

# Sullivan County Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

## Sullivan County REC

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### Staff

**Craig A. Harting**, CEO  
**Dennis Klem**, Manager,  
*Finance and Administration*  
**Walt Tubach**, Manager,  
*Electric Operations*  
**Diane E. White**, Executive Assistant

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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



# Thanksgiving in July

By Craig A. Harting

WE'VE ALL heard of "Christmas in July." I've always thought this idea was promoted by marketers trying to sell more products, but it turns out it started with a girls' summer camp in 1933 in North Carolina.

I love Thanksgiving so I got to wondering, why not Thanksgiving in July? A little research showed that I wasn't the only one. Turns out food companies and some other people have the same idea. Now, if I could just convince my wife!

In any event, I am thankful every day for the people I get to work with. This month I want to thank them for what they do each day and describe a little of what they do.

### Lineworkers

We'll start with the ever-popular lineworkers. These guys are the most visible of our group as they are out and about in the field each work day. Your first thought may be of them repairing outages, and this is the most important thing — especially if you are out of power!

There is a rotation of callouts so a lineworker is always available to take the call. However, no one goes alone as we always send two men to work on any problem. In a big storm, we may need to call for help from one of our sister rural electric co-ops.

On a daily basis they may be assigned to any number of tasks. They may set poles for a new service or replace an old pole. They may work on a system improvement project or per-

form one of many maintenance items. I am thankful for: **Todd Molyneux**, **Nolan Chase**, **Chad Phillips**, **Dave Kepner**, **Kendall Achey**, **Tom Livezey**, **Darrick Higley**, **Alex Laudermilch** and **Tyler Worthen**.

### Office employees


The office staff handles an enormous amount of work. They bill 6,000 accounts each month using the meter reading system to import readings. Sounds simple, but there are constant account changes with new names and meter changes for a number of reasons.

Then payments are opened (some are done online) and posted. Collection efforts are made in cases of non-payment. Vendors need to be paid for their products and services. Members' questions need to be answered and information provided on energy use and technology. Financial and other reports are filed with various authorities.

I am thankful for: **John Zelewicz**, **Diane Cusson**, **Tom Eberlin**, **Lori Williams** and **Kim Phillips**.

### Management

I am especially thankful to have a strong and effective management team with **Walt Tubach** as manager of operations and **Jeff Spako** as operations assistant. **Dennis Klem** is the manager of finance and administration, and **Diane White** is the executive assistant.

Now, if I could just get my wife to make me a pumpkin pie ... 

# Annual meeting online touches upon many topics

By John Zelewicz  
Penn Lines Writer

IT'S BEEN over a year since we first heard and saw the words "COVID-19" and "pandemic" splashed across the television screen, radio, internet, and newspapers. Our normal world came to a screeching halt as restaurants, movie theaters, parades, county fairs and more were limited by the number of people allowed to gather. And while things are looking better, it may be years before we get back to the way of life we had before.

For many years, Sullivan County Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) held its annual meeting at the Sullivan County Courthouse in Laporte before moving it to the Sullivan County High School in Laporte.

Of course, the pandemic changed the annual meeting, not only for Sullivan County REC, but for all electric cooperatives. Last year, Sullivan County REC held its first annual meeting online via Zoom, and this year was no different. This year's meeting was called to order at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, May 19, by board Chair Dave Aumen.

You may wonder why we have annual meetings. They are held to give members a chance to learn how the co-op is doing financially, what types of projects are in the wind and ask questions about the co-op. Basically, it's a time to let members know where the co-op is now and what it is doing to prepare for the future.

## Voting by mail ballots

In past years, the annual meeting provided an opportunity for members to vote for directors who would represent them. Since 2015, however, ballots have been mailed to members for the election of directors. Once ballots are mailed back, the Credentials & Election Committee is convened to tally the ballots and authenticate the director election.

At this year's annual meeting, Sulli-



HISTORY: Originally, the co-op's annual meeting was held at the Sullivan County Courthouse in Laporte. Later, meetings were held at the Sullivan County High School. Due to COVID-19, the past two annual meetings were held online via Zoom.

van County REC attorney Robert W. Chappell was on hand to report on the results of the 2021 director election as follows:

### District 3:

James Lambert received 616 votes

### District 4:

Jeff Hamilton received 970 votes

### District 8:

David Aumen received 983 votes

### District 7:

David Rakestraw received 1,009 votes  
(special election)

After welcoming everyone to the annual meeting, Aumen recognized former District 2 Director Wayne Gavitt.

