

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

From the CEO



Here we go again

By Craig A. Harting

THE STORMS of Aug. 12 and 13 were unusual. Three waves in 26 hours left us with a big mess. We started calling for back-up crews after the second wave on Thursday evening, but other co-ops were busy working on their own problems.

Fortunately, by Friday morning, Valley REC, Somerset REC and Well-sboro Electric were able to send a crew each. A fourth crew came from a contractor, Everhart & Hoover, which was engaged to start a project for us the following Monday.

Takes long

We apologize for any inconvenience this outage caused you. We fully understand your problems as a number of the lineworkers did not have power for several days and suffered the same issues you did.

We need to follow all safety protocols in our work. First, we need to open and ground the lines for protection. Then we patrol, find the problem, repair the lines (hopefully, a pole isn't broken), remove the grounds and re-energize.

Your calls of trees on lines and lines down are very helpful, and we thank you for reporting those on our outage line, 570-924-3418. This helps to shorten outage time. *However, always stay away from trees touching lines and any lines down. Never assume lines are dead.*

Be prepared

We prepare year-round by clearing rights-of-way and maintaining lines. We average over 10,000 trees cut per year and trim another 8,000 trees per year. Unfortunately, most outages are caused by trees uprooting or breaking in half — trees you cannot predict before the storm — but a clear right-of-way greatly reduces the restoration time.

We also have an aggressive line maintenance program with regular line inspections and preventative repairs, annual pole inspections and replacements, and circuit breaker maintenance.

You, too, need a plan, and many of you have a generator, which is great. However, make sure you are connecting it properly so no lineworkers get hurt. Call our office at 570-924-3381 if you have any questions or would like to purchase a Generlink switch from us.

Is your power back on? Check your meter to see if it has a kilowatt-hour (kWh) reading. No power means no kWh reading. If you have a Generlink switch, it has a green light to indicate power is back on and you can disconnect your generator.

Your support

I can't thank you enough for your support, and the lineworkers appreciate the encouragement you offer during these tough times and long hours. We come back from the field with stories of your support and help. We are humbled to be able to serve you. 

Camp F.L.E.A. opens the outdoors to children

By John Zelewicz
Penn Lines Writer

LIVING in rural Pennsylvania, we sometimes take a lot for granted. In the hustle and bustle of everyday living, we get acclimated to the beauty that surrounds us. And yet, there are those who don't often have an opportunity to get outdoors and enjoy all the wonders that many experience but don't always appreciate. Camp F.L.E.A. (Family Life Enrichment Adventure) provides a chance to do just that for at-risk children.

"A lot of kids don't have the opportunity to have outdoor experiences," explains Lisa Wilcox, director for Sullivan County Children and Youth Services. "Some can't afford it, and others just don't have anyone to do it with. All kids need support, and need adults in their lives. We show them how to get along with other kids, work on team building, and encourage them to stay away from doing drugs and alcohol. They learn while having fun."

Camp F.L.E.A. started thanks to Bradford County Sheriff Steve Evans and Sullivan County Sheriff Burton Adams. They wanted to create a free, family-focused camp, modeled after Camp Cadet, another program for children in Pennsylvania that encourages them to build positive relationships with law enforcement. The pair worked with Bradford and Sullivan County's Children and Youth Services to start the camp in 1998. Over time, Camp F.L.E.A. has evolved to what it is today. The program is free of cost to all



CAMP FUN: Kathryn Allen from Clyde Peeling's Reptiland shows campers a wide variety of animals, such as turtles, snakes, an iguana ... and even an alligator.

eligible Bradford and Sullivan County children, ages 9 to 12.

"They tried to make it a camp for families, but that didn't work," Wilcox says. "Parents couldn't or wouldn't come, so they would substitute someone else like a grandparent. Sometimes, both parents and guardians would come with the child, but now the camp is just for kids. We do want to have families involved, so we have events where families are invited to attend like the fishing event, parent program and graduation."

Camp Brulé chosen to host Camp F.L.E.A.

The camp is held at Camp Brulé in Sullivan County. Sheriff Evans selected Camp Brulé because it had everything that was needed.

