

CHOPTANK ELECTRIC  
**Cooperative Living**



**BLAZING  
IN BOTETOURT**

PAGE 10

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Watering chores, water bills! Sweating behind a roaring mower!  
Spraying poison chemicals and digging weeds...



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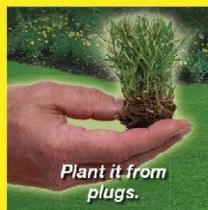
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1100	+400	10	\$110.00	\$40.00	32%
2000	+1000	20	\$180.00	\$65.00	46%
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Super Plugs	Free Plugs	Tray	Your PRICE	+Shipping	SAVINGS
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25	+5	2	\$ 42.50	\$20.00	25%
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**LUCKY CHARM.**  
Rily's first St. Patrick's Day, and she's milkin' it. Photo submitted by Allison Dean.



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**SWEET BLISS.**  
A sundown reflection off the ice and a painting in the sky. Photo submitted by Donald Moore.



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COVER: VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTER AND EMT LAURA KATE JENNINGS-BRINK DISPLAYS HER YELLOW HELMET. PHOTO COURTESY BOTETOURT COUNTY.

Correction: The front cover photo of the Jan.-Feb. issue of Cooperative Living was incorrectly credited to photographer Randy Walker. It should have been credited to photographer Lisa Carter. The photo was a composite image that should not have appeared in the magazine. Cooperative Living regrets the errors and apologizes to Lisa Carter.

**VIEWPOINT**

**Celebrating Spring**

**M**arch is a month that officially welcomes spring and starts transitioning away from colder weather. In my younger years, it meant getting ready for outdoor sports like baseball and soccer. Then in my later years, it meant preparing to coach those sports for my children.

In this edition of *Cooperative Living*, we celebrate Women's History Month, which is recognized annually in March. Our cover story highlights a group of female firefighters in and around Botetourt County who help hold an annual Girls' Fire Camp showing young ladies what it is like to be firefighters and paramedics, opening their perspectives about those career paths.

This issue also features the story of Virginia State Police 1st Sgt. Dylan Davenport; the first Black woman to be



appointed area commander of the VSP's Area 44 office serving Caroline and King George counties. As a little girl growing up in Brooklyn, N.Y., Davenport says she had no idea that one day she'd be making history in Virginia.

The agriculture industry plays a big role in our cooperative service territories, so we wanted to include a feature on Agriculture Week, which is recognized March 21-27. The article illustrates what it is like to be a Maryland farmer in the 21st century and gives a detailed history of a modern farm and what it takes to run it.

I hope everyone gets a chance to enjoy this springtime weather and all the outdoor activities it brings. ●

*Brian S. Mosier*

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

# Cooperative Living

Vol. 78, No. 3 • ISSN 1529-4579

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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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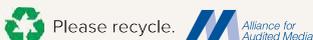
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COOPERATIVE LIVING (USPS 473-300) is published 10 times a year, monthly except for combined January/February and November/December issues, by the VMD Association of Electric Cooperatives. POSTMASTER, address changes should be sent to: Cooperative Living, 4201 Dominion Boulevard, Suite 101, Glen Allen, VA 23060, (804) 346-3344. Periodicals Postage paid at Glen Allen, VA, and additional mailing offices. Subscription: \$5.69 per year for members of subscribing co-ops; \$10 per year for all others.

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## Giving Back

*REC donates parade prize money to food pantry in Orange*



Jeff Henry, director of member services and community relations at REC's Culpeper office and JoAnn Tolbert, board director at Love Outreach Food Pantry of Orange County.

**IN THE SPIRIT OF COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLE NUMBER 7: CONCERN FOR COMMUNITY,** Rappahannock Electric Cooperative recently donated \$500 to the Love Outreach Food Pantry of Orange County. The money represented the cash prize REC received for winning first place in the Town of Orange Holiday Parade with their festively adorned bucket truck. REC coordinated with the Rotary Club of Orange County, which awarded the prize, to ensure the money went to a group that would help the community.

"We felt it was the right thing to do — to donate this money back into the community," says Jeff Henry, director of member services and community relations at REC's Culpeper office. JoAnn Tolbert, board director at the food pantry, added, "It's quite a blessing. It shows us how much REC cares about the community and Orange County."

Tolbert noted that the \$500 will allow the pantry to help feed 300 families in Orange County for a month. ●

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# Rewarding Challenges

by Jim Robertson, Staff Writer

*World traveler finds fulfillment in serving others*

“We’re not trying to make money off our neighbors. We’re just trying to provide the best service we can to our members, and we’re trying to be as frugal with that money as we possibly can,” says Chris Botulinski, chief operations officer at BARC Electric Cooperative in Millboro, Va.

Raised in a military family, home for Botulinski changed several times, taking him throughout the U.S. and around the world. His life began in Japan before relocating to Fort Meade, Md. The next couple years included some bouncing back and forth between Pearl City, Hawaii, and Goodfellow Air Force Base in San Angelo, Texas. He describes his middle school and early high school years in Rota, Spain, as “amazing.”

Returning to Fort Meade, where he graduated from Meade High School, Botulinski began his college career at the University of Maryland with little or no direction and later transferred to the University of Alaska Fairbanks, where he earned a degree in electrical engineering with a power emphasis.

## A CAREER BEGINS

Botulinski began his professional journey with Copper Valley Electric Association, a sparsely populated electric cooperative with a large service area in southern Alaska. “One of the best experiences up there was just learning what a cooperative is, what it means to work for a co-op. I had no idea, until then, what it meant to serve the members,” says Botulinski. During his time with CVEA, he served in



“I didn’t realize how much I missed working at a co-op until I got back into it.”

— Chris Botulinski

the roles of system engineer, manager of engineering and manager of transmission and distribution.

With no prior knowledge of electric cooperatives or how they function, Botulinski was relieved to learn that co-ops operate as not-for-profit utilities. That fact may have come as a shock, but he also finds it refreshing to know that community-focused organizations still exist and continue to provide a high level of service.

“I quickly understood we work for the member-owners,” admits Botulinski. “We serve them. We have our jobs because of their willingness to create that cooperative many years ago, and we continue to improve and maintain that system.”

After dedicating ten years to CVEA, he moved away from cooperatives for four years. First, as site power engineer at a large aluminum smelter in Queensland, Australia, for a year and then as electrical operations engineer and manager for a photovoltaic solar company, SunPower, in Austin, Texas. He gained better understanding of large-scale utility projects and how renewable generation sources interact with the electric grid.

Glad to return to the cooperative community, Botulinski served as vice president of engineering for Southwestern Electric Cooperative



Scan to read more about Chris' interesting journey to BARC.

**POWERFUL CAREERS**

in Greenville, Ill. “I didn’t realize how much I missed working at a co-op until I got back into it,” he says. Most co-op employees describe their fellow employees as family.

Expanding his knowledge of substation and line transmission construction in Illinois led to relocating once more to the mountains of Virginia to serve the members and employees of BARC Electric Cooperative as chief operations officer. He oversees the daily engineering and operations activities of the co-op’s electric system in addition to managing a fully owned fiber broadband subsidiary, BARC Connects.

“This throws another fantastic challenge into my career,” says Botulinski, who was unfamiliar with running a broadband service provider, “and now greatly expanding my knowledge of what it takes to operate a [broadband] system on top of the electric system.”

## ADVICE FOR CAREER SEEKERS

“The big difference in an electric co-op is you are not a number,” Botulinski stresses. “You are an individual, and management cares about you. We celebrate each other’s successes, and we share in defeats.”

Botulinski encourages all job seekers to give serious consideration to an electric cooperative, where everyone works together to carry out a mission of providing service to their members. You just may find yourself a powerful career like Chris Botulinski and many others. ●

► For more, visit [vmdaec.com/powerfulcareers](http://vmdaec.com/powerfulcareers).

# Weight, Weight ... Don't Tell Me

by Vanessa LaFaso Stolarski, Contributing Columnist

## Discover the secret to weight maintenance

For decades, we as a nation generally believed cardiovascular exercises were the key to weight loss and longevity. Who remembers Olympic track stars and triathletes posing on Wheaties boxes? While it's true that exercises like walking, swimming and biking are important for heart health, more recent research has shown that maintaining muscle mass percentage significantly slows the aging process.

As a bonus, muscle mass also helps our ability to avoid joint pain and unwanted weight gain. If you think about it, it's logical. Your muscles not only help you feel strong and capable, but they also support your skeleton. The less muscle tissue you have, the more prone you are to joint pain. Additionally, muscles allow us to take in more "couch calories." Because muscles burn calories at rest, if we stay



muscular, we don't have to work quite so hard to maintain a healthy weight. Yes, you read that correctly. The more muscle mass you have, the less you have to work to maintain a healthy weight.

Weightlifting is one way to add muscle. If you've never tried weightlifting before, or it's been a few years, start with resistance bands. Bands are a very safe way to achieve increased muscle with a very low risk of injury. Most come in varying widths from least resistant to most.

Owning a whole set will allow you to increase the difficulty as you grow stronger. One of the keys to building muscle is challenging yourself, so it's a good idea to increase your reps or resistance as soon as the movement becomes too easy. Safely challenging yourself is the key. ●

Bands are a safe way to achieve increased muscle with a low risk of injury.



## TYPES OF BANDS

### Theraband Loops:

Flat, thin loops of latex or synthetic rubber without handles. Therabands are great for stabilizing joints while moving your body.

### Tube Bands:

Rounded tubes of rubber with handles. Versatile for training both upper and lower body.

### Super Bands:

Flat, heavy rubber loops that are longer and thicker than Therabands. Similar to tube bands, these can be used for almost every basic lifting movement from squats to presses.

### Important Note:

When building muscle tissue, always aim for three sets or rounds of 12 to 18 repetitions whether using bands or weights. Always make sure you rest for at least 90 seconds in between sets.



## A FULL-BODY WORKOUT USING RESISTANCE BANDS:

### OVERHEAD PRESS [3 x 12]

Stand in the middle of the band with both feet next to each other. Grab both sides of the band in each hand. Raise your arms over your head until your arms are straight. Repeat 12 times. Rest 90 seconds. Do two more rounds.

