

# Sullivan County Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

**Sullivan County REC**  
 P.O. Box 65  
 Forksville, PA 18616  
 570-924-3381  
 1-800-570-5081  
 Email: [screc@epix.net](mailto:screc@epix.net)  
 Website: [www.screc.com](http://www.screc.com)

**Staff**

**John Lykens, CEO**  
**Dennis Klem, Manager, Finance and Administration**  
**Walt Tubach, Manager, Electric Operations**  
**Diane E. White, Executive Assistant**

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**Ann B. Henderson – CCD\*/BLC\*\***  
*Chairman*  
**Stephan Paul Brady – CCD/BLC/Gold\*\*\***  
*Vice Chairman*  
**Kathy A. Robbins – CCD/BLC/Gold**  
*Secretary*  
**David L. Aumen – CCD/BLC/Gold**  
**Karen Beinlich**  
**Jeff Hamilton – CCD/BLC/Gold**  
**Jim Lambert – CCD**  
**Jay Lewis – CCD/BLC**  
**David R. Rakestraw**

\*Credentialed Cooperative Director  
 \*\*Board Leadership Certificate  
 \*\*\*Director Gold Certificate

**Office Hours**  
 Monday through Friday  
 7 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

## From the CEO



### Let's talk, face-to-face

By John Lykens

IN MY last column, I ended by saying I look forward to meeting with and hearing from you, our members, as we begin this journey together. You, our members, play a significantly important role in the cooperative and the cooperative program. Together, the Sullivan County Rural Electric Cooperative (SCREC) Board of Directors, employees and members form three legs that support the cooperative “seat.” Take any one of these legs away from the seat, and the cooperative cannot stand. It takes all three to build a solid cooperative foundation.

In May, the cooperative celebrated its 85th anniversary with an open house. The cooperative doors were open to the membership and public from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Friday, May 27. This was an opportunity for members to get a glimpse into the cooperative’s operations, look at its 85-year-old history by means of photographs and newspaper articles dating back to 1937, engage with SCREC employees, ask questions, and get answers. For those members who participated in the open house, I believe everyone felt it was a worthwhile experience.

Each October since 2014, group of SCREC members, who are also part of Co-op Owners for Political Action (Co-op Owners), meet at the cooperative one evening to gain political insight on a state and national level from the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association, our statewide organization in Harrisburg. Our Co-op Owners

group has 65 members, whose participation helps rural electric cooperatives continue to serve our members without over-regulation from state and federal agencies. Members interested in learning more about Co-op Owners or joining the group should visit the cooperative’s website, [screc.com](http://screc.com), and select the “Co-op Owners for Political Action” pull-down menu on the homepage.

These are just a few examples of ways members can engage with cooperative employees and their elected board members to strengthen the cooperative. We believe member input and feedback is extremely important and crucial to the success of your cooperative. We are interested in hearing what things your cooperative does well; what things you believe the cooperative could improve; what additional services, if any, you’d like us to provide; and the myriad of other questions you’d like answers to.

I am personally committed to engaging with as many members as permissible throughout my tenure at SCREC. As I communicated to the board of directors during its CEO search, my preferred method of communication is face-to-face, verbal communication. To that end, I will be making time in my schedule to meet with members throughout our service territory in Sullivan, Lycoming and Bradford counties. My hope is that time will allow for impromptu meetings to engage with members of all rate classifications. Until then, have a great, safe summer. ☀

