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CooperativeLiving

THE
**CROOKED
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PAGE 6

Performers have taken the stage at the historic
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THE CROOKED ROAD PHOTO





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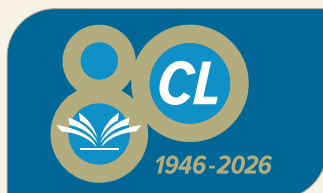


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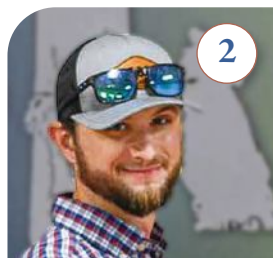
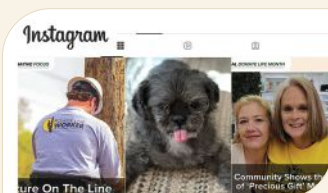
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VIEWPOINT

Honoring the Past — Energizing the Future

By the time you read this issue of *Cooperative Living*, it will have been a few weeks since our association's 82nd Annual Meeting. This year's theme, "Honoring Our Past — Energizing Our Future," gave us an opportunity to celebrate 250 years of our nation's history and 80 years of this magazine serving our cooperative community.

Why do we spend so much time looking back? Because remembering where we came from reminds us who we are. The cooperative spirit that helped bring electricity to rural America still guides us today: neighbors working together to meet the needs of their communities and build a better future.

This month's *Cooperative Living* offers plenty of reminders of how far we've come. We continue our look back at eight decades of the magazine while highlighting the people, values and traditions that remain at the heart of our cooperatives.



You'll also find stories about cooperative communities caring for one another, from helping families facing unexpected challenges to working together to keep farmers and workers safe. We explore the rich history of bluegrass and country music, born in Virginia and now enjoyed around the world. And because community is at the heart of the cooperative experience, this issue includes our annual guide to the fairs and festivals that bring our communities together each fall.

Our electric cooperatives have evolved into sophisticated 21st-century energy businesses, but the values our founders envisioned remain as relevant as ever. We are proud of where we came from, grateful for the people who built this cooperative legacy and excited about what comes next.

Together, we can honor our past while energizing a future where our rural communities and suburban towns preserve what makes them special while embracing new opportunities.

That is the Cooperative Way.

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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BARC PHOTOS

A Concerned Community

Co-op rallies around injured lineworker

by Jack Cooksey, Staff Writer

It was February when Deaven Snyder and fellow lineworkers from BARC Electric Cooperative traveled to Maryland to help restore power after a snowstorm. “Being able to help another co-op and community in need is what mutual aid is all about,” Deaven said later, reflecting on the experience.

Just weeks later, he and his wife, Sierra, would experience that same cooperative spirit firsthand.

In April, Deaven suffered severe injuries from an ATV accident in Clifton Forge, Va. The ATV he and a friend were riding overturned while climbing a 70-foot embankment. The ATV landed on Deaven, fracturing his skull, face, jaw, shoulder and several ribs, collapsing his left lung and causing a traumatic brain injury.

Within hours, members of Deaven’s work crew rushed to the hospital to support him and Sierra. BARC leaders also visited the hospital in the days that followed.

“People got together quickly and did any and everything they could,” Deaven said later. “It wasn’t like they got together a couple of weeks later. It was instant support — and not just from a few coworkers, but all of them.”

BARC lineworkers organized a GoFundMe campaign and helped with household and yard tasks while Sierra stayed by Deaven’s side.

Despite his severe injuries, the lineman did not require surgery. Although doctors predicted a six-month recovery, Deaven’s rebound was quicker than anticipated.

“Physical and occupational [therapists were] pushing him to do all these different workouts,” Sierra says. “He would wake up each morning and do [them]. He definitely pushed himself.”

By August, Deaven was cleared by doctors to return to work with no restrictions. “He’s definitely been itching real bad to get back [to work],” Sierra says. “We’re glad that he made it there.” ●

This story includes reporting by Victoria A. Rocha, a writer for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.



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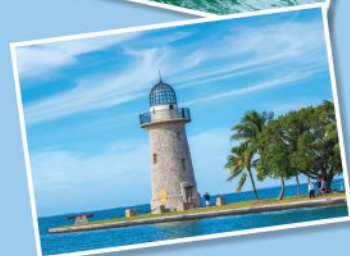


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2016-

A Lasting Legacy

Celebrating the eighth decade of Cooperative Living

by Laura Emery, Staff Writer

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

Through triumphs and tragedies, celebrations and challenges, *Cooperative Living's* eighth decade — 2016 through 2026 — demonstrated the enduring role of the magazine.

From stories of women breaking barriers to features celebrating military service, acts of kindness, educational history and resilience during a global pandemic, the magazine continued to tell the stories that mattered most — about the people and places that make cooperative-served communities special. The articles reflected a changing world while remaining rooted in the cooperative values that have guided the publication for generations.

Advances in technology transformed the way people communicate and consume information, as electric cooperatives themselves navigated new challenges related to workforce development, broadband expansion, cybersecurity, renewable energy and an increasingly complex electric grid.

In the July 2016 issue, Executive Editor Richard G. Johnstone Jr. reflected on the enduring value of trusted print journalism. In an era increasingly dominated by digital content, social media and rapidly changing news cycles, he reaffirmed print's ability to foster meaningful connections between cooperatives and their members.

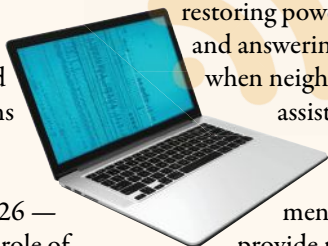
STORIES THAT MATTER

The magazine continued its emphasis on storytelling centered on co-op members and cooperative-served communities. Readers followed lineworkers responding to major storms, restoring power after natural disasters and answering the calls for mutual aid when neighboring utilities required assistance. Articles highlighted the dedication and sacrifice required of the men and women who work to provide reliable electricity.

A highlight of the decade was a May 2017 cover story on Lizzie Wyant Wood of Fishersville, Va., the commonwealth's oldest living resident at age 112. The article explored her life, faith, family and the changes she witnessed during more than a century, including the arrival of electricity and indoor plumbing. Just one month later, the magazine reported her passing.

The January 2018 cover story, "Into the Light," marked a first for *Cooperative Living* by tackling the often-overlooked issues of mental illness, depression and suicide prevention. By sharing the stories of families affected by these challenges and highlighting the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's Out of the Darkness walks, the article helped bring an often-stigmatized topic "into the light."

The decade also showcased the cooperative commitment to preparing for the next generation of energy workers. Features examined workforce initiatives such as Girl Power Camp, created by the Virginia, Maryland & Delaware Association of Electric Cooperatives in 2021 to introduce young women to careers in linework



May 2023

and energy, fields where women have historically been underrepresented. Readers also learned about the dedication of the state-of-the-art training center in Palmyra, developed by the electric cooperatives of Virginia, Maryland and Delaware to provide hands-on training and instruction for future lineworkers.

BREAKING BARRIERS

The magazine celebrated women who blazed trails in their professions and communities. In the March-April 2019 issue, readers met Bettina Ring, whose upbringing in Craig County and lifelong commitment to forestry, conservation and rural economic development led to her appointment as Virginia's first female secretary of agriculture and forestry.

In January 2020, Genevieve Boarman was featured. Boarman became Virginia's first female electric cooperative lineworker after being hired by Northern Neck Electric Cooperative



-2026

shortly after graduating from Southside Virginia Community College's Power Line Worker Training School.

The March 2023 issue profiled Virginia State Police 1st Sgt. Dylan Davenport, the first Black woman appointed commander of the agency's Area 44 office serving Caroline and King George counties.

Two years later, the March 2025 issue shared the story of Sonja Cox, the first female CEO in the VMDAEC system, tracing the leadership journey that culminated in her becoming the first female president and CEO of Southern Maryland Electric Cooperative. Together, these stories reflected expanding opportunities for women in fields and leadership roles once dominated by men.

The February 2020 issue included one of the decade's most historically significant cover packages. Through stories about Robert Russa Moton High School in Farmville, George Washington Carver Regional High School in Culpeper and A.T. Johnson High School in Montross, the magazine examined Virginia's segregated educational history and the individuals working to preserve those stories.

POWERING POSSIBILITY

Cooperative Living also explored how access to electricity transformed communities around the world. Readers followed lineworkers who traveled beyond the borders of the U.S. to help bring electricity to underserved communities. In the November-December 2019 issue, the cover story featured an international electrification



project and the life-changing impact electricity had on rural communities in Bolivia and to families who had lived without it for generations. Then, in the January-February issue, the magazine followed electric cooperative crews bringing power to rural communities in Guatemala.

As the electric utility industry evolved, so did the magazine's coverage. Readers learned about broadband initiatives, emerging cybersecurity concerns, grid modernization efforts and new approaches to energy generation. Articles explored how cooperatives balanced innovation with reliability while working to meet the changing expectations of their members.