### BANDED CHAIR SQUAT [3 x 12]

Slide a Theraband over your legs like you are putting on pants and place it about 4-5 inches above your knee caps. Sit down on the chair while pushing your knees out against the band the whole time. Stand up and squeeze your butt. Repeat 12 times. Rest 90 seconds. Do two more rounds.



### BANDED BICEP CURLS [3 x 12]

Stand in the middle of the band with both feet next to each other. Grab both handles of a tube band. Keeping your elbows close to your torso, pull your hand toward your shoulder then release the band back down. Repeat 12 times. Rest 90 seconds. Do two more rounds.

### BANDED GOOD MORNINGS [3 x 12]

Stand in the middle of the band with both feet next to each other. Loop the band over your head and rest it on the bottom of your neck where your shoulders begin. (Also known as the trapezius muscles or "traps.") Hinge your hips back. While keeping legs straight and knees relaxed, bend forward until you feel a stretch in the back of your legs. Stand back up and squeeze your buttocks. Repeat 12 times. Rest 90 seconds. Do two more rounds.



*Vanessa LaFaso Stolarski is a certified nutrition counselor, weightlifting coach, life coach and stress management specialist.*

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# Into the Blue

by Laura Emery, Staff Writer

## *Trooper makes history as first Black female appointed Area 44 commander*

As a teen, it wasn't unusual for Dylan Davenport to awake in the middle of the night to the sound of fire engine sirens blaring as they departed from the fire station directly across the street from her family's apartment.

That was just a normal part of growing up in Brooklyn, N.Y.

When a young Davenport peeked through the blinds at first responders coming and going at all hours, she had no way of knowing that one day she would join the ranks of dedicated first responders in a state nearly 300 miles away.

Born in Jamaica, where her father worked for the Jamaica Constabulary Force, Davenport moved at a very young age with her family to New York, where her mother worked for the financial firm Dean Witter, which later became Morgan Stanley.

"I guess you could say that I had a standard 80s childhood," she says, laughing. "At the time, I could never have imagined I'd be where I am now."

### MAKING HISTORY

Davenport is now a 1st Sgt. with the Virginia State Police and is the first Black female to be appointed area commander of the VSP's Area 44 office serving Caroline and King George counties.

But she says the road to this position wasn't always clear.

"I was pregnant, so my husband and I started looking at ways we could better afford to live. The cost of living in New York City was very high, so we decided to move to rural Virginia," she says.

For the Jamaican who grew up in

Brooklyn, Virginia offers a totally different perspective on life. "It's quieter, more peaceful and the people are friendly," she explains.

When she first moved to the commonwealth 22 years ago, Davenport worked as an unarmed security guard but she knew she wanted to grow in her career and, possibly, take a different direction.

The opportunity for change came in 2002 when she discovered an employment ad for a commercial vehicle enforcement officer position with the Virginia State Police, which has more than 3,000 employees across the state.

"I decided to go for it," she says. "While I worked in that position, I met a lot of troopers. There was this one trooper that took the time to really share the positive side of his job with me. He encouraged me to become a trooper myself, and that's when I started to seriously consider it."

According to Davenport, Sygna Blydenburgh, a fellow commercial vehicle enforcement officer, also saw great potential in her. "Sygna told me that she was the first Black woman to retire from the sworn ranks of the Virginia State Police [in 2006], and so it feels really good now knowing that she was encouraging me and motivating me at that time," Davenport says.

### PAYING HER DUES

In 2004, Davenport entered the Virginia State Police Academy and became a trooper after 28 weeks of training that included 1,300 classroom



1st Sgt. Dylan Davenport, Rappahannock Electric Cooperative member.

and field instruction hours in more than 100 different subjects.

But while there, she says she

remembers looking around and thinking, "Where are the other Black females?"

"You stand out because you don't look like everyone else," she explains. "When I went to the Academy in 2004, that class graduated eight women. It was helpful that there were other females there, but I was the only minority female."

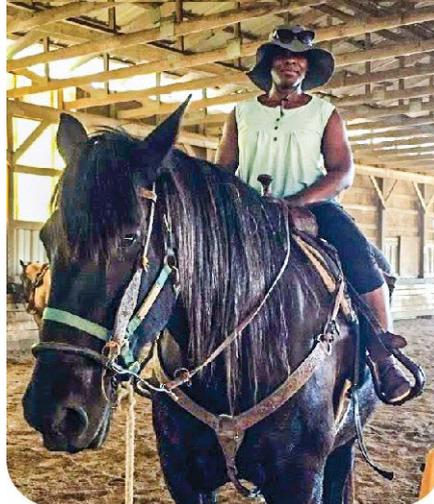
In February of 2005, Davenport started work as a trooper serving in VSP Area 1, which included Hanover and Henrico. "As a road trooper, we covered the interstate counties and did standard highway safety stuff, including pursuits, traffic stops, fight calls, motor vehicle crash investigations, fatal crash investigations, and special assignments like escorts and special event details," she explains.

In June of 2015, she was promoted to sergeant. "I ended up working for Sygna Blydenburgh's husband at the Area 44 office, and I worked for him for a few years until he promoted away to lieutenant. So, coming back here as a first sergeant — and as the first Black female to oversee the office — it brought me a little bit of a sense of coming home," she says.

### A SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY

When it comes to being a trailblazer for other Black women, she explains: "Being the first Black female to do something brings with it some pressure. If, as the first Black female to do something, I have a misstep, I don't want the next Black female that comes along

Sgt. Davenport finds horseback riding very therapeutic.



to be impeded by my misstep. That's not something that my white coworkers have to deal with. If a white leader — a sergeant or first sergeant — makes a mistake, the next white leader that comes along is not imprinted with that simply because of their race or gender. If I can inspire someone, that's fantastic — but I also don't want my mistakes to reflect on anyone else.”

Blydenburgh passed away in May of 2017. “I feel like she would have been really proud of me,” Davenport says.

Current priorities for Davenport include working heavily on the community outreach footprint in Caroline and King George counties. If we have citizens who have concerns or are not trusting of the police — that's okay. Hopefully, through contact, if they are pulled over, they'll say, ‘Oh, that's my trooper behind me, so I'll pull over and see why they're pulling me over.’”

### NEW PERSPECTIVES

Davenport reflects on her own

childhood experiences with New York City law enforcement. “Growing up in N.Y., we did not have a friendly relationship with the police there. You didn't deal with them unless you had to. It was an urban area and you didn't have the community type of relationship with law enforcement that you get to experience in more rural, or less urban, communities. It was very different,” she says.

She also makes quality of life for Area 44's troopers a top priority. “I try to make decisions that keep them as content as they can be in a job that has a lot of stress,” she says. “They're my

favorite part of the job. They're not mere employees to me. We're a team and we serve together, and that's what drives me to continue to do my best to make the environment as good as I can make it for them.”

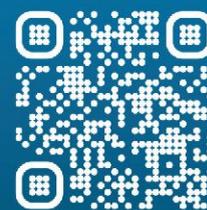
To help deal with the stress that comes with her own position, Davenport finds peace on the back of a horse. “I go to a local farm and take lessons there,” she says. “I wish I'd started it 20 years ago. Horses are a cool thing when you live in New York City, but not practical. As I began to see horses grazing on farms along the rural roads of Virginia, it made me really want to do it.” She also enjoys spending time with her family, gardening and playing with her dog.

“I could never have predicted that I'd be doing what I am doing now,” she reflects, “but I'm honored to be able to do this. I'm here to serve the public honorably and transparently, and to create a positive environment for the troopers that I serve — and I take it very seriously.” ●

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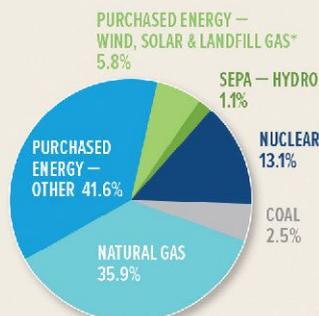


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Old Dominion Electric Cooperative



\*ODEC may sell renewable energy credits related to these purchases to its member distribution cooperatives and non-members.



The following Virginia electric cooperatives — A&N, BARC, Community, Mecklenburg, Northern Neck, Prince George, Rappahannock, Shenandoah Valley and Southside — purchased electricity from Old Dominion Electric Cooperative (ODEC) in 2022. In addition, all of these cooperatives, except A&N, purchased a small amount of hydro power from the Southeastern Power Administration (SEPA). ODEC also provided power to Choptank Electric Cooperative in Maryland and Delaware Electric Cooperative.

In 2022, ODEC generated or purchased approximately 12.5 million megawatt hours of electricity for resale to its member distribution cooperatives and to non-members. Emissions from all of ODEC's owned generating facilities averaged approximately 0.000116 tons per megawatt hour for nitrogen oxide, and approximately 0.000017 tons per megawatt hour for sulfur dioxide. SEPA supplied approximately 133,323 megawatt hours of electricity to the eight Virginia cooperatives indicated above. The chart displays the percentages of total energy supplied by ODEC and SEPA to all ODEC members in 2022. The power supply mix of individual ODEC members may vary as a result of purchases or generation of power directly from other resources.

For questions related to the graphic, please call James Wright at (804) 968-4064.

# Got Valuable Junk?

Story courtesy of American Pickers

## American Pickers is coming to Virginia

The History Channel's documentary series American Pickers is heading to Virginia this month and it could mean some extra cash for anyone with valuable junk.

The popular television show will be roaming and filming throughout Virginia in March, looking for whatever they can find, and they encourage anyone with collectibles to contact them and let them know.

The pickers say they hope to give historically significant antique objects a new lease on life while learning a thing or two about Virginia along the way.

"We at American Pickers continue to take the pandemic very seriously and will be following all guidelines and protocols for safe filming outlined by the state and the CDC," the show's producers say in a press release. "Nevertheless, we are excited to continue reaching the many collectors in the Virginia area to discuss their years of picking and we are eager to hear their stories."



Mike Wolfe and Danielle Colby.