# All good things must end

By John Zelewicz  
Penn Lines Writer

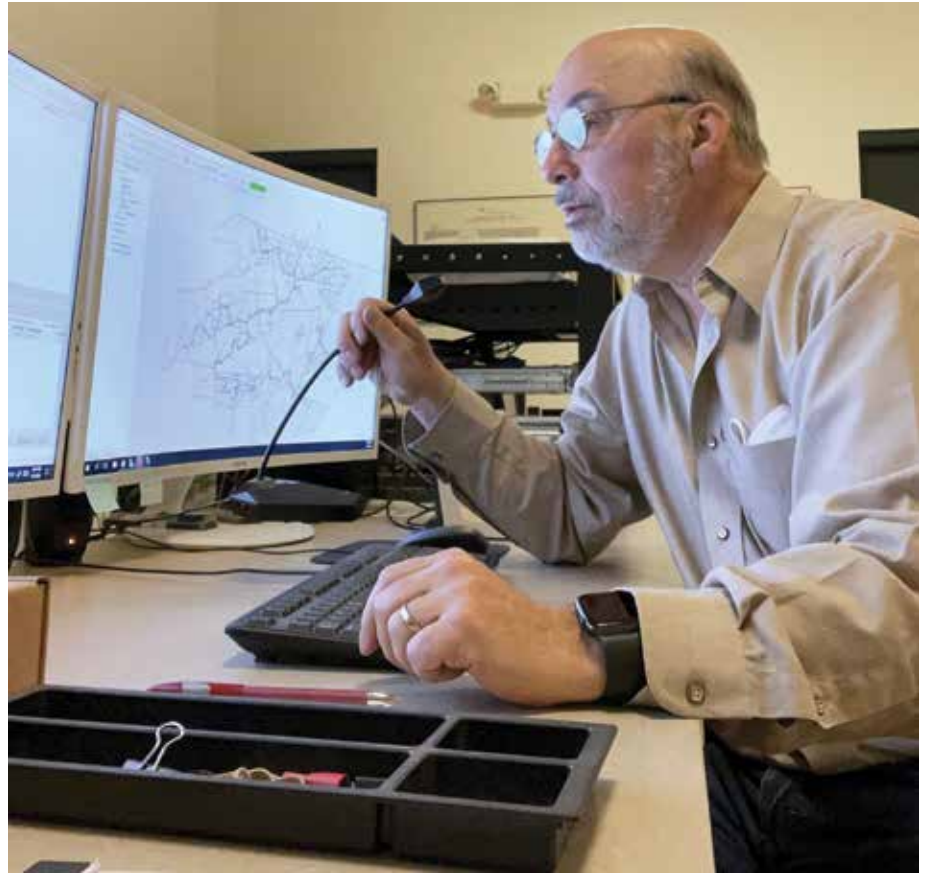
DECEMBER 26, 1985, is not a date that would have any significance for most people. But for me, it's a date that I will always remember. It's the first day I came to work at Sullivan County Rural Electric Cooperative (REC). I was hired primarily as a dispatcher, but my duties also included maintenance (cleaning the office, cutting grass, etc.) and answering the office phone after hours.

Originally, the co-op's General Manager Wesley Thomas handled outage calls after hours, on weekends and holidays. After Mr. Thomas, Ed Dezich was chosen to serve as general manager for the co-op. One of the first things he decided to do was hire a full-time dispatcher. It was natural they would look to the lineworkers for that position because they know the system like the back of their hand. And so it was that lineman Bill Weightman became our first official, full-time night dispatcher. When Bill retired, I assumed the position and have been dispatching ever since.

Back then, we didn't have the outage management system (OMS), and I had to handle each call manually. I would receive an outage call and get the member's name, phone number, and address. Once the call ended, I had to open my large print-out of members' names and look up the person's account so I could tell the lineworker on call where the outage was.

During a large outage, there were times when I found it almost impossible to dispatch crews. Every time I would hang up the phone to call a lineworker, it would ring again with another member reporting an outage. I know there may be some who don't like having to deal with an automated outage-reporting system, but it certainly makes it easier for those handling an outage.

In my second year, I took on the duty of writing the local pages for *Penn Lines*. While I can't give the exact



TIME FOR GOODBYE: Dispatcher and *Penn Lines* writer John Zelewicz retired July 5 after working for Sullivan County REC for 36 years.

figure, I believe I've written around 390 feature articles and about as many sidebar articles. I've written articles about events, such as the Pennsylvania Bowhunters Festival and annual meetings, and places like Worlds End State Park. I've written about interesting people, like Eloise Caseman who collected pencils, John Yonkin who owns and operates a drone, and, of course, about the occasional devastating storms that affected our members.

The only prerequisite I had when writing an article was that it had to do with a person or business on our system.

I'll let you in on a little secret (and make sure you don't tell anyone else): There were a few, rare occasions when I stretched that rule a wee bit to write about such things as the Sullivan Review in Dushore and the Eagles Mere

Toboggan Slide. Even though they weren't technically members of the co-op, I felt they affected co-op members in the area, and it was ok to write about them. But overall, I obeyed the rules and was fortunate enough to find interesting people, events and businesses to write about over the years.

## A sign of the times

When I first started writing for *Penn Lines*, people were more open and willing to allow me to write about them. They allowed me to share their hobbies and collections with our members. Over the years, however, people became hesitant. While they were more than happy to *tell* me about it, they didn't want me to *write* about it. I guess that shows how times have changed, even in rural areas like Sullivan, Lycoming and Bradford counties.



