Guest Column

YOUR CO-OP annual meeting is more than a picnic; it represents one of the most important things that makes your cooperative different than a typical investor-owned utility — local democratic control. We are owned by you, our members, and you elect your local board members at the annual meeting each year. Our annual meeting has seen some changes over the years, ranging from being held in a field under a tent for our 50th celebration, moving to Conneaut Lake Park for many years and back to the Crawford County Fairgrounds location.

This year will mark another change, and we believe a marked improvement that helps us continue to provide a great co-op family event coupled with exercising the co-op principle — Concern for Community. The date of the annual meeting will be Saturday, Aug. 17, at 11 a.m. at the Crawford County Fairgrounds — also the first day of the Crawford County Fair.

We are working diligently to iron out all of the logistics, but here is a preview of the plan. A large tent will be located on the parking property adjacent from Gate 2 (on the north side of Dickson Road). Members will park in this parking area and attend the annual meeting at 11 a.m. under the tent. This meeting will last approximately one hour.

Upon registering at the annual meeting, members will receive a gate pass to the Crawford County Fair that can be used only on Saturday, Aug. 17. Registering members will also receive a $25 coupon book that can be used only on Aug. 17 at food vendors once inside the fair gates. These vendors will have a sign indicating that they honor the coupon books. Each membership registering will also have the option to purchase one additional $25 coupon book for $15. Coupon books cannot be used for games.

For any member who has attended our annual meeting held at the Crawford County Fairgrounds, you already know the village that it takes to accomplish this mini-carnival. In 2018, we had almost all of our employees working in addition to over 100 community volunteers from eight different youth and civic groups. We will continue to support these community groups, just in other ways.

I am a firm believer that if you don’t push yourself outside of your comfort zone, you will never grow. Although this is a change from years past, we are very excited about the opportunity to offer our members an even bigger carnival atmosphere for our annual meeting at an affordable cost. Look to Penn Lines and our website for details as they progress.

Cooperatively yours,

Linda King
VP of Communications & Energy Solutions
YOU ARE INVITED! Once again, your board of directors and staff invite you to attend a member meeting. Nominating meetings are scheduled for Districts 1, 2 and 4. An informational meeting has also been scheduled (see above). These meetings follow the same agenda and allow you an opportunity to learn about the cooperative, ask questions or offer suggestions.

During each meeting, presentations will be given by Kathryn Cooper-Winters, board chair, and Bill Buchanan, president & CEO. Three of the four meetings will begin at 6 p.m. with a meal and generally wrap up by 8 p.m.

The member resource meeting held at the Movies in Meadville will begin at 7 p.m. All who attend this meeting will receive a movie gift certificate after the presentations. No meal will be provided.

Members can attend any of the meetings regardless of their district.

IF YOUR district is listed above, and you are interested in running for the board seat, there are a few qualifications you must meet before becoming a director (this is not a complete list):

- Your primary residential home (within that district) must receive Northwestern REC electric service for at least one year prior.
- You must be a member in good standing with no outstanding balances for at least one year.
- You cannot be a close relative of an employee or current director.
- You cannot be convicted of a felony within the past five years.
- You cannot be a candidate or incumbent for elected public office at a county-wide level or above.

For a complete list of qualifications, please visit NorthwesternREC.coop.

You must be nominated by another member at the nomination meeting held within your district. Petitions with at least 15 member signatures can also be submitted as nominations.

All nominees must meet the qualifications as outlined in Article IV, Section 4, of the bylaws (found online) and are considered tentative until validated by the Member Panel on Director Elections.
AUTHOR ANTHONY J. D’Angelo observed that, “Without a sense of caring, there can be no sense of community.”

To a large degree, this reflects Northwestern REC’s philosophy toward our members and the broader service territory we serve. As a cooperative, we have a different “bottom line.” While our priority is always to provide reliable and safe energy, there is another equally important part of this equation. Your well-being and that of the larger community we serve are of paramount concern.

To us, you are not just a customer; you are a member of our co-op and without you, we would not exist.

In 1936, Northwestern REC was founded to fulfill a vital need in our community that would not have otherwise been met. Concerned local leaders came together to build this co-op and bring electricity where there was none.

At that time, members of the community understood we were different because they likely knew someone who helped to create Northwestern REC. For most people, our founding and its circumstances have been long forgotten. Over time, folks in the community may have come to think of us as simply another energy provider. But we are not. We are a co-op that is constantly evolving to meet the needs of the communities we serve, and we are able to do this because of members like you.

Since our inception, we have sought feedback and engagement from you and that of the larger community to guide our long-term decisions. This is why we hold annual meetings and other events, such as member meetings, throughout the year. We host events like this to engage with you and obtain your feedback.

We strive to find new ways to help you use energy more efficiently. We’re always looking to explore more options that will help you manage your energy use, such as the Electric Appliance Rebate Program. In short, we are always seeking to keep pace with the changing energy environment, evolving technology and shifting consumer expectations.

Northwestern REC members help guide important co-op decisions that improve and enrich the community. We value the perspective of our board members, who are members of the co-op and community — just like you.

As a local business, we have a stake in the community. That’s why we support local charitable organizations such as the United Ways throughout our service territory, and through our programs like Member-to-Member and Operation Roundup. When you support these efforts, you are supporting the community and making it a better place for everyone.