PHOTO COURTESY AMERICAN PICKERS

If you or someone you know has a large, private collection or accumulation of antiques that you think the pickers can spend the better part of the day looking through, they say they want to hear from you. Please note, the pickers do not pick stores, flea markets, malls, auction businesses, museums, or anything open to the public. ●



Send your name, phone number, location and description of the collection with photos to: [americanpickers@cinetflix.com](mailto:americanpickers@cinetflix.com) or call (646) 493-2184. You can also go to Facebook: @GotAPick.

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“Growing up, had Fire & EMS not been a huge part of my family, I may have never known about the profession being an option.”

– Kayla Jones, Botetourt Fire & EMS

## Where There’s Smoke, There’s Opportunity

Story courtesy of Cardinal News Staff

### *Girls’ Fire Camp encourages female firefighter recruitment*

When Melanie Wimmer of Salem, Va., asked her daughter if she wanted to take part in the Girls’ Fire Camp last summer in Botetourt County, 10-year-old Mia told her mom she didn’t realize that women could be firefighters.

She soon learned firsthand that they certainly can.

Mia was excited to participate in the camp and learned more about what her 27-year-old brother does as a career firefighter and emergency medical technician for Botetourt Fire & EMS. She also learned that she, too, could do the job.

“It’s something different and it’s a program to let these ladies know that you can be a firefighter, you can be a paramedic,” says Wimmer about the Girls’ Fire Camp.

Botetourt is planning to hold the Girls’ Fire Camp again this year at Lord Botetourt High School in Daleville

to inform kids, especially young girls, about the option of a future career in fire rescue, and possibly to get parents interested in volunteering or becoming career employees.

It’s part of the agency’s efforts to address the challenges of recruiting and retention that many departments in Virginia and across the U.S. are currently facing, especially when it comes to attracting women to the historically male-dominated profession.

The fire camp idea was so popular in its first year that all the initial spots were filled within 24 hours after registration began. Organizers originally planned to have 50 openings but expanded it to 58. Another 45 girls, unfortunately, remained on a waiting list.

### **ON FIRE**

This year’s event is scheduled for June 24 and registration opens April 3. The camp will be open to upcoming first



through tenth graders this year, and just like last year, it is free to attend. “Spots will be limited, and we expect tickets to go quickly,” says Taylor Lunsford, recruitment and retention specialist for Botetourt Fire & EMS. “Information will be posted at [botetourtfireems.org](http://botetourtfireems.org) and on our social media closer to registration.”

Lunsford says a \$5,000 grant from the International Association of Fire Chiefs Volunteer Workforce Solutions makes the annual one-day event possible. “We are looking forward to continuing to provide interactive education and showing more girls that the fire & EMS field is for them too,” she says.

The first half of the one-day program is generally focused on fire safety in the home, and the science of how fires

PHOTOS COURTESY BOTETOURT COUNTY



Helen “Gracey” Humbert.

operate. The girls get to use a small hose to spray water on a fire and learn to use an extinguisher. They also are shown a mock car crash and the rescue of an injured person by an all-women crew of first responders.

Elementary school girls take part in the first half of the day’s events. Older girls also participate in the second session, which is focused on EMT work. They learn about first aid and CPR and, under heavy supervision, they may get to use equipment that extracts people from car crashes, like the “Jaws of Life.”

The Girls’ Fire Camp is held in honor of the late Helen “Gracey” Humbert, a retired Botetourt Fire & EMS captain who also worked for Roanoke Fire EMS. She died in April 2022 after a long battle with breast cancer.

Lunsford recalls that when she was a high school student in Botetourt, it was not widely known that a fire-rescue career was even available to women. Whenever she would see fire-EMS recruiters, they were always men.

“You didn’t ever picture yourself in that position. It was hard to visualize,” she says. “[Firefighting and EMS services were] something that were always there when you needed them, but not something you thought of as a career.”

Jessica Moreno, a Botetourt resident and former nurse at Carilion Roanoke Memorial Hospital, signed up her three daughters, 9-year-old Raelyn Clark, 11-year-old Jalissa Moreno and 13-year-old Faith Cramer, for last year’s fire camp. She says there generally aren’t a lot of activities for kids in Botetourt and that this was an interesting one.

“They don’t have to be firefighters,

who herself is working on getting a bachelor’s degree in criminal justice and wants to be an FBI agent.

“They were very excited,” Moreno says of her daughters. “They thought they were going to go into a burning building and put out a fire. I told them there might be a little fire, like a demonstration, but it would be learning and demonstration.”

### RECRUITMENT WOES

Nationwide, only 4% of career firefighters and about 11% of volunteer fire service personnel are women, according to the U.S. Fire Administration, which is part of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, known as FEMA.

In Virginia and elsewhere, agencies are having trouble recruiting and retaining both men and women, says Larry Gwaltney, executive director of the Virginia State Firefighters Association.

“Every volunteer agency that I know of needs help,” says Gwaltney, a retired battalion chief for Hampton Fire & Rescue.

Chief Jason Ferguson of Botetourt Fire & EMS agrees and says his department has seen fewer and fewer people of any gender, interested in a career as a firefighter or EMT in recent years.

“We have so much to

but it’s great just to encourage them that women can do it as well,” says Moreno,

“[Firefighting and EMS services were] something that were always there when you needed them, but not something you thought of as a career.”

– Taylor Lunsford, recruitment and retention specialist, Botetourt Fire & EMS

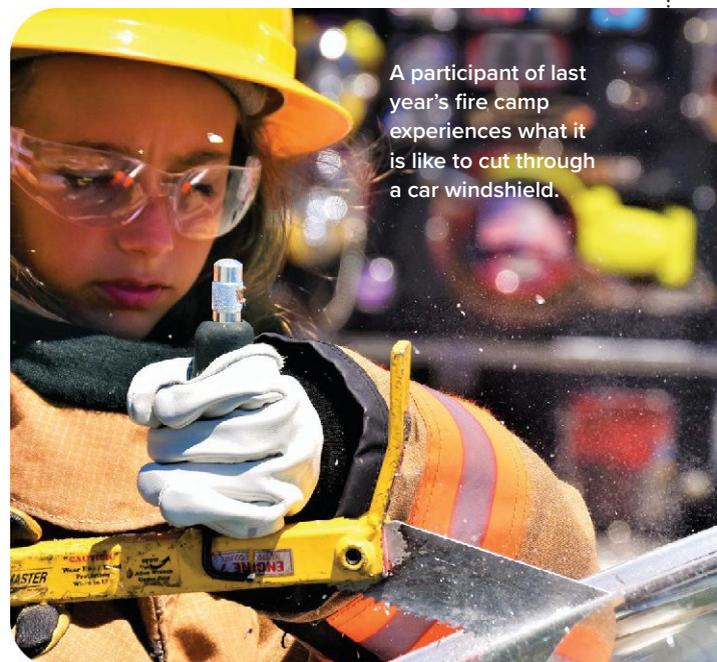
offer besides just day-to-day emergencies that we respond to,” he says, adding that working in the fire-EMS field offers “a gateway to the healthcare industry.”

“It gives folks a chance to see what medicine is all about,” Ferguson adds. “A lot of physicians started as EMTs, because it really prepares you.”

### GOING FOR IT

Laura Kate Jennings-Brink, a volunteer EMT and now also a volunteer firefighter with the Read Mountain Volunteer Fire Department, says last year’s Girls’ Fire Camp inspired

*(continued on page 12)*



A participant of last year’s fire camp experiences what it is like to cut through a car windshield.

## Where There's Smoke

(continued from page 11)

her to get her firefighter certification. “Seeing how excited all the girls were last year really inspired me to prove to myself that I could do it and go all the way,” she says. “I used to be a blue helmet EMT, which meant I had limited access during calls, but I went ahead and got my certification. Now I’m a yellow helmet, which means I can do it all,” she says.

While Jennings-Brink’s story is uplifting, Deputy Chief Marci Stone of Roanoke Fire-EMS agrees that there is an overall downward change in recruitment for firefighter positions.

She attributes the decline, in part, to the idea that many young people are now encouraged to go to college and end up leaving their hometowns and entering the white-collar workforce. Stone says that a fire-rescue career is often seen as blue-collar work because only a high school diploma is required.

“Another part of the reason it’s so hard to recruit both men and women is that many fire-rescue agencies require employees to work 24-hour shifts, making it difficult for new employees to take care of family obligations,” Stone says.

She adds that she has been involved in discussions about possibly changing the requirement but there has been resistance to change.

“We do have to look at the future to

ensure that all the policies and practices, including our shifts, are inclusive,” she says.

According to Stone, the Roanoke department had 243 full-time career fire-rescue personnel in 2022, but only six of them were women, including her.

In 2022 in the city of Salem, only four out of 70 full-time fire-EMT employees were women, says Deputy Chief Matt Rickman of Salem Fire-EMS. And only about eight to 10 of the department’s 25 part-time employees were women.

The fire-rescue agencies in Salem, Botetourt, Roanoke and Roanoke County use a joint-hiring process. In a typical hiring cycle, Rickman says, the team of four departments typically has no more than four women applicants eligible for hire.

“Some years we don’t have any,” he says, adding that Salem has hired about five women in the past five years.

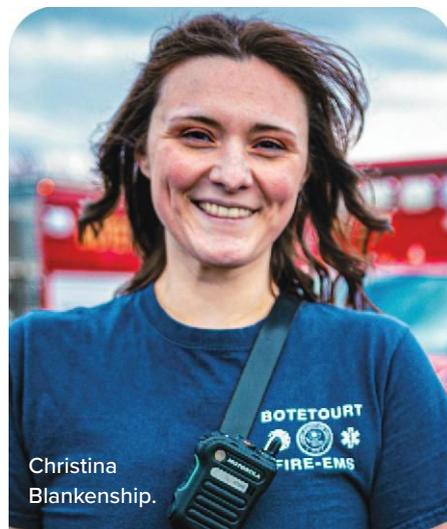
When Stone began her career as a firefighter, she said she initially had to show her male colleagues that she could measure up and then had to prove herself again each time she was promoted. Stone says she and a colleague became the first women to be hired for fire suppression duties in Roanoke in the late 1990s.

“I had to have grit. I had to have drive and ambition,” she says. “There was a microscope on me.”

Stone became a volunteer EMT

“My favorite part of the Girls’ Fire Camp experience is watching how empowered the girls are during the camp.”