"I would like to recognize Wayne Gavitt for serving as a director for 45 years," he said. "Wayne served from 1976 until 2021, and just recently retired in May."

Over the years, Gavitt served as board chair five times and board vice

chair three times. Gavitt also served as the co-op's delegate to the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association (PREA) for 22 years. In 2010, he was awarded the PREA Miracle Mile Eminent Service Award.

Aumen spoke briefly about how it came to be that the annual meeting was being held online. The board will continue to study options and review whether or not annual meetings will continue to be held online or go back to being in-person events.

Touching upon financial matters, Aumen explained that the co-op was working to reach an equity level of 40% or greater. In 2020, equity was at 36% and it has continued to grow over the years. He also spoke about the possibility of a rate increase in 2022.

"Our last rate increase was 2017," he said. "Due to rising costs, we may need to raise rates again in 2022. I just wanted to let members know that this is something that is being looked at and discussed."

## Harting to retire

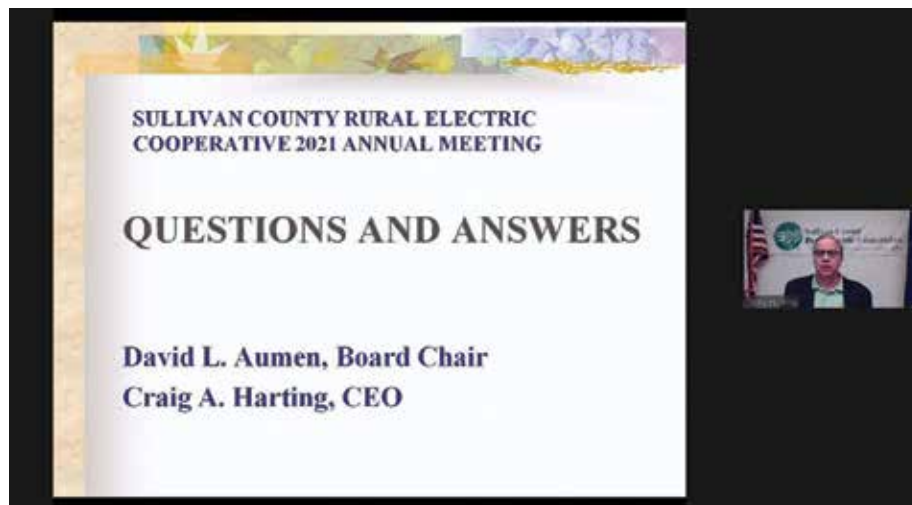
One of the topics touched upon by Aumen was the pending retirement of co-op CEO Craig Harting. Harting is planning to retire in the spring of 2022. The board will begin the process of looking for a new CEO this fall with the help of a consultant.

Harting touched briefly upon his future retirement.

“I will be retiring next spring, just a little over a year from now,” he said. “I expect it will be a smooth transition. Right now, I’m looking forward to another productive year.”

He also discussed the impact COVID-19 has had at the co-op.

“Last year, COVID-19 changed the way we operated and the way we scheduled our work,” Harting said. “Thankfully, we were able to deliver services and outage restoration seamlessly. As a result of COVID-19, more people have been availing themselves



MEMBER PARTICIPATION: Co-op members who attend the online annual meeting can ask questions. Here, CEO Craig Harting answers a question put forth by a member concerning outages.

of our Helping Hand Fund. We’re pleased to see people taking advantage of it because that’s what it’s there for.”

Sullivan County REC established the Helping Hand Fund to assist members who experience an economic hardship or tragic loss. Members can print out an application online at the co-op’s website or contact the office for an application.

Harting encouraged members to donate their capital credits checks to the fund, if so inclined. Anyone wishing to do so just needs to write the word “Donated” across the face of the check, sign their name under the word “Donated” and return the check to the co-op.

Harting reported new service construction was up about 50% and more than 100 poles were replaced last year. The co-op continues to upgrade its lines and electrical equipment to ensure reliable service and to backfeed power from one substation to another when needed.

The topic of outages and what causes them was discussed.

“While the number of outages was down last year, the length of outages was up a little bit,” he said. “The reason for outages varies from year to year. Last year, 26% of outages were due to power supply, 22% by trees, 16% due to equipment failure and 6% were due to unknown causes. This could be due to tree limbs or animals causing outages, but the linemen don’t find an exact cause for the outage. Our aggressive right-of-way program helps keep outages down.”

## New website

Harting noted that the co-op has updated its website, [screc.com](http://screc.com). Members can find information concerning capital credits, sign up for paperless billing and even see where outages are located.