"We were happy that they chose Camp Brulé because it's close by for us," Wilcox notes. "When the Boy Scouts shut down summer camping [there], we had to look at other sites as there was an uncertainty as to what was going to be done with it. Fortunately, we are able to continue renting the facility."

The camp was held July 14-17 this year. Originally, the camp was held in August because that was the only time the camp was available.

Camp F.L.E.A. has teams with several leaders who guide the campers in activities, such as team- and self-esteem-building activities. There are also programs presented by various community agencies that teach skills to help campers make healthy choices regarding drug and alcohol use, internet safety, bullying, and even healthy eating.

They say that no two snowflakes are the same ... and so it is with children. Some children have special needs and receive mental health services. That's why the camp ensures there is enough support staff to fill the needs of the kids attending.

Staff always on hand

"There is a requirement of staff-to-camper ratio, but we go beyond that," Wilcox notes with a smile. "We have one staff member to three campers, sometimes one staff to two campers. Some campers have special needs, and we may have one staff member per one



THE GREAT OUTDOORS: Campers have the opportunity to enjoy the great outdoors in Sullivan County. Part of the experience includes sleeping outdoors in Army tents.

camper. There is always a lot of adult staff around ... we haven't lost one yet."

Volunteers have to be 18 or older, and everyone has to have clearances. The No. 1 priority for camp staff is to ensure that the campers are safe and have a good time.

"We have some volunteers who stay at the camp overnight. Some who live in the area may go home at night," Wilcox says. "We try to have the same staff members there every day so campers can become familiar with them, relate to them and talk to them. If you have staff that keeps changing, it can be harder for the children to relate to them."

Campers have the opportunity to see what it's like to camp in the great outdoors. Pull into the parking lot of the camp, and you may feel as though you've just entered a military base as your eyes scan row upon row of Army tents.

"Campers stay in standard Army tents and sleep on cots," Wilcox says. "They may be unfamiliar with camping at first, but they learn how to stay dry in the tent and to keep the flap shut if it rains. It takes a little time for them to get used to spiders and things like that."

Of course, what camp would be complete without such outdoor activities as camping, swimming, boating and crafts.

One of the most popular activities is fishing. To ensure that campers have an opportunity to enjoy the outdoors and fishing, children are provided with fishing equipment to use during camp and beyond.

"We give free gear to the kids that they can take home once camp has end-



A CAMP HIGHLIGHT: One of the highlights at Camp F.L.E.A. is the fishing event. Campers are allowed to keep their fishing poles and equipment so they can continue to enjoy fishing long after camp is over.



AN OPPORTUNITY: There are many children who are unable to go camping. Camp F.L.E.A., however, provides an opportunity for at-risk children to do so.

ed," Wilcox says. "This year, they got a fishing pole and tackle box with sinkers, bobbers and hooks ... everything they need to fish, except worms. Giving something like fishing gear to the kids is a way to promote a positive activity for them and their family to do together."

This year, Camp F.L.E.A. welcomed 39 campers. Sometimes, there may be more than one child from a family. One year, three children from one family came to camp. With everything going on in the country with COVID-19, it was uncertain how many children would be coming to camp this year.

"We didn't think we would have any campers coming this year, but ended up with more than we expected," Wilcox says. "Last year, it just wasn't possible to have the camp. Even this year, there may be families that weren't as comfortable with sending their kids. One of the requirements is that the children have to get a physical and have a note from the doctor saying that they're physically able to participate at camp."

Spaces are limited

The camp can only support a certain number of campers, so spaces are limited. For many, the camp is an exciting time in their lives, and some return the following year. Some of the campers have enjoyed the camp so much that when they're older, they come back to serve as staff members.

At one time, organizers would seek donations to support the camp, and while some organizations still make donations, those funds are primarily used now to support the campers.

"We used to seek donations, but don't have to do that anymore," she says. "The camp is budgeted in the

Bradford County budget, and we put in a lot of staff time. Some groups, like the Kiwanis, still support the camp and that makes it possible to give the kids things they can keep like the fishing gear and blankets ... that sort of thing."