– Christina Blankenship,  
Botetourt Fire & EMS



Christina Blankenship.

at age 16 when she was a student at Franklin County High School. She had been in a car accident at age 15, and a then-16-year-old fellow Franklin High School student was one of the volunteer EMTs who responded to the scene.

While they were in the back of an ambulance, she asked him about volunteering and later went on a ride-along with him. When she was on crutches because of her knee injury, the young man even helped carry her things when they were at school.

“I wanted to serve in the community, and I wanted to help people in need, and I wanted to be outside,” Stone says. “I love the job. I can’t imagine doing anything else, and I really feel like it’s a calling.” ●

Botetourt County promoted last year’s fire camp with images such as this one. From left: Christina Blankenship, Laura Kate Jennings-Brink, Kayla Jones, Macy Thompson, Caitlin Mitchell, Kourtne Orth, and Catherine Amos. All either work for Botetourt Fire-EMS or are volunteers.



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2023

# Fairs & Festivals GUIDE



## SPECIAL SECTIONS

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### Summer Festivals & Travel Guide

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Publication: Nov. 1, 2023

Space Reservation Deadline: Sept. 22, 2023

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# Savings At The Touch of a Button

by Abby Berry, Contributing Columnist

## Apps that help you save energy

There are several reasons why people are interested in cutting back on energy consumption — some are primarily motivated to save on their monthly energy bills while others may be more concerned about reducing their personal carbon footprint.

Regardless of why you're interested in using less energy, there are several smartphone apps that can help you do just that.

Here are a few apps that can help you achieve meaningful energy savings:

**1. Smart thermostat apps:** You can purchase an ENERGY STAR®-certified smart thermostat for as low as \$100, which can save you 8% on annual heating and cooling costs, about \$50 per year. The device will quickly pay for itself,

and you'll gain insight into better ways to heat and cool your home. Plus, the ability to control the thermostat from anywhere can equate to real savings.

**2. Energy cost calculators:** If you're wanting to reduce energy use at home, it's important to know where your consumption is going. Energy cost calculators can help pinpoint your energy use with a few simple steps and identify areas to save. The concept is simple; just plug in the wattage of your various appliances and how often you use them to see which are using the most energy. Most energy cost calculator apps are free and can be downloaded to any Apple or Android device.

**3. JouleBug app:** If you're competitive

A smart thermostat.



and enjoy gamifying — well, everything — the JouleBug app is right up your alley. JouleBug makes energy conservation simple and fun through personal tasks and badges earned within the app, group challenges you can tackle with friends, and communities you can join to learn about local sustainability efforts. The JouleBug app is free and can be downloaded to Apple or Android devices, and it's an easy tool to make saving energy fun.

Whether you use an app or not, saving energy is always a smart idea that can help you save money on your monthly bills and reduce your carbon footprint. ●

*Abby Berry writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.*



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# MARCH BRINGS FOCUS TO MARYLAND AGRICULTURE

March is such a special month here on the Eastern Shore, especially weather speaking. We could have a late snow or a beautiful 75 degree day. You never know. And in between these very different weather patterns, farmers are busy adapting and preparing for the seasons ahead. Maryland's Agriculture Week is March 21 through March 27 and with many of our members being in the agriculture industry we would like to acknowledge and celebrate them.

Since its founding in 1634, Maryland's farmers have provided folks with essential crops to help the state, and our Nation, grow and thrive. During the American Revolution we produced enough flour to feed the Continental Army and Maryland became known as the "Breadbasket of the Revolution," playing a very important role in freeing the colonies from England and helping to create the United States of America.

To bring attention to Agriculture Week we are putting a spotlight on one of our family farms down in Eden, Maryland. Or, as Mr. Richardson calls it, "the middle of nowhere." (Story can be

found on page number 26). Richardson Farms is run by Roger and Fay Richardson along with their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. They grow beans and corn and their land has been in the family since 1767. Mr. Richardson has deep roots in Maryland agriculture. He was part of the original committee that formed Maryland's Department of Agriculture back in the late 50s and served as the state's Secretary of Agriculture from 2007 to 2009.

We are proud to serve all of our members on the Eastern Shore, including all of those with agricultural ties. Having a role in the hard work that is farming and allowing our state and country to grow is what being a cooperative is all about. Thank you all for that opportunity.

*Here's to a productive planting season and warmer days ahead for everyone!*



Mike Malandro, President & CEO  
Choptank Electric Cooperative



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# 85th Annual Member Meeting

Thursday, April 27, 2023

**P**lease join us for the annual meeting of cooperative members on Thursday, April 27 to discuss important policy and leadership issues and review the successes of 2022. All customers of Choptank Electric Cooperative are members and are entitled to vote and participate in discussions about how our electric distribution company functions here on the Eastern Shore.

The annual meeting and dinner will be held at the Talbot County Community Center located along Route 50 at 10028 Ocean Gateway in Easton. Doors will open at 4:30 p.m. for members to register, visit with staff and vendors and enjoy dinner catered by the Chesapeake

Culinary Center.

The business portion of the annual meeting will begin at 6 p.m. with President and CEO Mike Malandro reporting on the Co-op business over the last 12 months. Four Board members will be standing for re-election during the 2023 meeting.

- ✓ **John Burke**,  
representing Cecil County
- ✓ **Craig Mathies**,  
representing Somerset County
- ✓ **Jeff Rathell**,  
representing Talbot County
- ✓ **Bob Thompson**,  
representing Ocean Pines

Biographical information about each Director candidate is posted online at [choptankelectric.coop](http://choptankelectric.coop) and is displayed in the lobby of the headquarters office in Denton. Petitions for nomination were submitted, reviewed and approved by the Credentials and Elections Committee. Because there is only one approved Director candidate for each district, the Committee has invoked Bylaws section 4.06(b). This section states that in the event of an uncontested election,

**Scan to learn more about our board members up for re-election**



**JOHN BURKE**



**CRAIG MATHIES**



**JEFF RATHELL**



**BOB THOMPSON**





Choptank Electric Cooperative may forego the balloting process. A final vote to elect Directors will occur during the annual meeting.

In addition to the formal business of the meeting, there will be an opportunity for students to receive scholarships. Ten \$1,000 Luck of the Draw scholarships will be awarded to students who pre-file their applications and are present at the meeting with their parent or legal guardian who is an active cooperative member. Applications, qualifications and other details about the scholarships are posted on the website under Member Benefits and are covered on the next page of this edition of *Cooperative Living* magazine.

All members who attend the annual meeting will be awarded a \$10 bill credit on their next electric bill (limited to one per account). There will also be door prizes drawn at the end of the meeting ranging from \$100 - \$500 in bill credits.

To RSVP and reserve your space at the 2023 Annual Meeting, please contact our Member Service Center by:

- ✓ Calling 1-877-892-0001,
- or
- ✓ Emailing us at [annualmeeting@choptankelectric.coop](mailto:annualmeeting@choptankelectric.coop)

We will need your name, account number, guests' names and total number in your group to reserve your space and accurately register you for the 2023 Annual Meeting. The RSVP deadline is Thursday, April 13, but call today to guarantee your spot.

> [choptankelectric.coop/annual-meeting](http://choptankelectric.coop/annual-meeting)

# Luck of the Draw Scholarships Awarded at Annual Meeting



The Luck of the Draw Scholarship is awarded by randomly selecting student applications from a live drawing at the end of our annual meeting. To enter the drawing, students must fill out the application and answer a ten-question quiz based on a Cooperative article in the application.

This year, the annual meeting will be held on Thursday, April 27, at the Talbot County Community Center. The Board of Directors will draw and award ten \$1,000 scholarships to students in attendance who meet the following qualifications:

✓ Complete the Luck of the Draw application on our website at

[choptankelectric.coop](http://choptankelectric.coop) under Annual Meeting OR Scholarships.

✓ Submit the application to the Co-op by April 20 before 4:30 p.m. (applications will NOT be accepted at the annual meeting). You will receive a confirmation phone call/email when your application has been processed.

✓ Be present at the annual meeting on April 27 with your parent/legal guardian who is a Choptank Electric Cooperative member.

✓ Enrolling in an accredited two- or four-year college or technical school for the 2023 fall semester.

Winners of prior years, employees, and immediate family members of Choptank Electric are NOT eligible to participate.

> [choptankelectric.coop/scholarships](http://choptankelectric.coop/scholarships)

\*Scholarships must be redeemed by 8/31/23

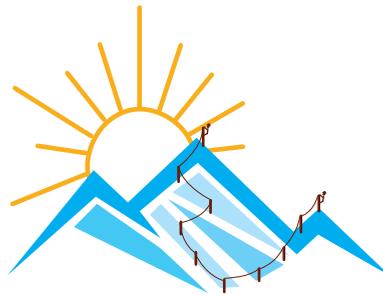
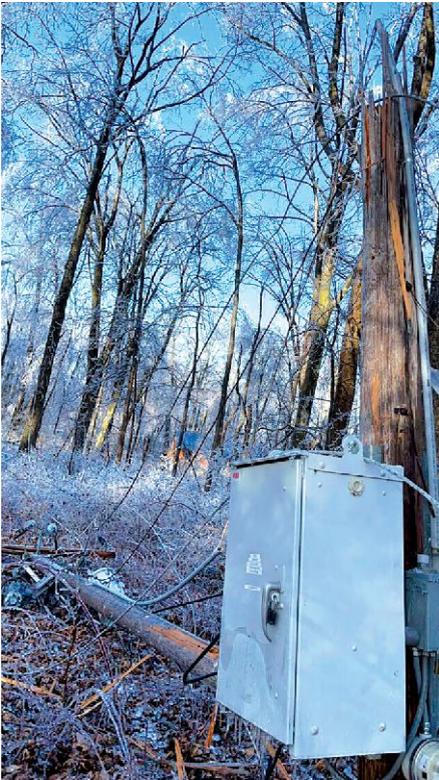
# Choptank Fiber Holds Educational Community Meetings



Choptank Fiber held two educational community meetings in late 2022 for residents of Caroline County. The meetings were well attended and covered important information and answered residents' questions regarding our high-speed internet build out in the county. Through a partnership with the Caroline County Government, the majority of the unserved will have access to fiber internet in Caroline County by the end of this year.