“During an outage, members want to know where the outage is, the number of people out and where the crews are working,” he said. “The outage viewer provides the best source of information to use during a storm. Crews do the best they can do, but they can only fix one problem at a time. They clean up one area before moving off to the next area.”

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:32 p.m. by the board chair. 🌞



2021 ANNUAL MEETING: Board Chair Dave Aumen calls the 2021 annual meeting to order and discusses a wide range of topics, including next year’s retirement of CEO Craig Harting.



# The heat is here

PEOPLE are individuals with likes and dislikes. Some people eagerly look forward to winter. They love to ice fish, ski, go snowmobiling and even make snow angels. Then there are those who hate winter and eagerly look forward to sweltering days where they can lay out in the sun drinking an ice-cold iced tea or enjoy swimming in a pool or the nearest creek.

Well, it's that time of year that many refer to as the "dog days of summer."

You may have heard that phrase before, but do you know where it came from? It is used to describe the period between July 3 and Aug. 11. It's a time when we normally experience the most oppressive temperatures of the summer.

That phrase is actually a reference to the time period when the sun occupies the same region of the sky as Sirius. Sirius is part of the constellation Canis

Major, the Great Dog, and it rises and sets with the sun. The Ancient Romans believed that due in part to how bright Sirius is, it gave off heat and added to the sun's warmth. The Romans referred to this period as *dies caniculares*, or dog days.

But no matter what you call it, the fact remains that it's one of the hottest times of the year. If you're lucky enough, you may have a swimming pool to jump in, or it's even better if you have a nearby friend or family member with a pool.

But what can you do to help stay cool and save electricity? Well, I'm glad you asked. Here are some tips to help you do that:

- ▶ Keep curtains and blinds closed during the hottest part of the day.
- ▶ Use the clothes dryer and oven during the cooler parts of the day.
- ▶ Use bathroom and kitchen fans to

remove heat and humidity produced by cooking and bathing.

- ▶ Try to prepare meals that require minimal cooking. Or try to use a microwave or cook the meal outside on a grill.
- ▶ Turn off lights in unoccupied rooms and unplug unnecessary electronics.
- ▶ If you have a ceiling fan, have it spin counter-clockwise to help push down cooler air.

The fact of the matter is that the dog days of summer will pass before you know it and cooler days will arrive with the return of autumn. In the meantime, sit back in a shady spot, hope for a cool breeze and enjoy a nice glass of ice-cold lemonade. Heck, before you know it, you'll be pulling out your winter clothing and trying to keep warm during the winter months that will inevitably return. 🌞

## Youth Tour students receive educational grant

STUDENTS are selected from Sullivan County Rural Electric Cooperative's (REC) member families each year to represent your co-op at the annual Youth Tour held in Washington, D.C. This year's Youth Tour was canceled due to safety reasons related to the pandemic.

The origin of this annual event was in 1957 when then-U.S. Sen. Lyndon B. Johnson spoke to electric cooperative leaders and encouraged them to sponsor teenagers to visit the nation's capital to learn about government. The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) began coordinating the program in 1964.

The Sullivan County REC Board of Directors decided to give each of the following students an educational opportunity grant this year since they will not be able to attend the 2021 Youth Tour:

Alice Polcrack, a student at Sullivan



County High School, is the daughter of Jane and Erik Polcrack. She is vice president of her class, participates in band and choir, and is a member of the Skiing Club, Cooking Club, FBLA, Student Government, and National Honor Society. She also participated in the Scholarship Challenge. She has been a 4-H member since 2013 and is currently president of the 4-H County Council. She has volunteered at the Animal Care Sanctuary since 2020. Her career goal is to become a genetic counselor or work in medical policy.



Alice Polcrack

Hunter Markel, a student at Montoursville Area High School, is the daughter of Karena and Scott Markel. She has been on the Honor Roll since 2018 and is



Hunter Markel

a member of Rho Kappa (social studies honor society), Mu Alpha Theta (mathematics honor society), and the English and Spanish honor societies. She is also a member of Spanish Club and Key Club and is on the yearbook staff. Her career goal is to become a physician or physician assistant.



Amber Rzeplinski

Amber Rzeplinski, a student at Montoursville Area High School, is the daughter of Jackie and Cletus Schuler. She is a member of the National Honor Society, the National Art Honor Society, and Rho Kappa because of her overall academic achievement and her excellence in the field of social studies. Her career goal is to become an English professor.

We at Sullivan County REC would like to congratulate these three students and wish them well in their future endeavors. 🌞