No event shaped the decade more profoundly than the COVID-19 pandemic. *Cooperative Living* became an important source of information during a period of uncertainty and disruption. Familiar events, including the Gaff-n-Go Rodeo, were canceled as public health concerns grew. Throughout the pandemic, *Cooperative Living* provided information about public health and safety, remote learning and staying connected, while highlighting how electric cooperatives maintained reliable



RYAN WHITE PHOTO

service during unprecedented challenges.

The decade also marked the loss of influential leaders, including longtime *Cooperative Living* editor Bill Sherrod. In June 2020, a Co-op People article celebrated Sherrod's receipt of VMDAEC's Distinguished Service Award for his exemplary stewardship of *Cooperative Living* and commitment to cooperative values. By the time the issue reached readers, Sherrod had died of pancreatic cancer.

FUTURE FOCUSED

By the start of 2026, *Cooperative Living* focused on its milestone with the introduction of the 80th Anniversary series, along with retro recipes and other nostalgic content throughout the year. While celebrating its past, the magazine also highlighted issues shaping the future of the electric cooperative industry: rising energy demand driven by data centers, reliability and affordability challenges, the future of the nation's generation mix and emerging technologies ranging from electric vehicles to small modular nuclear reactors.

As *Cooperative Living* celebrates its 80-year journey, one thing is clear: Readers have always been, and continue to be, the heart of the magazine. In a world shaped by social media, streaming content and constant connectivity, cooperative members continue to spend time with each issue, trusting the magazine to connect them with their co-ops, their communities and one another. ●



In 2017, the #MeToo movement became viral on social media, raising global awareness of sexual abuse.



The global COVID-19 pandemic led to worldwide lockdowns from 2020 to 2023.



Generative AI went mainstream with the launch of ChatGPT in late 2022.



In 2023, Taylor Swift's multibillion-dollar-grossing tour boosted local economies worldwide.

THE LONG AND CROOKED ROAD

Following the sounds of Virginia's Heritage Music Trail

by Don Harrison, Contributing Writer



Before The Crooked Road was established in 2004, fiddler Eddie Bond says Southwest Virginia's musical traditions were a well-kept secret.

"There were always music events going on — square dances, festivals and jam sessions at folks' houses," says the National Heritage Award winner, a native of the small town of Fries, Va. Bond has played at most of the venues along the 330-mile stretch of mountainous U.S. Route 58 that forms The

Crooked Road. He also hosts an affiliated jam session at the historic Fries Theater on Thursday nights. "But it was all local back then, before this," Bond says. "We didn't have a lot of visitors from out of state."

A TRAIL OF TRADITIONS

Established as an economic-development tool, The Crooked Road is a music heritage trail that winds through the mountains of the Blue Ridge, linking more than 50 destinations — concerts and



“I like to think of the trail as a thread that weaves the fabric together.”

—Patti Price-Love, director of tourism, Galax, Va.

jams held in country stores, museums, theaters and community halls — across 19 counties, four cities and 50 towns.

American string-band music was born and refined in this region, where nearly 100 years ago the “big bang” of country music occurred in the Virginia-Tennessee border town of Bristol. That’s where producer Ralph Peer recorded the music by Jimmie Rodgers and Virginia’s Carter Family, helping launch the commercial country music industry.

“The Crooked Road is where you can see how these traditions are being practiced and reinvented today,” says Virginia’s state folklorist Katy Clune, who runs the Virginia Folklife Program at the nonprofit Virginia Humanities. “It’s an exceptional window into local culture. From visiting the Birthplace of Country Music Museum in Bristol to checking out the old Fiddlers’ Convention in Galax, you can use The Crooked Road as a passport into these hearts of small communities in Appalachian Virginia.”

“I like to think of the trail as a thread that weaves the fabric together,” says Patti Price-Love, the director of tourism in Galax, Va., which hosts the annual Old Fiddlers’ Convention each August. “The individual venues along The Crooked Road don’t necessarily collaborate together, but we do promote each other.”

HOEDOWNS AND JAMS

The nation’s largest, longest-running fiddling competition, the Old Fiddlers’ Convention, celebrated its 90th anniversary last month. The event is still sponsored by Moose Lodge 733. Attracting 30,000 visitors annually to Galax,

population 6,000, “it’s a weeklong celebration of old-time and bluegrass [music],” Price-Love says. The Old Fiddlers’ event attracts competitors from across the U.S., as well as farther-flung locales such as France, the U.K. and Germany. “Last year we had one from Israel.”

As illustrious as it is, this hoedown, which ran Aug. 3-8, is but one attraction. There are jam sessions, performances and festivals held nearly every day somewhere along The Crooked Road in small towns such as Fancy Gap, Tazewell, Coeburn, Lamsburg, Floyd and Flat Ridge.

“We’re open every Saturday night from April to December,” says Michelle Galyean, board member of the Flat Ridge Community Center in Troutdale, Va., one of the newest affiliated stops on The Crooked Road. “A lot of people are, like, ‘Oh my lord, I can’t believe anybody lives up here,’” Galyean says with a laugh. “To get to us, you have to travel on an actual crooked country road.” The trek is worth it: For \$13, you’ll get a home-cooked meal, “a Sunday-after-church kind of dinner,” and a rousing evening of string-band music.

“The trail is really an all-encompassing picture of what culture is

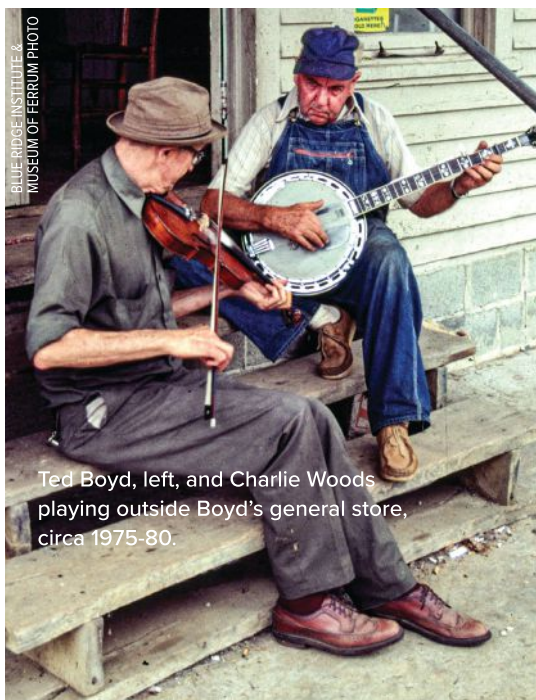
like in Southwest Virginia,” says Tyler Hughes, The Crooked Road’s executive director. “When somebody comes to visit us, no matter the venue or the festival, they’re getting a real glimpse of what life is like in Southwest Virginia. It isn’t overly commodified. It’s an authentic picture of life in the region.”

“That’s what we’re all about here, authenticity,” echoes Bethany Worley, executive director of the Blue Ridge Institute and Museum in Ferrum, Va., one of 10 major venues on The Crooked Road trail, along with 54 affiliate sites. “Everything we do, from our exhibits to our presentations and our archive [of Virginia folklife] — everything’s based on authenticity.”

LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Over the years, the institute has showcased exhibits on instrument making, moonshine, car culture and other aspects of Appalachian life. Its nearby heritage farm recreates the living and working conditions of the predominantly German settlers who came to the Blue Ridge in the early 19th century. “We have a lot of visitors who want to know what their ancestors’ lives

(continued on page 8)



Ted Boyd, left, and Charlie Woods playing outside Boyd’s general store, circa 1975-80.



Piedmont bluesman Jeffrey Scott, 2012 Blue Ridge Folklife Festival



Rita and Ronnie Williams, 2023 Carter Family Festival

The Long and Crooked Road

(continued from page 7)

were like,” Worley says. “We show them.”

For 52 years, the institute has presented the Blue Ridge Folklife Festival on the Ferrum College campus, featuring stages with local bluegrass, old-time, blues and African American gospel, along with traditional crafts (wooden bowls, oak baskets), food (fried apple pies, Brunswick stew), animals (horses, coonhounds), and Appalachian culture.

“Last year, we had somebody plowing with a horse, and people loved watching that,” Worley says, stressing that the focus of the festival, held on the fourth Saturday in October, is education. “Everyone has to demonstrate how they make the food, how they do the crafts. We hope that this will inspire people to keep these traditions alive.” It’s a real problem, it turns out. Many of the practitioners behind the crafts, customs and foodstuffs are aging out. “Thankfully, the music is flourishing,”

she says. “It’s alive and well thanks to the Junior Appalachian Music program.”

The Crooked Road has been a blessing to the region, says clawhammer banjo master and flatfoot dancer Brett Morris. She remembers that in the early days of the road, there was suspicion that it was a scheme to exploit regional traditions. “But it’s been remarkable. I mean, just being able to creatively offer opportunities for people to connect has been wonderful, and they really support youth programming.”

Morris, who learned the banjo from her cousin Eddie Bond, is the executive director of the nonprofit JAM. Based in Independence, Va., and originally started by guitarist Helen White, JAM oversees more than 60 after-school programs in six states, teaching children to play, dance and sing traditional old-time and bluegrass music using instruments common to the Appalachian region such as fiddle, guitar, mandolin, bass, dulcimer and banjo.