Thank you to all that attended and asked questions, as well as to Colonel Richardson and North Caroline High Schools for hosting the meetings.

> [www.choptankfiber.com](http://www.choptankfiber.com)



## Choptank Assists Large Rappahannock Power Outage

By Bobby Schaller,  
MultiMedia Manager



**O**n December 15 of last year a bad ice storm rolled through the Virginia mountains and coated trees, roads and power lines with heavy amounts of ice. The ice storm hit the territory of our fellow co-op, Rappahannock Electric Cooperative. The next day, 1,900 members were without power as a result of more than 120 separate outage events.

On arrival, Rappahannock field teams had discovered more than 20 broken poles and countless downed lines. Veteran lineworkers commented that this was the worst ice they had ever worked through. Concentrated mostly in the mountainous areas of Warren County, many of the damaged sites were difficult to reach. Crews had to manually carry heavy equipment into deep forests and up steep terrain.

*“We got the call Friday around 10 a.m. that Rappahannock needed some help. We packed up and met Tom Simpson in Denton to get the information we needed for the trip. We headed to their Front Royal office by 3 p.m. and went straight to work. Working in a town called Linden, Va., we worked on top of a mountain, they called it Blue Mountain. We worked into the night, clearing trees and downed lines caused from the ice storm. The first day we worked on their three-phase lines and on the second day we started on their single-phase lines and services in the same locations. We finished up late Saturday night with all their members being restored, and returned home Sunday morning.”*

**- Mason Johnson,  
Apprentice Lineman**

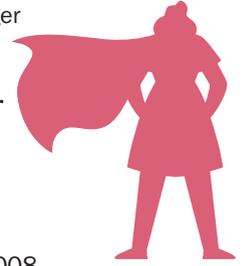
A call came through that a fellow co-op needed help. Lineworkers Dean Samuel Jr. and Mason Johnson of Choptank Electric Cooperative took that call. Volunteering their expertise and their weekend they stepped up, and within hours they were in the Virginia mountains hard at work. As cooperatives we serve our members most effectively by working together. Team work is a co-op principal that we stick to and our team showed a fine example of how to do just that.

At the height of the restoration efforts, there were as many as 100 field workers working to restore Rappahannock's members power and we are proud that Choptank Electric Cooperative stepped up and assisted in the effort.



# Women Electrifying the Cooperative World

By Katie Lockett, Marketing, Communications, Education Manager



March is Women's History Month, and March 8 is recognized as International Women's Day. The theme for 2023 is *embrace equity* – something we practice and celebrate here daily at Choptank Electric Cooperative. What better time than now to shine the spotlight on some of our cooperative's outstanding women who are making a difference in our community?



## Sherri Beatty

Asset Data Specialist  
DENTON DISTRICT OFFICE

**How long have you been an employee at Choptank Electric Cooperative?** 5 years

**Have you held any previous positions here?** I started as a Member Service Specialist for 3 years and a Regional Member Service Representative for 1 year before accepting my current position as Asset Data Specialist.

**What is your favorite part of working for Choptank Electric?** While I no longer work directly with our members, I'm happy to be part of a Cooperative that cares so much for its members and the communities it serves. We work hard to ensure our members have power and everyone here has a hand in that process one way or another.

**Why do you feel it's important for women to be involved in the industry?** Electric has always been in demand and that demand is continually growing with new homes, schools, hospitals, and workplaces. Women bring a unique way of thinking and powerful skill set – having a diverse group of employees will only enhance the industry.

**What impact do you hope to make while working here?** I want to do the best job I can. It's important to me that our men and women are in safe and reliable

vehicles so they can perform their daily duties. By keeping accurate maintenance records, we can be sure the vehicles are serviced properly and are up to par for them to do their jobs. It's nice that I can be one of the building blocks that keeps the Co-op functioning efficiently.

**What empowers you as a woman in the electric co-op field?** Working in an industry that is primarily staffed by men, I feel empowered when I complete tasks efficiently and accurately. Having gained the respect of the employees I work with has been important, as they have assisted in the learning curve. Being raised on a farm, I have carried over a strong work ethic which is vital to my employment success. My love for the outdoors helps me to be able to perform tasks in various conditions and my computer skills gained from working in member services have brought every part of this position into full focus.



## Peggy Fuller

Human Resources Specialist  
HEADQUARTERS IN DENTON

**How long have you been an employee at Choptank Electric Cooperative?** 33 years

**Have you held any previous positions here?** I started as a Staff Management Services Clerk in Human Resources in 1990. I worked in the Engineering and the Member Services departments for several years before returning to Human

Resources in 2008.

**What is your favorite part of working for Choptank Electric?** Knowing that I'm working in an industry that is part of such a life changing "movement" so to speak for the rural areas on the Eastern Shore and across America! I'm working at a place that brings a resource people can't live without. I'm happy to be part of a great team that works well together and keeps the lights on and the houses warm for all our members!

**Why do you feel it's important for women to be involved in the industry?** I feel women are important in every industry! We are just as capable of making decisions, working with our hands, managing people and handling important roles in a business as anyone else. I would love to see a female lineworker here at Choptank Electric someday. I know there are some extremely competent women out there working for other co-ops across America, and I think it would be great to have one here!

**What impact do you hope to make while working here?** I've seen a lot of changes over the years. I've been here through four CEOs, I've seen long-time employees retire after 50 years of service and I've seen new and excited young employees begin their careers here. I hope I've always been and will continue to be a dependable resource for all our employees and retirees.

**What empowers you as a woman in the electric co-op field?** I think my self-confidence and knowing my strengths and how to use them to make a difference is what empowers me the most. You have to find your passion, and mine is helping people and being someone they can count on. The best part of being a human in general is the free will to be whatever you want to be ... to set your own goals, have a network of good people around you, and

take advantage of all the wonderful opportunities out there to help you become successful and do good in the world!



### **Sharon Coverdale**

General Ledger Accountant  
HEADQUARTERS IN DENTON

*How long have you been an employee at Choptank Electric Cooperative?* 14 years

*Have you held any previous positions here?*  
No

*What is your favorite part of working for Choptank Electric?* There are many, but I'll expound on a few. On my first day of employment, the one thing that stood out was the friendly environment throughout the company. I was nervous and didn't know what to expect, but I was made to feel welcomed and included. Also, even though I am not in direct contact with our members daily, I enjoy playing a part in servicing them.

*Why do you feel it's important for women to be involved in the industry?* Women in the industry brings diversity to the industry, which makes a more dynamic workplace. I look at diversity as a benefit because each person is unique and has different experiences and perspectives that could bring about change or help resolve issues within the company.

*What impact do you hope to make while working here?* I will strive to continue to do a great job in my current role. But, most importantly, I hope to make an impact by being kind to others and treating people with respect. It doesn't cost anything to show kindness and to treat people the way you want to be treated.

*What empowers you as a woman in the electric co-op field?* To lead by example and to encourage women of all races and ethnicities to believe in themselves. It's important for women to know their worth personally and professionally because we have brought much needed value to this industry.



### **Irene Pasta**

Senior Member Services Specialist  
HEADQUARTERS IN DENTON

*How long have you been an employee at Choptank Electric Cooperative?* 12 years

*Have you held any previous positions here?*  
Member Services Specialist

*What is your favorite part of working for Choptank Electric?* The people I have worked with and work with today. When I started here, we were known for bringing electric to the rural areas ... because of our staff and what each one of us brings to the table and how we make it work together, today we have been able to grow, change and be a better cooperative than before. It's a cool place to be.

*Why do you feel it's important for women to be involved in the industry?* The numbers for women in the electric cooperative industry are still low, but every position a woman takes on shows a step forward to improve diversity in this industry. Women also help to create career options/paths that other women may have been hesitant to take or may not have considered.

*What impact do you hope to make while working here?* To have been part of a team that creates a positive working environment, that will build training and development job aids that can be easily implemented and offer growth opportunities, encourage others to be open, ask questions, work together as a team to build trust and be supportive of each other.

*What empowers you as a woman in the electric co-op field?* My approach in this field as in any field; learn something from everyone you work with, enjoy most days what you do (some just don't align sometimes and that's ok) and show the respect you want to receive. This will allow you to succeed in anything you do.



### **Deborah Gaddis**

Office Specialist II  
REGIONAL SERVICE CENTER IN SALISBURY

*How long have you been an employee at Choptank Electric Cooperative?* 20 years

*Have you held any previous positions here?*  
Member Service Representative

*What is your favorite part of working for Choptank Electric?* Learning and working with my coworkers. Working with operations supplies me with descriptive visuals from out in the field of repairs, such as broken cross arms, bad services, blown transformers and even vermin/serpents that can be found in a pad mount. Specialty projects are my favorite because I like being able to use my knowledge and experience to solve problems.

*Why do you feel it's important for women to be involved in the industry?* Gender diversity — giving others the opportunity to experience all avenues from linework to administration.

*What impact do you hope to make while working here?* The importance of teamwork. Working together to complete projects with ease and efficiency.

*What empowers you as a woman in the electric co-op field?* Workshops, trainings, and seminars to become educated to better serve the membership.

*“Whether they work in an office or on a line, these women are high-energy leaders who not only help keep the lights on, but serve as guiding lights to our team and in the community. We are grateful to have so many impactful women on staff and serving on our board here at Choptank.”*

- Mike Malandro, President and CEO  
of Choptank Electric Cooperative.

To learn more about our cooperative and future job openings, visit:  
> [choptankelectric.coop/employment](http://choptankelectric.coop/employment)



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We are happy to  
support your efforts.**

## Choptank Electric Trust Awards

The Choptank Electric Trust is a 501(c)(3) charitable foundation funded by Operation Round Up donations from members of Choptank Electric. Funds from the Trust are distributed in all nine counties of MD's Eastern Shore.

To apply, or to find out more about this program:

> [www.choptankelectric.coop/operation-round-trust-fund](http://www.choptankelectric.coop/operation-round-trust-fund)

### December 2022

- Wreaths Across America – \$1,500
- Community Church at Ocean Pines – \$3,250
- His Hope Ministries – \$3,000

**The total of approved applications for December 2022 was \$21,473, which included \$13,723 for individual home and medical expenses.**

**“Showing off our 1st Christmas here.”**



**Congratulations to the McQuires from Worcester County  
for winning our 2022 Christmas Light Contest!**



**Choptank Electric Cooperative, Inc.**

Choptank Electric, a Touchstone Energy Cooperative, is a not-for-profit, member-owned, electric distribution Co-op serving approximately 55,500 residential, commercial, and industrial members in all nine counties on Maryland's Eastern Shore.

