostats, energy efficient appliances and other home improvements that can reduce energy costs
- Developing load-control programs to reduce energy use, especially during peak demand hours

Visit your co-op's website to learn more about the money-savings programs available in your area.

Your co-op is also working to control costs on the front end of the system by:

- Combining buying power with other co-ops to drive down raw materials costs
- Investing in distributed energy resources, such as community solar battery storage and microgrids
- Advocating for fair policies that ensure data centers and other large-load customers are paying their fair share of infrastructure costs needed to power their facilities

Co-ops provide capital credits — the return of any profits collected by your electric cooperative back to its members.

One of the cooperative principles that guides our operations is Concern for Community. In some communities, electric cooperatives provide broadband internet access to spur economic opportunity and more active participation in the modern economy. Many of our cooperatives also sponsor grant programs and awards that give back to the communities they serve and recognize individuals who are giving their time and energy to improve their communities.

Even the Virginia, Maryland & Delaware Association of Electric Cooperatives is investing in the communities we serve to enhance future economic and job opportunities.

The association sponsors:

- VMDAEC Education Scholarship Foundation awards, giving \$1,500 grants to graduating high school seniors who live in co-op service territory
- Girl Power® Camps in Palmyra, Va., and Salisbury, Md., to train the next generation of energy technicians at no cost to participants

Your co-op shares your concern about rising prices and is dedicated to driving down costs wherever possible to save you money. ●

*To learn more about the charges that appear on your electric bill and how your individual power costs are accounted for, visit your co-op's website.*



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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:** April 5 for May issue; Publisher reserves the right to designate classification or reject any ad. No personals, please.

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