The students have numerous opportunities to perform with and learn from experienced masters (such as Bond, one of the instructors) at various The Crooked Road venues. The trail also sponsors an annual Youth Fiddlers’

2024
Old Fiddlers’
Convention,
Galax, Va.

KRISTA LYNN PHOTO



Convention each August. “There was a time when I was worried about whether this music would get passed along, but not anymore,” Bond says. “I feel really good about the future of traditional Appalachian music because of JAM,” says Hughes, an experienced old-time musician.

ONE BITE AT A TIME

So how can visitors best experience The Crooked Road? Hughes says the trail is best experienced in segments rather than from beginning to end. Planning is required, and to help with that, the organization recently launched The Crooked Road mobile app.

“What we typically recommend for folks, if they’ve got the time to spend in the region, is to pick out some anchor spots to stay in and drive out of,” Hughes says that most venues are within an hour’s drive from hubs such as Bristol, Abingdon and Blacksburg. “This puts you right at the heart of some of our major stops, like the Ralph Stanley Museum, Floyd Country Store, the Carter Family Fold.”

Soon, the trail may take an off-ramp near you. “We’ve got this great program called The Crooked Road On Tour, where we take musicians from across the region and send them out across the state and the country,” Hughes says.

Eddie Bond and Brett Morris are among the stalwart musicians who play these tours. “They’re some of our best diplomats for the region,” he says. “They can get in front of an audience and play a good rousing fiddle tune and show folks that this doesn’t just have to be a one-off thing, that they can visit Southwest Virginia and experience this nearly every night of the week.” ●

► For more information on The Crooked Road, visit thecrookedroadva.com.



2024 Old Fiddlers’ Convention,
Galax, Va.



KRISTA LYNN PHOTOS



“There was a time when I was worried about whether this music would get passed along, but not anymore.”

—Eddie Bond, fiddler and educator, Junior Appalachian Music program



No-Bake Energy Bites: Snack Smart, Save Smart

Ingredients:

- 1 cup old-fashioned oats
- 2/3 cup toasted shredded coconut (sweetened or unsweetened)
- 1/2 cup creamy peanut butter
- 1/2 cup semisweet chocolate chips
- 1/3 cup of honey
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Instructions:

Mix: Stir all ingredients together in a large mixing bowl until thoroughly combined.

Chill: Cover the bowl and refrigerate for 1 to 2 hours, or until the mixture is firm enough to roll.

Roll: Shape the chilled mixture into 1-inch balls.

Serve or store: Enjoy immediately, refrigerate in a sealed container for up to 1 week, or freeze for up to 3 months.



For more energy saving tips, visit [odec.com/waystosave](https://www.odec.com/waystosave).

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.



2026 FALL FAIRS & FESTIVALS GUIDE

Fall is one of the best times to experience the charm of Virginia's communities. Throughout the season, festivals, fairs and special events invite visitors to celebrate local traditions, enjoy great food and entertainment, and make lasting memories with family and friends.



TASTE OF THE MOUNTAINS | SEPT. 5
Madison County — Taste of the Mountains Main Street Festival returns to downtown Madison on Saturday, Sept. 5, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Enjoy more than 150 arts and crafts vendors, regional food, live music, magic shows, pony rides, history exhibits, and a beer and wine tent. Free admission, free parking and continuous shuttle service make this Labor Day weekend tradition worth experiencing. **For more information, visit madisonva.com.**

THE VIRGINIA PEANUT FESTIVAL | SEPT. 25-26

Emporia and Greenville County are stoked on peanuts — the 64th annual

Peanut Festival, that is. All your favorites will be on hand: a car show, arts and crafts, educational exhibits, a parade, live entertainment, cultural exhibits, a craft fair and plenty of delicious festival food.

For more information, visit emporiagreensvillechamber.com/virginia-peanut-festival.

SOUTH BOSTON HARVEST FESTIVAL | SEPT. 26

The 35th annual South Boston Harvest Festival will be held from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 26, in historic downtown South Boston. Sponsored by local businesses, industries and community agencies, the free event features shopping, live music,

children's activities, entertainment and food. Throughout the day, continuous live music and entertainment will take place on two stages. **For more information, visit downtownsobo.com.**

ART AT THE MILL | SEPT. 19-OCT. 4

Millwood, Va. — Art at the Mill is one of the premier art shows in the mid-Atlantic, attracting artists and buyers from more than a dozen states. Three hundred artists will display more than 1,000 works in a variety of media. The show runs from Friday, Sept. 19 through Sunday, Oct. 4. Hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturdays and noon to 5 p.m. Sunday through Friday. **For more information, visit clarkehistory.org.**



Art at the Mill

*Original Artwork for Sale
in a Lovely Historic Setting*

September 19 thru October 4

Sunday - Friday 12-5 Saturdays 10-5

Burwell-Morgan Mill, Millwood, VA 540.955.2600

FREE ADMISSION WITH THIS AD



CLARKE
COUNTY
HISTORICAL
ASSOCIATION



Tito's
Handmade
VODKA
AUSTIN • TEXAS



VIRGINIA
IS FOR
ART
LOVERS

*View our online Art Gallery during the show at
<https://bit.ly/FallArtGallery2026>*

YOUTH FOR TOMORROW'S 41ST ANNUAL COUNTRY FAIR & AUCTIONS | OCT. 3

Youth For Tomorrow's Country Fair & Auctions, a longtime Northern Virginia tradition, returns for its 41st year with family-friendly activities, entertainment and fundraising events on Saturday, Oct. 3. This year's fair promises to be the biggest and best yet! For event information and to purchase tickets, visit youthfortomorrow.org.

APPOMATTOX RAILROAD FESTIVAL | OCT. 9-11

The Historic Appomattox Railroad Festival returns to downtown Appomattox Oct. 9-11. Visitors can enjoy local dining, shopping, historic attractions and other events throughout the festival. To find places to stay, look for local eateries and shops, or to discover events happening during the festival, visit experienceappomattox.com.

HANDS & HARVEST FESTIVAL | OCT. 9-11

Fall is unforgettable in Highland County, Va. Experience the Hands & Harvest Festival Oct. 9-11 with a harvest trail, vendors, seasonal treats, entertainment and family fun. Visitors also can enjoy Hayfields State Park, Virginia's first Barn Quilt Trail, the Sounding Knob Fire Tower and more! For more information, visit highlandcounty.org.



Celebrating Railroad History for 54 years!

HISTORIC APPOMATTOX RAILROAD FESTIVAL
EST. 1972

**Friday - Sunday
OCTOBER 9-11**

*Live Music - Amusement Rides - Artisan Vendors
Children's Activities - Parade & more!*

Festival Information: AppomattoxRRFest.org
Lodging, shopping & dining: ExperienceAppomattox.com




Taste of the Mountains
Main Street Festival
Madison, VA

Saturday, September 5, 2026 • 9:00a - 4:00p

Arts • Crafts • Bands • Food • Pony Rides
Family Fun • Wine Tent
Free Parking • Free Shuttle

Taste of the Mountains 32nd Anniversary!

Madison County
VISITOR CENTER
110 N. Main Street, Madison, VA 22727
Phone 540/948-4455 • Fax 540/948-3174
www.madisonva.com



VACATION STARTS WITH VA

**Hands & Harvest Festival
October 9 - 11, 2026**

VIRGINIA IS FOR MOUNTAIN LOVERS
virginia.org

HIGHLAND COUNTY
VIRGINIA
highlandcounty.org

 All that you love, is all in one trip.
Start yours in **Highland County, VA.**



KING GEORGE FALL FESTIVAL

| OCT. 10

The 67th annual King George Fall Festival theme is "America the Beautiful: Celebrating 250 Years!" The festival features a craft and vendor show, parade, car show, pageant, races and entertainment. It also includes live

music and free rides and games for children. The parade begins at 11 a.m. at King George Elementary School and ends at King George High School. The SkillsUSA Car Show and craft and vendor show begin at 10 a.m. at King George High School in the gym, cafeteria and student parking lot. Food trucks will be on-site throughout the day. For parade, vendor, craft show and food truck information, visit kgfallfestival.com.

RASSAWEK AUTUMN FESTIVAL

| OCT. 17-18

The Rassawek Autumn Festival showcases a professional rodeo this year, along with demonstrations that include modern and antique heavy equipment, blacksmithing, welding and carpentry. Guests can also enjoy pig races, bluegrass music, artisan and food vendors, children's activities, and beer and wine. Purchase tickets in advance to save \$5 by visiting rassawek.com.

64th Annual
EMPORIA VIRGINIA
VIRGINIA PEANUT FESTIVAL
FRIDAY & SATURDAY,
SEPT. 25-26, 2026
- MUSIC - **FREE ADMISSION!!!** - MUSIC -
FIREWORKS • ARTS • CRAFTS • FOOD • PARADE • CAR SHOW • CARNIVAL
434-634-9441
virginiapeanutfestival.com

67th Annual KING GEORGE FALL FESTIVAL
★ Est. 1959 ★
★ America the Beautiful ★
CELEBRATING 250 YEARS!
★ **SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2026** ★
Visit www.kgfallfestival.com for more info & registrations
9 AM Cornhole Tournament (must pre-register)
10 AM - 4 PM Food Trucks/Vendors/Car Show, KGHS Student Parking Lot
10 AM - 4 PM Craft & Vendor Show, KGHS Gym & Cafeteria
11 AM Fall Festival Parade, RT 3/Kings Hwy - KGES to KGHS/KGMS
12 PM - 4 PM Rides/Games/Live Music, All at King George High School
5K, 1-MILE & TOT TROT RUNS 10/4 @ 2PM, REGISTER AT www.kgfallfestival.com
FUN FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY!
Come for the fun. ★ Stay for the community. ★ Make memories that last!