#### **President and CEO**

Micheal E. Malandro

#### **Board of Directors**

Jeffrey D. Rathell Sr.  
Chairman, Talbot Co.

John J. Burke Jr.  
Vice Chairman, Cecil Co.

Douglas D. Scott  
Treasurer, Dorchester Co.

Robert E. Arnold  
Secretary, Queen Anne's Co.

Amy I. Brandt  
Caroline Co.

Olin S. Davis III  
Kent Co.

Matthew R. Holloway  
Wicomico Co.

Robert B. Thompson  
Ocean Pines District

Donna R. West  
Worcester Co.

Craig N. Mathies Sr.  
Somerset Co.

**Choptank Fiber, LLC**

Choptank Fiber, LLC is a wholly-owned broadband subsidiary of Choptank Electric Cooperative. Choptank Fiber's goal is to install true Gigabit broadband with no data caps one community at a time until we serve all our members on the Eastern Shore.

**ALL-NEW** mobility technology

# Introducing the world's lightest mobility scooter with anti-tip technology

*The So Lite™ Scooter is easy to transport and almost impossible to tip over.*

Like millions of older Americans, I struggle with mobility. For years, I watched my quality of life slip away, as I was forced to stay home while friends and family took part in activities I'd once enjoyed. I thought I'd made some progress when I got a mobility scooter, but then I realized how hard it was to transport. Taking it apart and putting it back together was like doing a jigsaw puzzle. Once I had it disassembled, I had to try to put all of the pieces in the trunk of a car, go to wherever I was going, and repeat the process in reverse. Travel scooters were easier to transport, but they were uncomfortable and scary to drive, I always felt like I was ready to tip over. Then I found the *So Lite™ Scooter*. Now there's nothing that can hold me back.

Years of work by innovative engineers have resulted in a scooter that's designed with seniors in mind. They created Electronic Stability Control (ESC) that makes it virtually impossible to tip over. If you try to turn too quickly, the scooter automatically slows down to prevent it from tipping over. The battery provides powerful energy at a fraction of the weight of most batteries. With its rugged yet lightweight aluminum frame, the *So Lite™ Scooter* is the most portable scooter ever—but it can hold up to 275 pounds—yet weighs only 40.8 pounds without the battery! What's more, it



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HEALTH & LIFESTYLE

# Planting the Seeds of Savings

by Miranda Boutelle, Contributing Columnist

*Helping farmers reduce energy costs benefits*

**Q:** Are there ways to reduce energy use on a farm?

**A:** The importance of farms cannot be understated. Farmers feed our families and keep the country running, but the business brings many challenges, including risk and uncertainty.

**F**inding ways to use less energy can reduce costs and result in energy savings for years to come.

When looking to improve farm efficiency, consider the following areas.

## MOTORS AND PUMPS

Because motors and pumps account for a significant amount of energy use on a farm, replacing inefficient motors with efficient models can save energy and reduce costs. Adding variable frequency drives allow you to vary the frequency and voltage supplied to the motor or pump to adjust the motor's speed. This saves kilowatt hours and reduces load by only operating at the needed capacity. VFDs can be used in place of a phase converter, which allows use of three-phase power equipment where there is only access to single-phase power.

## IRRIGATION

Upgrade irrigation equipment to use less water, which means less pumping and reducing the amount of water and energy consumed. The goal is to get the right amount of water where it is needed. This can be

accomplished by reducing evaporation through system design and fixing leaks in the system. GPS and geographic information system technologies allow for more specific irrigation targeting. Monitor and test systems regularly to ensure maximum efficiency.

## LIGHTS

The longer lights are on, the higher the potential for savings. Prioritize replacing incandescent or fluorescent exterior lighting on photocells or lights that stay on all night. LED lights last two to four times longer than fluorescents and 25 to 35 times longer than incandescents. That means less frequent replacement, which saves on materials and labor costs.

## HEATER CONTROLS

In climates where engine block heaters are used to keep vehicle engines warm enough to start, adding engine block heater controls with temperature sensors and timers will reduce electricity use. To keep water from freezing on farms with livestock, save energy by using stock tank heaters with thermostatic controls, which operate only when needed instead of running

constantly. Insulated stock tanks may eliminate the need to heat water.

## EMERGING TECHNOLOGY

New farming technologies that offer efficiency possibilities include electric tractors, space heating and water heating. Equipment with information technology capabilities can aid efficiency by monitoring conditions and automating farming tasks. As with home efficiency practices, consider the equipment used most and the savings potential from upgrading or modifying existing equipment.

## REBATES

About 80% of U.S. farms are located in counties served by electric cooperatives. Check with your local electric cooperative to see if they offer rebates on farming equipment and energy-efficiency projects that help reduce energy use.

Improving efficiency on the farm can result in less energy use, lower bills and improved farming success during challenging financial times. ●

*Miranda Boutelle writes on energy efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.*



Finding ways to use less energy can reduce costs and result in more efficient farming practices for years to come.





# Savings Can Be Made in the Shade

Story courtesy of Old Dominion Electric Cooperative

## Landscaping for a more energy-efficient home

It's no secret smart decisions about your home can save big dollars on your power bill. However, homeowners who already have blackout curtains and Energy Star appliances may wonder what other steps they can take to boost their energy efficiency. The next frontier of power savings may very well be outside.

Trees and shrubs are not only beautiful additions to the yard that can boost curb appeal, but they can also provide a smart way to protect your home from the elements. In fact, the average home can save up to 25% on energy bills with a bit of forward-thinking landscaping.

As homeowners, land developers and even business owners look to save money and conserve precious power, well-engineered landscaping features like the examples below will continue to provide opportunities for increased efficiencies.

### THE BIG PICTURE

The continental United States has four distinct climate zones: cool,

temperate, hot-humid and hot-arid. Virginia, Delaware and Maryland are all in the temperate climate zone, with seasonal changes that need consideration when landscaping for energy efficiency.

To fight the harsh winds of winter, consider planting windbreaks — thick shrubs and trees — on the north and northwest sides of your home. This will provide protection from those bitter wind chills that can make outdoor conditions feel 20 degrees colder than the thermometer indicates.

Another step you can take is to increase your home's ability to retain heat in the winter months by keeping windows in full view of the sun. Plan for the seasonal differences by planting trees that will be lush and green in spring and summer but bare during the cooler months.

In the summer, be sure to make the wind work for you, not against you. Wind tunnels can easily be made

Trees and shrubs can provide a smart way to protect your home from the elements.



by planting thick shrubs perpendicular to the flow of air. If done properly, this will redirect summer breezes toward your home and provide a natural relief to your air conditioner.

You can also take steps to maximize summertime shade around windows, meaning leafy trees and tall shrubs. Additionally, consider placing air conditioning units in a location where they'll be shaded during the hottest part of the day. This can increase the efficiency of most air conditioning units by as much as 10%.

### YOUR OWN LITTLE WORLD

While no solutions are one-size-fits-all, taking these steps can help you not only make your home more energy efficient but also more comfortable during the hottest and coldest months. Strategic use of shading and windbreaks can even make your yard more inviting, leading to additional energy savings any time you turn off the electronics to enjoy some time on the patio. ●



# National Agriculture Week

by Katie Luckett, Contributing Writer

## Past, present and future celebrated on Richardson Farm

**A**griculture has played a vital role in the world for as far back as society can recall.

Farmers have consistently provided the food, fuel and fiber that society needs to survive and thrive in a sustainable manner. Therefore, National Agriculture Week is celebrated in the third week of March to honor the industry and recognize agriculture’s advances as well as its heritage.

Richardson Farm in Worcester County, Md., dates to 1767 and is now run by the eighth, ninth, tenth and eleventh generations. Roger Richardson and his wife, Fay, are the current owners and operators, along with their daughter, Donna Richardson West; their grandson, Tom West, and their great-grandsons, Thomas and Lane West — today all playing important roles on the farm.

**“Dad’s always been one to help people. All of his leadership roles began as a way to help other farmers and grew to having state and national impacts.”**

—Donna Richardson West



The family business produces corn and soybeans and the farm totals 3,500 acres, including approximately 1,200 acres leased from others across Somerset, Wicomico and Worcester counties. Richardson Farm has solar panels on their land that power their entire farm and home, and Roger notes that “Choptank Electric Cooperative is very supportive of this effort.” In 1980, Roger started an agricultural trucking business

to haul grain, poultry, lumber and meal — and it is still in operation today.

Roger has served in many leadership positions throughout his agriculture career, inspiring his daughter along the way. “Dad’s always been one to help people,” shares Donna. “All of his leadership roles began as a way to help other farmers and grew to having state and national impacts.” Most notably, Roger was appointed as the Maryland Secretary of Agriculture from 2007 to 2009 under the [Maryland Gov. Martin] O’Malley administration.

Roger has also served on the Agricultural Stewardship Commission, National Association of Farmer Elected Committees, American Corn Growers Association, Maryland Farm Service Committee, Maryland Agriculture Stabilization Committee and Worcester County Farm Bureau, to name a few. In addition to the significant roles Roger played in agriculture, he also has been a staple in his local community, serving on the Worcester County Board of Education for 10 years and being active in his church. “It’s important to meet all types of people and diversify yourself outside of just farming,” adds Roger.

Roger’s first agricultural leadership role was helping to found the farmer-owned cooperative Snow Hill Grain Inc. in 1966. He realized the importance of cooperatives early on in life when Choptank Electric Cooperative (formerly Choptank Cooperative, Inc.) came to Worcester County in 1941 and provided electricity to the rural areas that didn’t previously have access.

“I remember the day it was connected



From left, Thomas West, Tom West, Lane West, Roger Richardson and his daughter, Donna Richardson West.



Roger Richardson and Donna Richardson West.

and the big celebration in Princess Anne,” shares Roger. “My dad had been petitioning other farmers in our area to help bring the electric cooperative to our county, and he was so excited to see it through.”