**MANY HONORS:** Throughout the years, John Zelewicz and other Sullivan County REC employees have received awards for articles they wrote for *Penn Lines*.

Back then, I also had a camera that used film. In fact, we only used black-and-white film. We kept up with changing times, though, and eventually used real honest-to-goodness color film. But it wasn't long before we went digital and watched as film cameras slowly faded away like eight-track tapes, flashbulbs, and VCRs. To be honest, most of the time now, I don't even use my digital camera because cellphones with their built-in cameras have come a long way since they first came out. Now, my digital camera is stuffed into a drawer, unseen and unused, but not forgotten. I've been fortunate enough to win several Stainbrook Awards and Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association Communications Awards for my writing over the years. This is something I've been very proud of, especially considering that we're one of the smallest electric co-ops around and writing for *Penn Lines* is something I have a limited amount of time to work on each month.

I've also been fortunate in getting to know many of our members personally. I've been deeply touched when over the years people have stopped me and asked, "Aren't you John Zelewicz? I love reading your articles in *Penn Lines*." I've tried to write articles that entertain and inform for *Penn Lines* and Facebook. I truly hope you've enjoyed them.

I've seen a lot of changes since I began working here at the co-op. I watched the old warehouse and pole yard in Forksville be torn down and turned into a park. I watched as two new warehouses and a pole yard were built by our office along Route 87, near Forksville.

I was here when our office underwent renovations and was extended and updated. At one time, my office consisted of a small room with a desk squeezed in between numerous file cabinets and one window that looked into the hallway. When the co-op building was redone, my office was

moved, and I enjoyed a large room with all the equipment I needed to handle outages. For years, we had our system maps pinned to the wall. When an outage occurred, we used yellow stickers to show where crews were, blue ones to note outages, and the dreaded pink stickers to indicate where there were problems, such as broken poles or downed wires. Now, I have several computer systems (IVR, AMR, and OMS) to help handle outages.

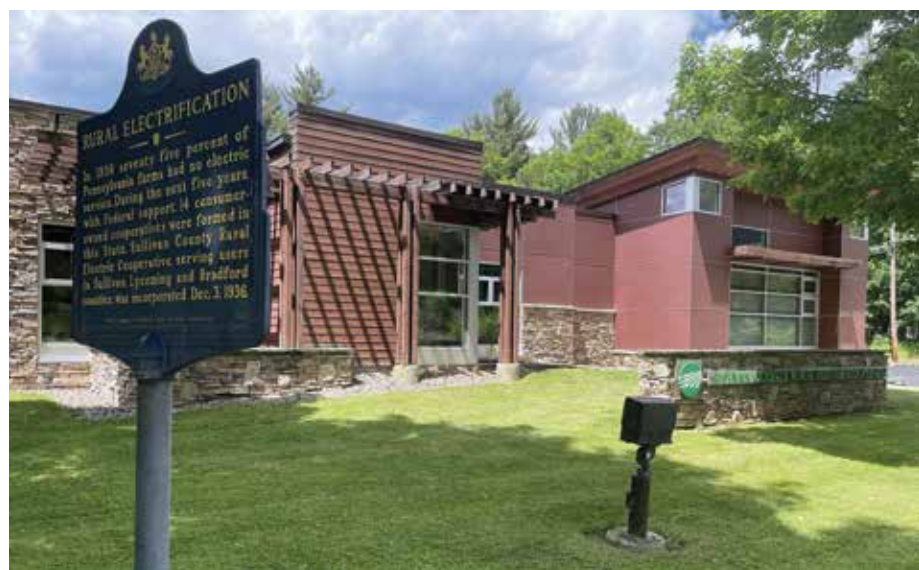
### Worked with wonderful people

One of the things I am most grateful for is the wonderful bunch of people I've had the pleasure to work with over the years: Heb McCarty, Jim Rinker, Russell Bennett, Mark and Emery Smith, John Miller, Ron McCarty, Ed Dezech, George Kline, Dennis Klem, Nancy Rosbach, Jeff Spako, Walt Tubach, Todd Molyneux, Nolan Chase, Kim Phillips ... the list goes on and on and is too long to mention everyone.

I'm thankful for all the lineworkers who made my job easier with their willingness to go out on outages no matter the time or weather.