Camp is over. The tents have been taken down and stored for next year. The buildings have been swept out, the windows closed and the doors locked. The sound of the last vehicle leaving has faded, and dust from the dirt road has settled down once more. But for those associated with Camp F.L.E.A., it's time to start planning for next year. They started meeting in August to discuss next year's event and look for anything that can be done to improve the camp.

"Normally, we start having meetings right after camp, but we're very busy right now," Wilcox says. "We're doing inventory. We have a list of improvements to look over and will be meeting with staff and volunteers to see how things went and see what, if anything, we can do better. Later on, we'll meet monthly and, as we get closer to camp, we'll begin to meet bi-weekly."

For those interested in more information about Camp F.L.E.A., you can visit the Sullivan County Pennsylvania Children and Youth Services website at sullivancounty-pa.us/offices/children-youth.

You can also contact the following agencies:

- ▶ Bradford County Children and Youth Services, 220 Main St., Unit No. 1, Towanda, PA 18848 or call 570-265-1760.
- ▶ Sullivan County Children and Youth Services, 9219 Route 487, Suite D, Dushore, PA 18616 or call 570-928-0307. 🌞

Don't be shocked this Halloween!

By John Zelewicz
Penn Lines Writer

THE MOON shines brightly in the night sky. A cool breeze blows, and leaves dance across the yard and down the street. The smell of wood smoke and burning leaves is carried on the wind. There's little doubt that soon ghosts, zombies, witches or, perhaps, a cowboy or fairy princess will walk upon the Earth ... even in your own neighborhood!

Yes, Halloween will soon be here. If you have any doubt, just walk into any department store, and you'll find aisles filled with Halloween candy and decorations to adorn your home or yard.

Halloween is a holiday that's really gotten popular over the years. Growing up, the decorations we had for our home were much simpler than the ones you'll find today. We had cardboard witches and ghosts that we'd hang in the windows. We also had an orange plastic witch that would light up. The only outdoor decoration we had was the traditional pumpkin carved into a jack-o'-lantern with flaming eyes and a ghastly smile.

But those decorations have faded away over the years. Today, people really get into decorating for Halloween. You can spend a lot of money buying Halloween decorations. Many displays are high-tech with the type

of visual and audio displays you'd expect to find at a large amusement park.

Many of these decorations run on electricity, and while they add a festive air to the holiday, they also pose the added danger of electrocution and fire. When planning your haunted house this Halloween, be sure to follow the safety tips listed below.

Inspect: Carefully inspect each electrical decoration. Check for cracked or frayed sockets, loose or bare wires, and loose connections. If you find any of these problems, the best thing to do is simply throw the decoration away.

Secure: Be sure to carefully secure outdoor lights to trees, exterior home walls or other sturdy supports to protect the lights from wind damage. When securing decorations, be sure to use only insulated staples, not nails or tacks. Be careful when securing decorations to ensure that you don't staple through lights or extension cords. Damaged wires could lead to electrical shock or fire.

Think ahead: You may put your decorations up on a nice sunny, warm day, but living in northeast Pennsylvania, you can bet there's a good chance



AVOID A SCARE: Be safe while decorating for Halloween.

that by the time Halloween is over, snow may be on the ground. Make sure extension cords are placed so they don't run through water or snow on the ground.

When using outside decorations or extension cords, make sure they're UL-rated for outdoor use. Never put more than three standard-size sets of lights on a single extension cord. Just like you do at Christmas, always turn off decorations before leaving home or going to bed.

Use GFCIs: For added protection, plug outdoor electric lights and decorations into circuits protected by ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs). If your outside receptacle doesn't have one, you can buy portable, outdoor GFCIs where electrical supplies are sold. If you plan to put up outside decorations throughout the year, you can have a qualified electrician install a GFCI permanently for you.

By making sure decorations are in good condition and rated for outdoor use and using GFCIs, you can help ensure that the only thing you have to be scared of this Halloween is running out of candy when trick-or-treaters come to your front door. ⚡



Electric co-ops were local before it was cool!

All co-ops exist to meet a community need. We're proud to be homegrown.