He recounted being able to fix equipment and build things faster as a kid in the farm’s shop with electricity, like “hooking up a Maytag motor to the water pump to fill the water trough in the stalls, rather than filling it by hand,” adds Roger.

Today, the family’s home farm in the Pocomoke Forest is in the current Choptank Fiber build-out phase and has been staked for broadband. The farm is set to receive high-speed internet this spring. “This will elevate our current apps and programs used on the farm, as well as the GPS technology in our equipment,” says Donna. “Having faster and more reliable internet will allow us to do more digitally and connect with



others when we can't be in-person.”

Donna has been a strong advocate for rural broadband on the Eastern Shore during her time as a director on the Choptank Electric Cooperative board. She also serves on the Virginia, Maryland & Delaware Association of Broadband Cooperatives board, representing Choptank Fiber. Donna testified to the Maryland General Assembly in 2020 on behalf of Choptank Electric Cooperative for a bill to allow the co-op to become member-regulated and pursue part of the \$20 billion in federal money in 2021 to help cooperatives deliver broadband to rural areas.

“I compare the need for rural broadband today to the need for rural electricity in the 1930s and the Rural Electrification Act,” adds Donna. “It was a milestone for farmers on the Eastern Shore to have access to electricity then, just like high-speed internet will be for them now.”

Both Donna and Roger both note that their biggest accomplishments are their families and the legacy they are creating on the farm. “It makes you feel good to have something to leave behind for the next generations, and to have your family want to be involved in the business,” says Donna. ●

▶ Scan to learn more about National Agriculture Week



**Bold ideas reshaping rural Virginia.**

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# Setting the Bar Higher

by Peggy Hyland, Contributing Writer

*Much more than just another pub*

**O**n a recent near-perfect-weather Saturday, my companion and I wound our way along rural roads to Manassas to check out the Public House Kitchen & Brewery. At the heart of the revitalized Old Town section, this charming brewpub was well worth the drive.

The dining room has both a bar and tables in a family-friendly, welcoming atmosphere suitable for all ages. There are also two window tables, perfect for people-watching. The walls were covered in retro beer signs. I always check for purse hooks and was pleased to find them at all tables as well as the bar (it's the little things).

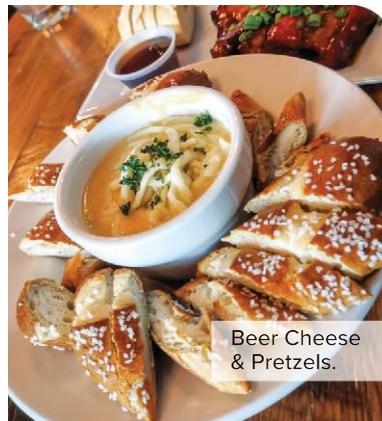
The menu takes pub fare to new heights, and we were blown away by every single dish. We first dove into the poutine for an appetizer; crispy fries delicately sauced with brown gravy and melted cheese. The candied bacon did not last long, as we gobbled up the sticky, gooey, crisp and thick slices. The beer cheese and pretzels had a creamy delicate cheese dip. They were all so delicious that it was hard to pick a favorite, but that one won by a narrow margin.

When a restaurant touts a dish as “the best around,” they need to live up to it, and The Best Reuben Around did not disappoint. Served open-faced, it had large chunks of house-corned beef that was perfectly seasoned along with beer-braised sauerkraut.

The salmon had a light, refreshing seasoning and was cooked perfectly. The fried chicken had a crisp and crunchy exterior with zesty seasoning surrounding juicy boneless chicken breasts. It came with a house favorite: the smoked



The Best Reuben Around.



Beer Cheese & Pretzels.



Blueberry & White Chocolate Bread Pudding.



Gouda Mac & Cheese, also available as an entrée. I do not usually go for macaroni and cheese, but this made a believer out of me.

The small but well-represented dessert menu included a delicious apple crisp. It had a nice savory warmth from the

cinnamon to balance the sweetness and was served with vanilla ice cream. I could not resist the pull of the seasonal bread pudding, which was blueberry and white chocolate. Like macaroni and cheese, bread pudding is not my go-to choice, but this would make a bread pudding lover out of the biggest skeptic.

The service was impeccable — friendly, attentive without hovering and seamlessly tag-teamed. The ample portions were appropriately priced, and the house-brewed beers were excellent. We sampled the hoppy Just the tIPA, the malty Alewerks Tavern Brown Ale, the West Coast-

style Public House Stop Playin' Smokey, and the decadent Aslin How Now Brown Cow, with peanut butter, chocolate and coffee, balanced just right.

Manassas has truly reinvigorated itself in the twenty years since I lived there. The charming and bustling Old Town area now has plenty of parking to serve the burgeoning arts and food scene. I can't wait to go back, and the Public House will be my first stop. ●

*Public House Kitchen & Brewery*  
9406 Battle St., Manassas, Va. 20110  
(571) 292-1427  
[phbrewpub.com](http://phbrewpub.com)

# Feeling Peckish?



Wet your beak with these delicious chicken dishes

## Rotisserie Chicken-Biscuit Casserole

Recipe courtesy of Family Features/Culinary.net

### Ingredients:

1 whole rotisserie chicken	¼ cup sour cream
8 refrigerated biscuits	2 cups frozen vegetables
1 can (10 ¾ oz.) cream of mushroom soup	½ teaspoon dried basil
½ cup milk	⅛ teaspoon pepper

### Directions:

Heat oven to 450 degrees. Remove meat from rotisserie chicken and shred; set aside. Discard bones. Cut biscuits into quarters; set aside. In saucepan, stir soup, milk, sour cream, chicken, vegetables, basil and pepper. Cook until boiling. Spoon chicken mixture into baking dish. Arrange quartered biscuits over filling. Bake 10-12 minutes, or until biscuits are golden brown.

## Chicken Puffs

Recipe courtesy of Wendy Lankford, Red Oak, Va.

### Ingredients:

2 cups chicken, cooked and chopped	⅛ teaspoon pepper
3 oz. cream cheese	1 tablespoon onion, chopped
¼ teaspoon salt	3 pkgs. crescent rolls
2 tablespoons butter, melted	

### Directions:

Mix all ingredients except rolls together. Place a portion on each roll (for appetizers cut rolls in half). Pull corners together and pinch. Place on cookie sheet and bake at 400 degrees until slightly browned. (An egg wash makes this very pretty and seals edges.)



## Warm Pasta Salad with Chicken

Recipe Courtesy of Christine Grande, Lovettsville, Va.

### Ingredients:

- 8 oz. whole wheat curly pasta, like rotini or cavatappi
- ½ cup plus 2 tablespoons any vinaigrette salad dressing, divided
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 2 large carrots, sliced into quarter-inch circles
- 1 large sweet bell pepper (any color), diced
- 2 medium zucchinis, sliced into quarter-inch half moons
- 5 or 6 white button or baby bella mushrooms, sliced
- 1 can artichoke hearts, drained and quartered
- 1 jar or pouch sun-dried tomatoes, drained and julienned
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon each of basil, oregano and parsley
- ⅛ teaspoon black pepper
- 2 cups cooked chicken breast, diced
- grated Romano or Parmesan cheese

### Directions:

Cook pasta according to package directions except do not add salt or anything else to the water. Cook for one minute longer than al dente time. Drain pasta well (do not rinse) and return to pot. Stir in 1/2 cup of vinaigrette dressing. Cover with lid and keep warm. In a large sauté pan or wok, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add onion and carrots and sauté until carrots are crisp-tender, about 4 minutes. Add the remaining vegetables and the dried herbs and sauté until vegetables start to soften and mushrooms begin to darken, about 2 minutes. Stir in chicken, black pepper, and remaining vinaigrette dressing. Cover and cook until chicken is thoroughly heated, about 2-3 minutes. Turn off heat and mix in the pasta. Add more vinaigrette, if desired. Serve topped with grated cheese.

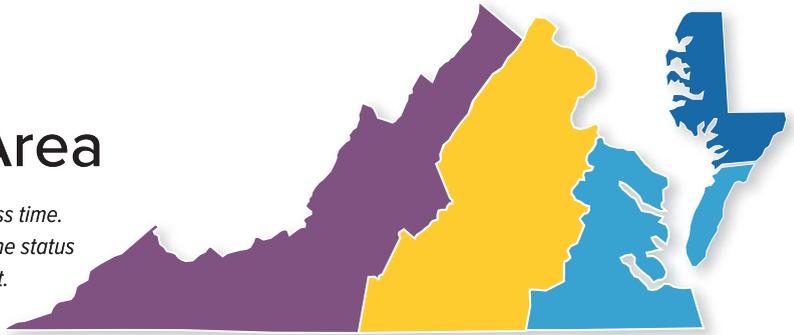
## Got a tasty treat to share?

Email your original vegetarian dishes, spinach dishes and carrot recipes to [cooperativekitchen@co-opliving.com](mailto:cooperativekitchen@co-opliving.com), or mail to Cooperative Kitchen, c/o Cooperative Living, P.O. Box 2340, Glen Allen, VA 23058-2340 and include your email address.

You also can submit them online at [co-opliving.com/cooperativekitchen](http://co-opliving.com/cooperativekitchen). Selected recipes will be published in future issues of *Cooperative Living* or at [co-opliving.com](http://co-opliving.com). Because of volume we cannot guarantee publication of all recipes. Reader recipes are submitted in good faith. *Cooperative Living* cannot warrant results.

# Events Around the Area

*Editor's note: All information is believed to be accurate as of press time. Before you attend, please use the contact information to verify the status of an event. Listing an event does not constitute an endorsement.*



## BLUE RIDGE WEST

### MARCH

**11-12, 18-19 HIGHLAND CO.** The Highland County Maple Festival. [highlandcounty.org](http://highlandcounty.org).

**17 CLIFTON FORGE.** Main Street's Annual Shortest St. Patrick's Day Parade in VA. 510 Main Street. 5:30 p.m. (540) 862-2000. [cliftonforgemainstreet.org](http://cliftonforgemainstreet.org).