If the truth be told, I don't think lineworkers get the recognition they deserve for the work they do ... especially during an outage. Lineworkers

*(continues on page 14d)*



**COOPERATIVE CHANGES:** A lot has changed in the 36 years since John Zelewicz joined the cooperative. Now, instead of handling outage calls manually, co-op employees rely on an outage management system. The co-op office has also been updated and expanded.

**All good things must end**

*(continued from page 14c)*

often work in horrific conditions, such as extreme cold, snow, flooding, ice, damaging wind and rain. I know how frustrating it is to be without power. Having electricity when needed is something we've all grown accustomed to, and when it goes out, it's frustrating and often uncomfortable, especially in winter. But lineworkers are dedicated individuals who give up sleep, meals and time with their families to get power back on for our members.

I've also noticed a change in our members over the years. The sad truth is, fewer people understand what it means to be an electric cooperative member.

Your co-op isn't run out of another state like some businesses are. No, your co-op is made up of people living in your community. Perhaps one of them may be your neighbor or someone who goes to your church, serves on the school board, or even has a child in a sports activity you attend.

Working at the co-op was more than a job for me. The office staff and lineworkers are more like family, and the co-op office was my second home. I spent many a night in my office hunched over outage maps or computers, keeping track of outages and our lineworkers, and doing all I could to keep them safe as they worked to get power back on.

And while I've enjoyed my 36 years at the co-op, the fact of the matter is, all good things must come to an end — and so it is for me. To many, 36 years may seem like a long time, but looking back, it seems as though those years flew by in the blink of an eye. All the people who were here when I started — save one — are no longer here. It's time to make room for someone else to handle my duties. I've decided to take off my co-op hat, turn in my bundle of office keys, shut down my computer and walk down the long office corridor and out the door one final time.

As the adage goes, "Parting is such sweet sorrow." Goodbye and thanks to everyone who made my years here memorable ones. ❁

**From the operations department**

By Walt Tubach

ABOUT 2 A.M. Tuesday April 19, the cooperative's dispatcher, John Zelewicz, called me and said we had numerous outages from the wet, heavy snow that was falling.

John asked me to go to the office and get into the outage computer to help him figure out what was wrong with the machine because he was having trouble getting the messages and calls at his home.



Walt Tubach  
Manager, Electric  
Operations

I went to the office and was quite surprised at the 8 to 10 inches of snow that already had fallen. Once I arrived, I could see on the map the number of outages were many and growing. I talked to several of my lineworkers out in the storm and found out they were having trouble getting around on the unplowed roads. On top of that, the weight of the snow had brought down trees over the line and many wires were broken.

I called Spako Tree Service and asked the owner, Jeff Spako, if he could bring in all of his employees to assist in the restoration process. Jeff and his crews are a vital extension of the cooperative line crews, not only helping with brushing each day, but also assisting with storm damage.

John and I talked on the phone, but we could not fix the outage computer at his house, so John drove in to help sort the outages and put a plan together. I called the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association's emergency line and asked for some line crews from our neighboring cooperatives to come and assist us with the

outage restoration, too. This is a wonderful tool the cooperatives have implemented to help a sister co-op out. It was not very long until I received a call back that a crew from Bedford Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) and New Enterprise REC would be coming to help us. Later that morning, those crews arrived, and I was able to split my line crews, which enabled us to go to several more outage areas faster.

All of these crews provided us with fantastic help, and they worked swiftly but safely to restore power. By midnight Tuesday, all the lineworkers were exhausted so I sent them to get rest. They returned to work at 6 a.m. Wednesday. We regrouped and sent them out to complete the restoration of the outages. All residential members had their power restored by 10 that evening, and only a handful of seasonal accounts were still out of power. During this storm, we had six broken poles and numerous damaged insulators and transformers. Spans of wire were also broken and spliced back together.

I want to thank everyone who had "boots on the ground" to help with the outages along with the office employees who answered hundreds of phone calls and questions and the members who were patient while enduring an outage.

The employees at Sullivan County REC do our best to deliver reliable electric and serve you day in and day out. Remember: We are only a phone call away if you need us.

I hope you have enjoyed reading my article about your electric system, the recent outage we incurred and the problems we faced. Please stay safe! ❁

**SULLIVAN COUNTY REC'S OFFICE  
WILL BE CLOSED MONDAY, SEPT. 5, IN  
OBSERVANCE OF LABOR DAY.**