Rassawek Autumn Festival
PRO RODEO
OCTOBER 17 & 18, 2026
Visit Rassawek.com for more information

DISCOVER Front Royal

John Jackson Piedmont Blues Festival
A Tribute to a Rappahannock Legend
Last Saturday in September
Presented by
Virginia Cooperative Extension and Rappahannock Historical Society
Follow Us on Facebook @ John Jackson Piedmont Blues Festival
7 Meadows Lane, Castleton, VA 22716
Jacquesen Family Foundation • The William and Mary Grove Foundation
The Meadows at Castleton
RAIC, RAPPAHANNOCK AREA ART SOCIETY, VIRGINIA CO-OP, NORTHERN NEEL, VIRGINIA CO-OP, VIRGINIA CO-OP, VIRGINIA CO-OP
Virginia Cooperative Extension
Virginia Cooperative Extension is a partnership of Virginia Tech, Virginia State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and local governments, and is an equal opportunity organization. For the full text of our nondiscrimination statement, please visit www.vce.vt.edu.

OCT 3

PARTY LIKE IT'S 1776.
LIBERTY DAY: A HERITAGE CELEBRATION
Living History • Hayrides • Hot Cider
Rockland Park

OCT 10

FALL, BUT MAKE IT A FESTIVAL.
FESTIVAL OF LEAVES
200+ Vendors • 3 Music Stages • Beer Garden
Downtown Front Royal

DEC 5

YOUR HALLMARK MOVIE STARTS HERE.
CHRISTMAS ON MAIN
Merry Market • Parade • Shopping
Downtown Front Royal



Three Road Trips Worth The Drive

SPOTSYLVANIA COUNTY

Experience autumn in Spotsylvania County, Va. Make lasting memories at Belvedere Plantation's Harvest Festival (Sept. 12-Nov. 7), shop at Miller Farms and Spotsylvania Farmers markets, and explore scenic battlefields and fascinating museums. **Plan your fall getaway today by visiting visitspotsy.com.**

FRONT ROYAL

Front Royal, Va. invites you to experience three unforgettable seasonal celebrations. Step back in time at Liberty Day, enjoy fall fun at the Festival of Leaves and embrace holiday magic during Christmas on Main. **For more information, visit discoverfrontroyal.com.**



SEPTEMBER 26, 2026

Street Festival: 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

Great Fun for the Entire Family!

434-575-4208 • downtownsobo.com
info@downtownsobo.com

Visit Spotsy

Spotsylvania, Virginia



Make it your *fall* spot.



VISITSPOTSY.COM



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



HOPEWELL DOWNTOWN
PARTNERSHIP



VIRGINIA MOTORSPORTS PARK

OCTOBER 16 6PM – 11PM
OCTOBER 17 11AM – 11PM
OCTOBER 18 NOON – 6PM

EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

**CARNIVAL - LIVE MUSIC - WRESTLING -
VENDORS - PIG RACING - PETTING ZOO -
AGRICULTURE EXHIBITS -
AND MORE!**



WWW.DISCOVERDINWIDDIE.COM/COUNTYFAIR

A lineworker in a yellow safety vest and hard hat is working on a wooden utility pole. He is using a tool to attach a guy wire to a pole-grounding system. The background shows green pine trees and a clear blue sky. The worker is positioned on a white bucket lift with yellow safety railings. Various tools and equipment are visible on the lift, including a black container and a yellow box.

Reliability Doesn't Just Happen — It's Built

Lineworker Jay Chapman bonds a guy wire to a pole-grounding system during pole replacement work on Route 1 in Doswell, Va., July 15, 2026. Ongoing pole replacement work is critical to Rappahannock Electric Cooperative (REC) delivering safe, reliable energy. For more on how poles enhance reliability, [see the full feature on page 17.](#)

page 16

REC Holds Annual Meeting, Director Elections

September 2026

page 18

Introducing Your New Bill

page 20

Emergency Preparedness Is a Team Effort



Member-Owners Elect Directors at 2026 Annual Meeting

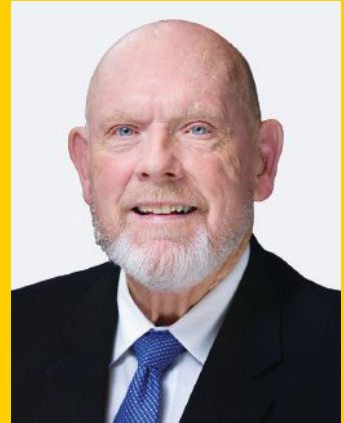
More than 16,500 REC member-owners participated in the 2026 Director Elections by designating their proxy or joining the virtual Annual Meeting on Aug. 5.



IN REGION IV, Sanford Reaves Jr. was re-elected. Region IV includes Culpeper and Orange counties.



IN REGION V, Randy Thomas was re-elected. Region V includes Spotsylvania County.



IN REGION IX, Eugene "Gene" L. Campbell Jr. was re-elected. Region IX includes Essex, King and Queen, and King William counties.

During the Annual Meeting, John D. Hewa, REC's President and CEO, and Board Chair Christopher G. Shipe reviewed the Cooperative's work to provide safe, reliable, affordable and sustainable energy solutions while preparing for continued growth across its 22-county service territory.

Hewa highlighted REC's thoughtful long-term investments in the electric system, including major reliability projects, pole replacements, right-of-way maintenance and the use of drones and other technology to identify equipment concerns before they cause outages. He also discussed the Cooperative's focus on safeguarding affordability while managing the rising costs of wholesale power, equipment and materials and labor.

"Delivering safe, reliable electricity is our

most fundamental responsibility," Hewa said. "We take action throughout the year to strengthen our electric system before problems occur."

REC leaders also shared updates on the Cooperative's approach to growth, including new economic-development projects and large facilities. Hewa emphasized that REC is using rates, business models and other safeguards intended to ensure the costs and risks of serving large loads are managed fairly and not shifted to existing member-owners.

Hewa's comments had a strong member value theme, as he highlighted the return of approximately \$10 million in capital credits to members this year, record Summer Savings Plan participation and an increased bill credit, battery energy storage investments, Vividly Brighter

offerings and an efficiency assistance program for manufactured-home residents. Leaders also recognized the community impact of The Power of Change, which has provided nearly \$2 million in grants to local nonprofits since 2005, through the generosity of REC members.

Shipe thanked member-owners for participating in the election process and underscored the role they play in Cooperative governance.

"Our director elections are democracy in action," Shipe said. "The directors you elect will represent you and help ensure that your interests remain at the center of every decision made by this Cooperative."

Full election results and video from the 2026 Annual Meeting are available at myrec.coop/annualmeeting.

Reliability Maintained — One Pole at a Time

Utility poles are a familiar part of the landscape across REC's service territory. They support the system that powers homes, farms, schools and businesses.

But poles do much more than hold wires. Depending on their location, they may carry electric lines, fiber-optic cable and communications equipment. They can also support transformers that lower voltage, insulators that separate energized wires, and protective devices such as fuses, cutouts, switches and surge arresters. Together, this equipment helps REC deliver power safely, isolate problems and restore service.

Because poles support so much critical infrastructure, replacing aging or damaged poles is an important part of REC's reliability work.

Poles are designed to last for decades, but weather, insects, moisture and changing ground conditions can weaken them. During high winds, heavy rain, ice or severe storms, a deteriorated pole can break, bringing down lines, damaging equipment and causing outages.