### APRIL

**8 CLIFTON FORGE.** Main Street's Annual Easter Parade. Downtown Clifton Forge. 510 Main Street. 11 a.m. (540) 862-2000. [cliftonforgemainstreet.org](http://cliftonforgemainstreet.org).

**8 MIDDLETOWN.** Easter Egg Hunt. Middletown Park. 11 a.m. (540) 869-2226. [middletownva.gov](http://middletownva.gov).

**8 SHENANDOAH.** Free Community Easter Egg Hunt. Shenandoah Community Library. 12-1 p.m. [townofshenandoah.com](http://townofshenandoah.com).

## PIEDMONT

### MARCH

**18 DOSWELL.** Saltfish Breakfast. Doswell Ruritan Club. 6-9 a.m. [doswellruritan.org](http://doswellruritan.org).

**31 HAYMARKET.** "Wizard of Oz" Tea. Evergreen Fire Station 15. 11 a.m.-2 p.m. [htcgardenclub.com](http://htcgardenclub.com).

### APRIL

**8 MADISON.** 2023 En Plein Air Seasonal Series. Revaluation Vineyards. [revaluationvineyards.com](http://revaluationvineyards.com).

**15 DOSWELL.** Saltfish Breakfast. Doswell Ruritan Club. 6-9 a.m. [doswellruritan.org](http://doswellruritan.org).

## TIDEWATER

### MARCH

**18 KING WILLIAM.** 8th Annual O'Nanock St. Patrick's Parade. Market Street. 3 p.m. [onancock.org](http://onancock.org).

### APRIL

**11 KING WILLIAM.** Fish Fry. King William Ruritan Club. 4-8 p.m. (804) 363-1781.

**15 COLONIAL BEACH.** Virginia Osprey Festival. Town Hill. 9 a.m.-4 p.m. [vaospreyfestival.org](http://vaospreyfestival.org).

## MARYLAND

### MARCH

**17 EASTON.** St. Patrick's Day Parade. S. Washington Street. 5:30 p.m. [discovereaston.com](http://discovereaston.com).

**PRINT DEADLINES:** April 1 for May 15-June 15  
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Early Resilience tomato.

# A Matter of Taste

Story courtesy of Statewide Editors Association

*Your guide to growing delicious region-specific tomatoes*

**W**ant to know the best tomato varieties to grow in your region? Here are some suggestions for those living in Virginia, Maryland and Delaware:

## PURPLE ZEBRA

If you want a tomato that looks just as good as it tastes, search no more. According to All-America Selections, Purple Zebra is a national winner with fruit that is “firm in texture, complex in flavor and has a taste more sweet than acidic.” This variety has high resistance to tomato mosaic virus, verticillium wilt, fusarium wilt and late blight. Start seeds indoors 4–6 weeks before the last frost for best results. In the garden, space transplants no less than 2 feet apart or, if using containers, select 5-gallon pots with drainage. This variety produces 150–200



Purple Zebra tomato.

green-striped, purple tomatoes and requires staking. Most gardeners can begin harvesting tomatoes 80–85 days after transplant.

## CELANO

Another national winner, Celano, is an early-producing, high-yielding grape-type tomato for your patio or garden. According to AAS trial notes, Celano developed fruit much earlier and produced much longer than comparable varieties. Deep-red, oblong tomatoes typically weigh a little over half an ounce and taste sweet. As for disease resistance, this variety has superior tolerance to late blight. Transplants should be spaced at least 2 feet apart in the garden and will benefit from staking.

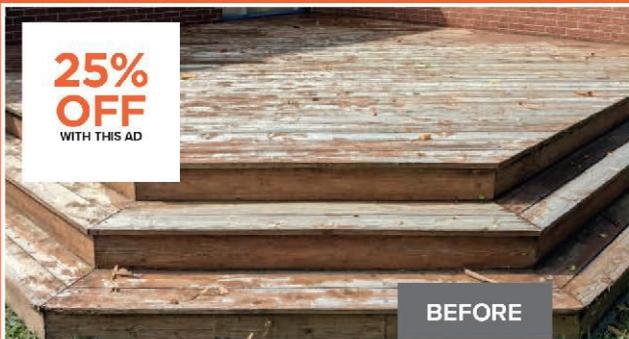
## EARLY RESILIENCE

Early Resilience is a fantastic selection for canning enthusiasts. Each plant will produce roughly 25 tomatoes with good-quality flesh and excellent flavor. This variety displayed high resistance to blossom-end rot and numerous diseases. From transplant, gardeners can expect to harvest tomatoes after 70–115 days. For best results, space each plant at least 24 inches apart. Staking may help but is not required. ●



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# Not Just Another Syrupy Column

by Margo Oxendine, Contributing Columnist

*The Highland County Maple Festival is just around the corner*



**W**inter is supposedly almost over.

But then again, there's the Highland County Maple Festival. It's sort of a sure bet around

here that on one of the two weekends of Maple Festival, there will be snow.

But that's not much of a problem; the Maple Festival goes on for two weekends. One of those is bound to be filled with sunshine. Even snow does not stop the visitors from streaming in for that sweet syrup, those delectable donuts, the pancakes and the crafts.

The dates for the Highland County Maple Festival this year are March 11-12, and March 18-19.

Where is it? Almost anywhere in Highland County — from Hightown to McDowell to Monterey. Much of the action takes place inside the “new” school, which serves all grades; and, also at the old school, where you'll find the Highland Center, on Spruce Street. Just follow the crowds, wherever you land. You'll find wonderful stuff everywhere.

Those donuts I mentioned? Well, know now that one is nowhere near enough. A fresh, maple syrup donut, still warm, is one of the best things I've ever eaten. I remember one Maple Fest when my mother and I waited in a long,

snaking line for at least 45 minutes.

Folks were purchasing boxes of dozens of donuts, sometimes balanced in a veritable tower as they walked by us to get out the door. When we finally got to the ordering counter, we said, “We'll have four donuts, please.”

“Just four?” the people around us exclaimed. “You waited all this time for just four donuts? That's kind of sad.” No, it wasn't sad at all. We got back to the car and sat there, devouring our still-warm, delicious donuts. Didn't feel a bit of guilt about it, either.

I have a suggestion for a place you might want to take a little trek to during the festival: Southernmost Maple, a farm found by taking the little road across from the Bolar Ruritan Club. (By the way, the Ruritan Club is noted for its hot-off-the-griddle pancakes and sausage. Another long line, but also well worth the wait.)

Southernmost Maple, up scenic Bolar Road, is run by the family and friends of owners Mike and Diane Puffenbarger and is a destination in and of itself. There is an authentic old-time country store wherein you'll find Amish butter, syrup in all sizes of containers, buckwheat flour, jams, and lots of home-baked goods that might include the best maple-oatmeal-pecan cookies you've ever eaten.

Inside, you'll find a real restroom



(difficult to find during any festival, anywhere.) But more importantly, lots of live, good

ole country music and bluegrass, with Mike Puffenbarger on the stand-up bass. Oh yeah: And pancakes; buttermilk or buckwheat. And of course, plenty of that tasty syrup.

Outside at Southernmost, you'll find a food trailer, selling homemade barbecue and delectable brisket and the usual hot dogs along with other fare. They'll be frying up donuts in the trailer, too, so this is your chance to forget the long lines in Monterey, and get what you're craving, fast.

There are more crafters than you can count sprinkled throughout the festival venues. But this year, the Highland Center is featuring a slew of them, including a local artisans' showcase, and plenty of handmade items. There are many excellent artisans in Highland County, and if you want them all in one place, then this should be another of your destinations.

If you want more info about the Highland Maple Festival, call 540-468-2550, the Chamber of Commerce office. Or, just hop in the car and take off toward Virginia's “Little Switzerland,” for a sweet, tasty, happy weekend. ●

To order Margo's book, “A Party of One,” call 540-468-2147 Mon-Wed., 9-5, or email [therecorderoffice@gmail.com](mailto:therecorderoffice@gmail.com).



PHOTO COURTESY OF POWELL VALLEY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE



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# UnFURgettable MOMENTS!

by Laura Emery, Staff Writer

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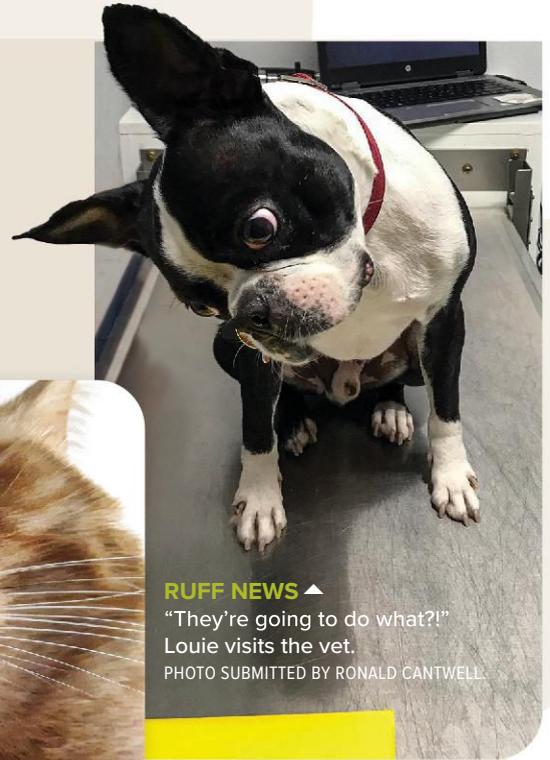
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◀ **NOT RIGHT MEOW**

This cat is feline no rush to roll over.  
PHOTO SUBMITTED KATHY DECASSAN.



**RUFF NEWS** ▲

"They're going to do what?!"  
Louie visits the vet.  
PHOTO SUBMITTED BY RONALD CANTWELL



▲ **SIMON SAYS STICK OUT YOUR TONGUE**

Simon is purr-fecting his selfie skills.  
PHOTO SUBMITTED BY KAYLA HOOVER.

◀ **TOO CLOSE FUR COMFORT**

Nash is awkwardly close to little Memphis.

PHOTO SUBMITTED BY AMANDA LEAGH HUSKEY.



**BELLY UP, BUTTERCUP!** ▶

Patches is exhausted.  
PHOTO SUBMITTED BY SUSAN NICKERSON.



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