While the times may have changed, our mission and outlook have not. We view our role as a catalyst for good. Working together, we can accomplish great things for our community now and in the future.

You are more than a customer

Buy 2 games, get 3rd free

Redeem the Co-op Connections Card discount at Lost LANES in Cambridge Springs.

Use your Co-op Connections Card to buy 2 bowling games and get the 3rd game FREE. Limit 4 people per visit. Not valid with any other promotion.

Co-op Connections is another benefit to being a member of your local electric cooperative.

Visit our website at www.NorthwesternREC.coop or call 1-800-352-0014!
Types of Heat Pumps

There are three main types of heat pump systems. Use the information below to determine the system that’s best suited for your climate and home.

**Air-Source Heat Pumps**

- Most commonly used heat pumps
- Moves heat rather than converting it from a fuel like combustion heating systems do
- Can reduce heating costs by about 50 percent when compared to baseboard heaters or electric furnaces
- Newer, more efficient systems now represent a legitimate space heating alternative in colder regions like the Northeast and Midwest.

*Note: If temperatures in your area drop below 10 to 25 F, you will need an auxiliary heating system (depending on the size of the system).*

**Geothermal Heat Pumps**

- More expensive to install but provide more energy savings for heating and cooling
- Move heat through pipes buried underground
- When compared to a conventional heating system, can reduce energy use by 25 to 50 percent
- Effective in extreme climates
- Not ideal for smaller lots and certain soil conditions

**Ductless Mini-Split Heat Pumps**

- Easier to install, quiet, small in size
- Flexible for heating and cooling individual rooms and smaller spaces
- No energy loss through ductwork, which accounts for more than 30 percent of a home’s energy use for space heating/cooling.
- Installation can be pricey, but federal incentives may be available

Heat pump systems should be installed by a licensed professional. Contact your local electric cooperative for more information about options and potential incentives.

*Sources: Dept. of Energy and Consumer Reports*
Would your home pass an electrical inspection?

IF YOU’RE getting ready to sell your home or just wondering how electrically sound it is, there are some general guidelines out there to assess the condition of your home’s wiring and electrical bones. Although it varies depending on where you live, most local codes follow the National Electric Code (NEC).

The NEC is an industry-specific, jargon-filled document that outlines required practices for all aspects of residential and commercial electrical installation. Don’t worry; you don’t have to Google it and read it from cover to cover, but know that your local code could vary. Local code always wins out when there are variances, so be sure to check with your qualified electrician or local building department (start with your city or town) for specific code requirements.

Electrical malfunction is dangerous. U.S. fire departments responded to an estimated average of 45,210 reported U.S. home structure fires involving electrical failure or malfunction per year from 2010 to 2014, according to the National Fire Protection Agency. The home fires resulted in 420 deaths, 1,370 injuries and an annual $1.4 billion in direct property damage.

In general, here are some all-house guidelines that an inspector would look for; remember, they may or may not align with your local electrical code but they are NEC-mandated. If your home has any of the following defects, it may not pass an electrical safety inspection:

- Old knob-and-tube, along with BX cable wiring, common in the U.S. from about 1880 to 1930
- New lights and receptacles installed into old wiring
- Overcrowded wires; i.e., too many wires bundled together producing excess heat
- Spliced wires that were illegally installed (they must be installed by an approved method)
- Broken or missing carbon monoxide detectors or smoke alarms (whether smoke alarms must be hard-wired depends on the age of the home and in most cases, whether any home improvement projects required a permit)
- Non-insulated/non-contact-rated recessed lights that touch attic insulation, which is a fire hazard
- Improper overcurrent protection, which means the breaker or fuse is too large for the wire rating
- Improper grounding and bonding of electrical panels and devices

Some other room-specific things to look for include:

**Kitchen**

- Does your electric range, cooktop or oven have a dedicated 240-volt circuit?
- Is the breaker for the range, cooktop or oven sized correctly?
- Does your island have its own outlet? (The NEC has outlet requirements for kitchen islands, peninsulas and countertops.)
- Does your microwave, refrigerator, microwave and garbage disposal each have its own circuit?

**Bathroom**

- Are outlets GFCI (ground fault circuit interrupters)? GFCIs are designed to protect people from electric shock around water.
- Do your combination fan/lights have their own 20-amp circuit?
- Do the light fixtures in the shower or tub area have a “lens” cover? Are they moisture resistant?

**Other rooms (living, dining, family, bedrooms)**

- Does each room have a wall switch installed beside the entry door?
- Are outlets installed no farther than 12 feet apart?
- Are ceiling fixtures controlled by a wall switch and not just a pull chain?

There are also hallway, staircase and garage code requirements, as well as those for the electrical service panel and wiring. Check with your qualified electrician or the city or town where you live for specific code requirements in all areas of your home.

**Arc-fault circuit interrupters (AFCIs)**

Many prominent electrical and homebuilding experts believe that using arc-fault circuit interrupters (AFCIs) in these areas of homes have a significant impact on homeowner safety and that they reduce the number of lives lost in home electrical fires.

An AFCI is designed to detect series faults, line to neutral faults and line to ground faults, effectively stopping a fire before it starts.