"Replacing poles before they fail is one of the most practical ways we can strengthen

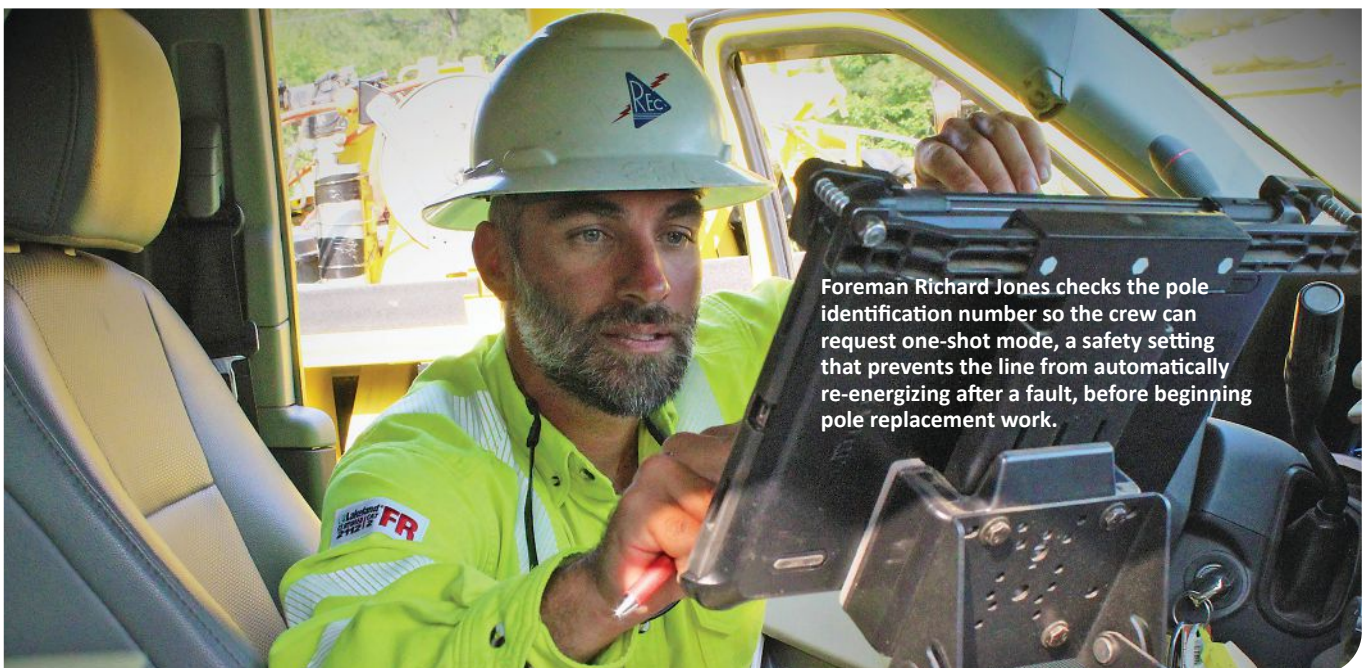
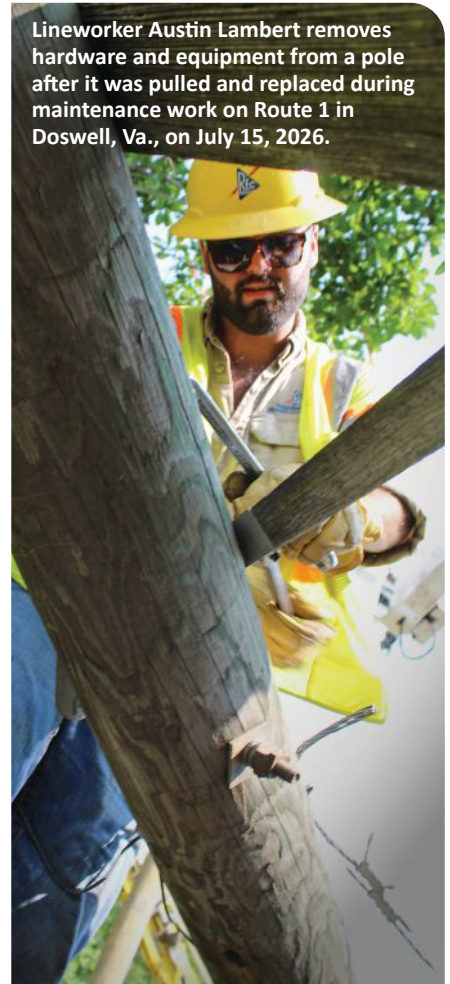
the grid, protect our crews and improve reliability for members," said Kevin Pories, Senior Director – Operations and Construction.

Planned replacements are also generally more efficient than emergency repairs, which may require urgent crew response, additional materials and longer restoration times. In the first five months of the year, crews replaced 2,382 wood poles in 2026 and installed 28 ductile iron poles in locations where added reinforcement was needed.

Fiber projects and broadband partnerships have helped advance this work. Installing fiber often requires larger or taller poles to provide safe clearance below power lines. Fiber leasing and pole-attachment revenue also help offset improvement costs, while communications equipment supports system monitoring and faster outage response. This program has provided for 10,600 pole replacements since 2022.

With all that potentially rests on each of the thousands of poles replaced each year, this work is a critical part of REC's comprehensive approach to maintaining reliability.

Lineworker Austin Lambert removes hardware and equipment from a pole after it was pulled and replaced during maintenance work on Route 1 in Doswell, Va., on July 15, 2026.



Foreman Richard Jones checks the pole identification number so the crew can request one-shot mode, a safety setting that prevents the line from automatically re-energizing after a fault, before beginning pole replacement work.



Understanding Your New REC Bill

Beginning with bills issued in October, REC members will see an updated bill designed to make important account information easier to find and understand. The updated layout puts your total amount due and due date front and center while clearly organizing energy use, payment history, current charges and member resources.

1 Important Information for Members

Look here for timely updates, safety reminders and information that may affect your service. The message will change each month, so take a moment to read it.

2 Your Bill Snapshot

This bold circle puts the two details most members look for first — the total amount due and the due date — in one easy-to-find place. It gives you a quick snapshot before you review the rest of your bill.

3 Your Account at a Glance

Brings together basic account details, including your name, account number and billing date.

4 Your Energy Use at a Glance

This chart shows how much electricity you used each month and how your usage compares with the previous year. Average temperature is included because extreme weather can significantly affect energy costs.

5 How Your Total Comes Together

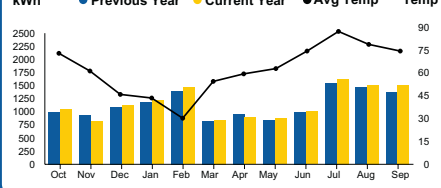
Shows activity since your last bill. It lists your previous balance, payments received, any remaining balance and your new charges so you can see how the total amount due was calculated.

**RAPPAHANNOCK
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE**

IMPORTANT MESSAGES
Summer heat can push your bill higher because cooling is one of the biggest drivers of home energy use. Keep your thermostat at 78 degrees or the highest comfortable setting, check filters regularly and use REC tools to better understand your usage. Find more savings tips at myrec.coop/save

Member Name: John Doe
Account #: 00000000
Billing Date: 09/16/2026

Total Amount Due
\$271.34
by **10/11/2026**

USAGE HISTORY
kWh • Previous Year • Current Year • Avg Temp Temp


BILL SUMMARY

Previous Balance	\$278.42
Payments Received	-\$278.42
Balance Forward	\$0.00
Current Charges by 10/11/2026	\$271.34
Total Amount Due	\$271.34

An accurate REC account phone number helps speed up outage reporting and restoration. Sign in to update your account-listed phone number at myrec.coop
By paying with check, you allow REC to process your payment either as a one-time electronic transfer or as a standard check transaction.
Bill is due and payable upon receipt. 1.5% penalty if not paid by 10/11/2026

Only return this portion with your check made payable to REC. Please write your account number on your check.

**RAPPAHANNOCK
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE**

P.O. Box 7388
Fredericksburg, VA 22404

Account # 00000000
Current Charges by 10/11/2026 \$271.34
Total Amount Due \$271.34
For payment options, visit myrec.coop/paymentchoices.


Scan here using a mobile device to pay online, or visit www.myrec.coop. To pay by phone call 1-800-552-3904.

JOHN DOE
123 MAIN ST
ANYWHERE VA 00000-0000

4 1570

Rappahannock Electric Cooperative
PO Box 34757
Alexandria, VA 22334-0757


049054005259&00100000000000002&4423

6 Ways to Pay

Choose the payment option that works best for you: online through MyREC SmartHub, by phone or by mail. Scan the QR code for quick online access, or use the detachable payment portion at the bottom of the bill when paying by check.

Although the bill will look different, it contains the same essential information you rely on each month. Use this guide to learn where to find the details that matter most and what each section means.



Service Address: 123 Main St
Service Description: Residential Home

Member Services Telephone Hours:
Mon.-Fri. 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.
Phone: 1-800-552-3904
Email: office@myrec.coop
www.myrec.coop

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Access Charge – Costs associated with building and maintaining a reliable delivery system for REC members. Energy use does not affect this cost.

kWh – Energy consumed over the billing period.

Distribution Charges – The cost to maintain wires, transformers, substations and other equipment used to deliver electricity to you.

Supply Charges – The cost for the generation and transmission of electricity.

Power Cost Adjustments – A charge or credit that adjusts for changes in the cost of power REC purchases for you.

Reconnect Fee – Due when service is reconnected after disconnection for non-payment (\$52 before 5pm; \$172 after 5pm or on weekends or holidays).

If you would like information about your electric rate, please visit www.myrec.coop/electric-rates.

Meter #	Rate Schedule	Previous Read	Present Read	From	To	Days	Multiplier	kWh Used
A00000000	A-1 Residential-1 Phase	23642	25144	08/11/2026	09/11/2026	30	1	1502

CURRENT CHARGE DETAILS

Access Charge		\$16.50
Distribution	300 kWh x 0.0645	\$19.35
	1,309 kWh x 0.04472	\$53.75
Supply	800 kWh x 0.06777	\$54.22
	809 kWh x 0.0978	\$68.66
Power Cost Adj	1,609 kWh x 0.034291	\$51.51
Individual Outage Notification		\$3.00
County Tax		\$2.00
Virginia Consumption Tax		\$2.35
Current Charges by 10/11/2026		\$271.34



DON'T GET LEFT IN THE DARK

POWER YOUR PEACE OF MIND

Whole home generators keep you comfortable and connected.



Focused On You: Looking out for our members

Save Energy, Save Money
myrec.coop/save

Help Is Available
myrec.coop/help or call 1-800-552-3904

MyREC SmartHub Tools
myrec.coop/myrecsmarthub

- Simple changes to lower your bill
- Learn how weather impacts your energy use
- You may qualify for local assistance
- Contact REC for payment arrangements
- Update your phone number & stay informed
- View your billing history & usage profile
- Go Paperless

Round up your electric bill to the next whole dollar to support nonprofits serving your community. Round up in MyREC SmartHub or learn more at www.thepowerofchange.org

7 Your Service and Meter Details

Shows your service address, when your meter was read and how much energy you used during the billing period. It also includes your meter number, rate schedule, reading dates and total kilowatt-hours used. These details can be helpful when reviewing your energy use or asking a question about your bill.

8 What You're Paying For

Breaks your bill into individual components, allowing you to see each charge and understand how your total bill is calculated based on your rate.

Some charges are based on how much electricity you use, while others support the equipment and services needed to keep power available to your home. The total at the bottom of this section matches the current charges shown on the front of your bill.

9 Bill Terms Explained

Not sure what terms such as access charge, distribution, supply or power-cost adjustment mean? The glossary explains the main charges on your bill and helps you understand which costs are tied to energy use and which support the overall electric system.

10 Help, Tools and Member Programs

Connects you with tools and services that can help you manage your account. You can find energy-saving information, payment assistance resources, MyREC SmartHub account tools and details about optional programs such as The Power of Change.



Emergency Preparedness Is A Team Effort

Each September, National Preparedness Month serves as a reminder that preparation is a shared responsibility. REC, local emergency responders and member-owners all have a role in helping communities stay safe and recover when severe weather or other unexpected events occur.



Your Cooperative

REC prepares for emergencies throughout the year. Employees monitor forecasts and potential threats so crews, equipment and other resources are ready when needed. REC's Operations Center is staffed 24/7 managing around the clock recovery operations during major storms. See "Inside REC's System Operations Center" on page 21.

Preparation also means reducing risk before a storm arrives. Vegetation management, equipment inspections, pole replacements and system upgrades strengthen the electric system and help prevent avoidable outages. While no system can prevent every weather-related interruption, all this work supports safer, faster restoration.



Your Community

Emergency preparedness also depends on local emergency and first responder services, governments, nonprofits and neighbors — including organizations supported through REC donations and The Power of Change, which lets participating REC members round up their monthly electric bills to the nearest dollar to fund local grants.

Recent donations and grants have helped provide important response equipment. An REC donation to the Spotsylvania County Sheriff's Office supported the purchase of 116 LifeVac units, a simple-to-use device designed to help clear a blocked airway during a choking emergency. The Ruckersville Volunteer Fire Company received funding from The Power of Change for a gear extractor, a specialized washing system for protective equipment that helps firefighters clean their gear and stay ready for the next call.



Your Home

Every household needs a plan, too. Before an outage, assemble an emergency kit with water, ready-to-eat food, flashlights, batteries, medications, first-aid supplies, pet needs and important documents. Keep portable power banks charged and prepare any generator for safe outdoor use.

Stay connected by keeping your contact information current in MyREC SmartHub, enabling outage alerts and following REC on social media. During an outage, report it through [SmartHub](#), at [myrec.coop/out](#) or by calling [1-800-552-3904](#).

Always stay far away from downed lines and anything touching them. Assume every line is energized and call 911 to report immediate danger.

**National
Preparedness Month**

Preparedness Starts At Home



Preparedness Resources

- REC Outage Center: [myrec.coop/outagecenter](#)
- REC Outage Preparation and Storm Checklist: [myrec.coop/stormprep](#)
- FEMA Ready.gov: Make a Plan: [ready.gov/plan](#)
- FEMA Ready.gov: Build a Kit: [ready.gov/kit](#)

Ready

Prepare. Plan. Stay Informed.®

**BE READY
WITH A WHOLE-HOME
GENERATOR.**

Vividly Brighter

SALES

SERVICE

INSTALLATION

Behind the Scenes: Where Teamwork Keeps the Lights On



At any hour of the day or night, dozens of computer monitors glow inside REC's headquarters. From four dispatch stations, employees watch over thousands of miles of line, more than 100 substations, parts of 22 counties and more than 185,000 connections.

The unassuming room may seem calm on a day without outages or be filled with phone calls, radio chatter and overlapping conversations during a storm. Either way, the work never stops.

A lineworker may call in a repair. A contractor may need a section of line de-energized. An outage report may have arrived from a member. Elsewhere, electricity may need rerouting to prevent an interruption.

Keeping track of it all are the eight system operators who staff REC's System Operations Center. The center operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week, serving as a critical link between members, lineworkers, response crews and employees across the Cooperative.

"There's a lot going on here," said Anthony Childress, System Operations Supervisor. "And it's all focused on keeping lineworkers safe, keeping the lights on when we can and getting them back on as quickly as possible when they go out."

Safety is the team's first priority. When crews work on REC's system, these employees track where the crews are and what work is taking place. They coordinate when equipment must be de-energized, confirm protections and manage the system while work is completed. Lineworkers rely on operators to know the status of nearby equipment; operators rely on crews to report what they see and provide updates.

The team also coordinates maintenance, construction and contract work across REC's service territory. When possible, systems operators reroute electricity to reduce interruptions and keep power flowing to members. Technology provides a clearer view of the system, but experience and communication is critical.

"The System Operations Center is where information becomes action," said Arthur Wholey, Senior Director – Operations and Construction Services. "Our employees are monitoring the system, communicating with crews and helping make sure we have the right people and resources in the right places."

That role becomes especially important during severe weather. Members may see REC's yellow trucks on the road and

lineworkers repairing damaged equipment. Behind that visible response, System Operations Center employees connect member reports with information from crews and the electric system.

As outages occur, operators identify affected areas, communicate assignments and track restoration. They also update the tools members rely on, including text alerts, REC's online outage map and estimated restoration times. For a member without power, waiting for restoration may feel like nothing is happening. Yet inside the System Operations Center, employees are constantly receiving information, confirming details and coordinating people.

During major events, REC may bring in additional crews or request mutual aid. The System Operations Center coordinates those resources and restoration priorities, beginning with major parts of the system and working outward to restore the greatest number of members safely.

The System Operations Center is rarely visible, but its work touches every part of REC. At its center, a small team works around the clock to protect those on the grid and keep the lights on for members.



Hunt Safely: Before You Set Up, Look Up

Safe hunters identify their target, know what lies beyond it and stay aware of nearby people, roads, homes and livestock. Just as important is knowing what's overhead.

Look Up Before You Hunt

Before the hunt, scan for utility poles, electric lines, fiber-optic cable and communications equipment. A single shot can damage critical infrastructure, disrupt service for homes, farms, schools, businesses and emergency responders, and lead to costly repairs. In Virginia, it's also a crime to shoot at power lines.

Make overhead hazards part of scouting and setup. If a bird is on, near or crossing in front of a line, let it go. A safe shot requires a clear target, background and path — including the sky above.

Safety Starts Before the Hunt



Find the lines.

Note where electric, fiber-optic, phone and other communications lines cross or border the field.



Watch the flight paths.

Check tree lines, fence rows and open areas where birds may fly near wires.



Set no-shot zones.

Identify any direction where a shot could carry toward poles, lines, equipment, homes, roads, livestock or people.



Choose safe setups.

Do not position hunters beneath lines or where birds may cross in front of utility equipment.



Brief the group.

Make sure everyone knows where overhead hazards are and which directions are off limits.



Let close shots go.

Never shoot at a bird sitting on, flying near or crossing in front of a utility line.



John D. Hewa
President &
Chief Executive
Officer



Board of Directors
Michael W. Lindsay
Region I



Christopher G. Shippe
Region II



Darlene H. Carpenter
Region III



Sanford Reaves Jr.
Region IV



Randy Thomas
Region V



Linda R. Gray
Region VI



J. Mark Wood
Region VII



Eric Paulson
Region VIII



Eugene L. Campbell Jr.
Region IX

Local Pages Editor – Casey M. Hollins, CCC

Contact Information:
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Fredericksburg, VA 22404
800.552.3904 | office@myrec.coop

Rappahannock Electric Cooperative is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

RAPPAHANNOCK ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE PRESENTS

THE POWER OF COMMUNITY *tour*

SEPTEMBER

Sept. 5

Taste of the Mountains
Madison
9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Sept. 5

Orange Street Festival
10 a.m.-4 p.m.

Sept. 12

Together We Shine and Touch a Truck
Caroline
9 a.m.-1 p.m.

Sept. 17

Louisa Biz Expo
Louisa
4-7 p.m.

Sept. 19

Clarke County Farmers Market
8 a.m.-noon

Sept. 19

Top of Virginia Building Association Touch a Truck
Clarke
10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Sept. 19

DisAbility Resource Festival
Fredericksburg
11 a.m.-4 p.m.

Sept. 19

Mangohick Fire Department Car Show
King William
3-7 p.m.



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Big Risks on Back Roads

Farm equipment traveling rural routes poses dangers for farmers and motorists

by Nicole Zema, Virginia Farm Bureau Federation

King William County Farm Bureau president and lifelong farmer Charlie Piersa can see all the extra traffic on the road from his vantage point in the tractor cab.

He says farms are getting smaller, equipment is getting bigger and rural roads are becoming more congested as the area accommodates increasingly more residential development.

"I can see them coming," Piersa says. "Some drivers take the back roads at 60 mph, going around curves on the wrong side of the road. My front end was almost hit twice this year. Eventually, somebody won't be so lucky, because one of us will get hit."

According to the National Safety Council, approximately 15,000 farm vehicles are involved in highway crashes annually. By and large, incidents involving passenger vehicles and farm equipment occur most frequently between May and October, from the start of spring planting through the fall harvest.

Driver impatience is pervasive as Piersa moves equipment between fields. "They'll get behind you on the back road and blow their horn at you," he says.

SLOW THE ROLL

While it can be tempting to try to pass farm equipment, motorists should remember that it's illegal to pass on a solid yellow line, explains Matt Nuckols, Virginia Farm Bureau safety coordinator. Even when passing is permitted, he advises against it.

"Most of this equipment is not traveling very far," he says, "so if you do get behind one, just a little bit of patience can go a long way — because they're likely not going more than a mile or two."

Nuckols also urges motorists to slow down when approaching farm equipment and leave enough space to stop. Even with a vantage point, equipment operators cannot see drivers who are following too closely.

"There's no benefit to being right on top of a tractor or piece of farm equipment," he notes. "Just leave some extra space and remember that they will likely be turning pretty soon."

Piersa recalls a highway crash several years ago in which his agricultural equipment was hit by a wood truck.

He lost a planter and a tractor. There were no injuries, and the truck driver paid only a small fine. "Even though [the truck driver] was on the wrong side of the road, on a short curve over [double yellow] lines," Piersa says.

Other crashes involving farm equipment in the region have ended tragically, he says. Piersa wants motorists to consider the big picture when encountering farm equipment on roadways.

"Even though farmers are getting smaller as a group, and family farms are slowly disappearing," he says, "remember to respect the ones who are still putting the food on your table." ●

► Visit vafb.com/safety to learn more about the Virginia Farm Bureau Safety Program.



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Power in Reserve

How cooperatives are using energy storage to strategically support the grid

by Jack McCarthy, Contributing Writer

When you hear electric cooperatives talk about battery storage, they aren't talking about the drawer at the end of your counter reserved for AAA batteries, multicolored highlighters, paper clips and rubber bands.

Instead, they are talking about large battery systems that can store energy and deliver it when it is needed most. As utilities work to meet growing energy needs while maintaining reliability and affordability, battery storage is becoming an important tool — both for electric cooperatives and the members they serve.

BATTERIES AS A UTILITY ASSET

One of the biggest benefits of battery storage is its ability to help electric cooperatives manage periods of high electricity demand, often called peak demand.

Demand for electricity changes throughout the day. It usually rises during the hottest summer afternoons and coldest winter mornings, when homes and businesses are using the most power.

Battery systems can be charged when electricity demand is lower and then discharged during these high-demand periods. By supplying stored energy to the grid when it is needed most, batteries can help reduce the amount of power utilities must purchase from other sources. This practice, known as peak shaving, can help lower costs and provide savings for member-owners.

These batteries are often charged by renewable resources such as solar and wind. Batteries can store the energy renewables produce and release it later when demand increases. This makes renewable energy more useful and reliable by allowing electricity generated

during one part of the day to be used during another. While batteries will typically be paired with renewable sources, they don't have to be. Batteries can also operate independently — meaning they are not paired with any specific resource — and charged by the grid during periods of lower demand.

This strategic use of energy storage strengthens grid resilience, providing a faster response to the electric system during peak demand.

Batteries are not a new technology, but they have become less expensive and more advanced — and, therefore, more practical for utilities. In fact, battery storage is already playing a larger role on the electric grid. According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, utility-scale battery storage capacity in the U.S. grew by 66% in 2024, reaching more than 26 gigawatts. Distribution cooperatives throughout Virginia, Maryland and Delaware, as well as generation partners such as Old Dominion Electric Cooperative, are exploring and implementing battery projects in the coming years.

“Battery storage is a great example of how BARC is embracing innovation

For many member-owners, the biggest benefit of residential batteries is backup power.

while staying true to our mission,” says Chris Botulinski, chief operating officer at BARC Electric Cooperative, based in Millboro, Va. “As a not-for-profit cooperative, our members are at the heart of our mission. We're always looking for practical ways to improve reliability, strengthen the grid and keep costs manageable for our members, and battery energy storage systems are becoming an important part of that effort. In addition to improving reliability, batteries are a cost-effective, cost-saving technology, helping BARC manage power costs and provide savings for our member-owners.”

PART OF A BALANCED ENERGY PORTFOLIO

While batteries offer many benefits, they are not a silver-bullet solution to the region's current energy crisis.

Unlike a power plant, batteries do not create electricity. They only store energy that has already been generated elsewhere. Much like the battery in your phone, once a utility-scale battery is depleted, it must be recharged before it can be used again.

Because of the need to recharge them, batteries alone cannot meet



electricity needs during extended periods of extreme demand or prolonged weather events. For that reason, electric cooperatives and generation partners such as ODEC rely on a balanced portfolio of resources, including reliable, affordable and dispatchable natural gas that can produce electricity when communities need it most.

Battery storage works best as a complement to dispatchable resources, helping cooperatives use electricity more efficiently while maintaining reliability.

BATTERIES AS A MEMBER-OWNER ASSET

Battery storage is not limited to utility-scale projects. As technology improves, more homeowners and small businesses have begun installing battery systems, often complimenting rooftop solar panels.

For many member-owners, the biggest benefit of residential batteries is backup power. By acting like a generator, batteries can keep essential appliances, communications devices and other critical equipment running during outages.

Member-owned residential batteries also can provide benefits beyond the home or business where they are installed. In some cooperative-offered programs, residential batteries can

be called upon during periods of high electricity demand to discharge stored energy. Instead of generating or purchasing additional electricity during these peak periods, cooperatives can briefly draw on energy already stored in participating members' batteries. When many batteries work together, they can help reduce strain on the grid and lower overall peak demand.

When paired with rooftop solar, home battery systems can often provide several hours of stored energy, helping improve reliability while creating value for both the homeowner and the cooperative. Although the batteries are located in individual homes, the value they create can reach far beyond a single household. By working together, members with home battery systems can help improve reliability, reduce costs and strengthen the electrical system for their entire cooperative community. It's another way members can play an active role in supporting reliable, affordable energy in their communities.

"Delaware Electric Cooperative is continuously exploring innovative ways to keep electricity affordable for the members we serve," says Rob Book, DEC's president and CEO. "Our Beat the Peak with Batteries program reflects what makes the cooperative model unique. Members are not just consumers of electricity. They are active partners

in helping us manage demand and control costs. When members participate, the benefits extend beyond their own homes, helping create value for the entire cooperative and the communities we serve."

THE COOPERATIVE DIFFERENCE

Battery energy storage systems reflect the cooperative approach to serving members.

Because electric cooperatives are owned by the people they serve, investments in new technologies are evaluated based on the value they provide to members. The goal is not simply to adopt the latest technology, but to improve reliability, support affordability and meet future energy needs. What's best for member-owners at the end of the line guides every decision cooperatives make.

Whether installed at a utility-scale level to amplify the reliability of renewables or in a member's garage, battery storage offers another tool to help cooperatives serve their communities. As the energy landscape continues to evolve, battery storage is likely to play a growing role in helping cooperatives deliver the reliable, affordable power their members depend on every day. ●

POSITIVELY PICKLED

Zucchini Pickles

recipe courtesy of Jane Corliss, Front Royal, Va.

Ingredients:

4 lbs. tender zucchini or other squash	2 cups sugar
4 small onions	1 teaspoon celery seed
¼ cup salt	1 teaspoons turmeric
2 cups white vinegar	2 teaspoons mustard seed



Directions:

Wash and slice zucchini. Peel and quarter onions, then slice thinly. Combine vegetables with salt and enough water to cover. Let stand two hours, then drain thoroughly. Bring vinegar, sugar and seasonings to a boil. Add vegetables and boil for five minutes. Pack into sterilized jars and seal, then process for five minutes in a hot water bath. Makes 4 pints; recipe may be doubled or tripled.

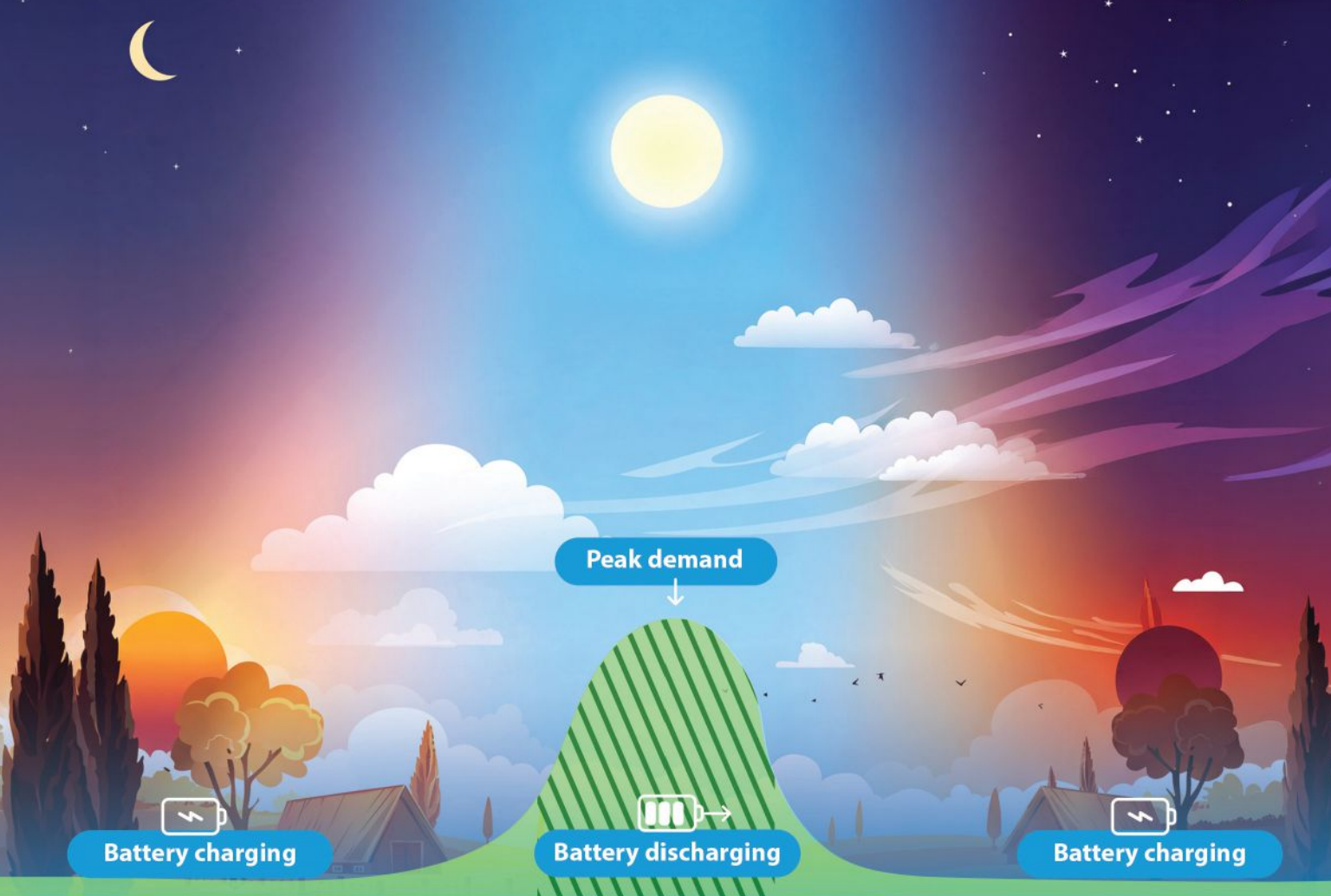
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Due to volume, we cannot guarantee publication of all recipes. Reader recipes are submitted in good faith. Cooperative Living cannot warrant results.



Utility-scale batteries and behind-the-meter storage

Batteries store electricity when demand is low and discharge it when demand is highest, working alongside natural gas, solar, and other resources to help meet member-consumer needs. Battery storage systems can help lower costs and provide savings for member-consumers.

 Energy demand

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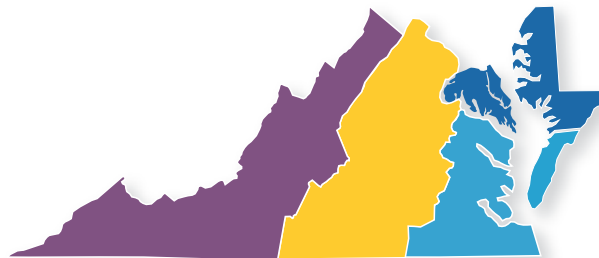
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Events Around the Area

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

SEPTEMBER

5 LURAY. 7th Annual Page Valley Sunflower Festival. Ralph H. Dean Park. 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Sglenn@townofluray.com.

12 BLACKSTONE. Family and Farm Day. 2375 Darvills Road. 9 a.m.-2 p.m. 434-818-5545.

20 MIDDLETOWN. Seafood Feast. Shaffer's BBQ & Market. 4 p.m. Bellegrrove.org

OCTOBER

2-3 HARRISONBURG. Virginia Mennonite Relief Sale. Rockingham County Fairgrounds. Times vary. Varelielsale.com

9-11 HIGHLAND COUNTY. Hands & Harvest Festival. Highlandcounty.org/hands-harvest-festival

PIEDMONT

SEPTEMBER

5 MADISON COUNTY. Taste of the Mountains Main Street Festival. Main Street. 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Madisonva.com

26 SPOTSYLVANIA. FXBG Fall Fairy and Dragon Festival. Mattaponi Winery. 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Fxbg-fairy-festival.com

26 CASTLETON. John Jackson Piedmont Blues Festival. Castleton Meadows. 10:30 a.m. 540-675-3619.

26 SOUTH BOSTON. Harvest Festival. Downtown South Boston. 9 a.m.-5 p.m. 434-575-4208.

26 POWHATAN. Good Medicine 5K and Fresh Start Fair. 2320 Skaggs Road. 8 a.m. Runsignup.com

26 FREDERICKSBURG. 328th Fredericksburg Dog Mart. 12400 Herndon Road. 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m. James.d.lloyd@hotmail.com.

OCTOBER

3 SPOTSYLVANIA. Gospel Sing. 6823 Partlow Road. 6 p.m.

3 BRISTOW. Youth for Tomorrow's Country Fair & Auctions. 11835 Hazel Circle Drive. 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Youthfortomorrow.org

10 HANOVER. Hanover Fields & Farms Tour. 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Visit 11 farms in the county. Hanoverfarmtour.com

10 KING GEORGE. Fall Festival. King George High School. 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Kgfallfestival.com

10-11 AMELIA COURTHOUSE. Harvest and Bluegrass Festival. Windsor Lavender Farm. 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Windsorlavenderfarm.com

TIDEWATER

SEPTEMBER

25-26 EMPORIA. The 64th Annual Virginia Peanut Festival. Veteran's Memorial Park. 434-634-9441. Virginiapeanutsfestival.com

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

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

27 ONANCOCK. An Afternoon at Bowman's Folly: Lecture on Gen. John Cropper. 2 p.m. 757-787-8012. Shorehistory.org

OCTOBER

9 ONANCOCK. Give Me Liberty: Patrick Henry Speaks. 5:30 p.m. 69 Market St. 757-787-8012. Shorehistory.org

10 ONANCOCK. Living History on the Lawn at Ker Place. VA Mobile Museum tours. 10 a.m.-4 p.m. 69 Market St. Shorehistory.org

10-11, 17-18, 24-25 WINDSOR. Haunted Barn & Hayride. 15209 Reuter Lane. 7-10 p.m. Hauntedbarnva.com

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Nov. 1 for Jan. 15-Feb. 28

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

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Too Cute

— to Handle —

by Laura Emery, Staff Writer

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DOUBLE TROUBLE ▲

Looks like 2-year-old Oaklynn found the perfect role model.

PHOTO SUBMITTED BY PAM COOK



▼ SMILES FOR MILES

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PHOTO SUBMITTED BY GRANDMOTHER TERESA MYERS



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PHOTO SUBMITTED BY TAYLORE LIFE

PEEK-A-BLOOM ►

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PHOTO SUBMITTED BY CAROLE DAVIS



◀ ON THE FENCE

Trace is still deciding where the fun is.

PHOTO SUBMITTED BY MORGAN WOODY

CELEBRATING

80

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, KERRY!



Rappahannock Electric Cooperative member Kerry Ellwanger, of Ruckersville, Va., is celebrating her 80th birthday on Sept. 24, making it a milestone year for both her and *Cooperative Living*. A devoted Christian, wife, mother and grandmother, Ellwanger enjoys singing in her church's choir, baking Christmas cookies, spending time with loved ones, tending to her plants and flowers, and watching *Wheel of Fortune* and *Jeopardy!*. Her daughter, Pamela Benson, says, "She reads every issue of *Cooperative Living* magazine."

Know someone turning 80 this year? Nominate them to be featured in *Cooperative Living* by emailing saycheese@co-opliving.com. Please send a photo of the individual being nominated, along with their birthdate and a short description about them.



WHEREZ IT?

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



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.



Rain or Shine | Free Admission

Details:
www.BestPARTVA.org
(804) 863-0212





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**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2026
10 A.M. – 5 P.M.**

Youth For Tomorrow Campus
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PREMIER FALL FAMILY FESTIVAL

Activities • Rides • Live Music • Great Food • Dock Dogs • Lumberjack Show