

# Sullivan County Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

## SULLIVAN COUNTY REC

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### STAFF

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**\*\*Board Leadership Certificate**

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### OFFICE HOURS

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

## Co-ops Grow Stronger Together with You



**IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE ANOTHER** summer has passed, and fall officially rolled in Sept. 23.

Fall is my favorite time of year. Vibrant colors, the morning caw of crows, cooler nights followed by warm (not hot) days, the start of Pennsylvania archery season, and the list goes on. For cooperatives across Pennsylvania and the United States, fall ushers in National Co-op Month in October. And just as I celebrate the arrival of fall, we would like to celebrate the cooperative difference and what it means for you and our community to be a part of this organization.

Sullivan County Rural Electric Cooperative (SCREC) is one of 832 electric distribution cooperatives across the United States. Apart from being not-for-profit, our purpose and mission are not so different from our regulated counterparts that provide electric service to their consumers. So what makes your electric cooperative different from investor-owned electric utilities that hasn't already been discussed in previous articles? Let's look at how growth-minded SCREC supports our members and the communities we serve.

**Co-ops help grow communities.** "Concern for community" is one of our seven core cooperative values. SCREC is committed to being involved in the communities throughout our service territory. From education to volunteering and lending "Helping Hands," we're here to help make our rural communities the flagship of Americanism.

**Co-ops grow together.** "Cooperation among cooperatives" is another one of our core values. SCREC better serves our members by working together with local, national, regional, and international organizations. We work together to share lessons learned, successful strategies, and better ways to serve you — our members. We are members of the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, and Touchstone Energy Cooperative. We're better when we grow together.

**Co-ops grow tomorrow's leaders.** "Education, training, and information" also appears on the core-value list. Electric co-ops serve as fertile ground for growing tomorrow's leaders through a variety of youth-engagement programs. SCREC provides school demonstrations, participates in community events and the Rural Electric Youth Tour program, and provides scholarships to high school graduates looking to further their education or vocation beyond the 12th grade. We are committed to providing opportunities for local youth to learn and thrive in our community and to giving back to our community as well.

**Finally, co-ops grow for you, our members.** While our mission remains the same — to provide safe, dependable electric energy and related services to you, our members, in an environmentally sound and fiscally responsible manner — how we accomplish that mission continues to change. Big challenges in the way of inflationary costs, more frequent and more severe storms, and invasive species and fungi invading our forests, would be impossible to manage if we didn't continue to grow. As we continue to fulfill our mission, your cooperative will apply emerging technologies to keep the lights on in a cost-responsible manner. We will never stop growing for you.

Please join me in celebrating National Co-op Month. We're lucky to be part of a program that has grown from an idea — one focused on setting profits aside and providing a better way of life for rural Americans — into reality. And 86 years later, cooperatives are still providing electricity to more than 42 million people across 48 states. Semper Fidelis. 🇺🇸

**JOHN LYKENS**  
CEO

# A Life of Rural Electric Cooperative Commitment

SARAH PARRISH, COOPERATIVE COMMUNICATOR

**CHANGE IS HARD, ESPECIALLY FOR** us rural folks.

How many times have you heard your pap or grandpa say, “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it” or “Newer ain’t always better” or “I can’t keep up with these new-fangled machines!”

What’s true today was true 80-plus years ago when electricity was first brought to our neck of the woods and the rest of Pennsylvania by rural electric cooperatives. Folks were hesitant — heck, they were downright scared: Was it safe? How would it change the only way of life they had ever known?

Fred Fiester remembers those days.

## Joining a cooperative

Fred was born March 19, 1928, to Grace J. (Gardner) and Leo H. Fiester on the family farm on Old Route 220, outside of Laporte. He and his four brothers and one sister were luckier than most children growing up in rural Sullivan County in the 1920s and 1930s; they never lived without electricity.

“We were very fortunate,” Fred recalls. His family used a 32-volt light plant to create their own electricity, which was then stored in radio batteries. When one of the 16 glass

batteries needed to be charged, they’d take it down the mountain to Sonestown to charge it.

With their light plant the Fiesters could run an ice box to keep food cold and Mrs. Fiester could use an electric iron. They were also able to use lightbulbs and had a washing machine.

In the 1940s, the Fiesters purchased a gas engine and generator to use in the barn to power milking machines. Before this all the cows were milked by hand. They bottled their own raw milk and peddled it in Laporte and at Lake Mokoma until 1944, when Fred went to Penn State University.

It was around this time that the first cooperative electric lines were being strung in the county by Sullivan County Rural Electric Cooperative (REC).

Service became available to the Fiesters in 1938, but they didn’t join the cooperative until the 1940s. The family’s first upgrade was an electric-operated butter churn, which took the place of the hand-crank barrel churn they had been using.

“We always felt that our own service was more reliable,” Fred says.

Little did he know that one day he would be working for a cooperative.

## Working for a cooperative

In 1948, Fred married Helen Kuhnle, and they had two children, Susan and Leo. To support his new family, he worked as a veteran training programmer from 1946 to 1953 before returning to Penn State to graduate.

Fred’s co-op career began in 1955, when he was hired by Wysox-based Claverack REC as an electrification adviser — now known as a member services representative.

For the next 35 years, Fred saw huge changes and advancements as he served the cooperative’s members.

He says two hand-dug holes with set poles was a good day’s work for the line crews when he first started. By the time he retired, Claverack REC had equipment with augers to set multiple poles a day. Safety training and equipment have come a long way, too, Fred says. Back then, lineworkers had no other choice but to climb poles to make repairs, and rubber and leather gloves were their only protection. Today, lineworkers have access to fiberglass equipment, bucket trucks, and extensive safety gear and equipment that is regularly tested and certified.



**A LIFE OF COOPERATION:** Fred Fiester’s family farm was first energized by Sullivan County Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) in the 1940s, and he continues to be a member of our co-op to this day. He dedicated 35 years of his life to serving the members of Claverack REC and is a true supporter of rural electrification in Pennsylvania.

Lineworkers nowadays also take part in rigorous training and schooling that includes continuing education.

In the office, the biggest advancement during Fred's tenure was the shift from paper maps to a computer mapping system. Automated calls and call centers didn't exist, either, he says. Office staff would work 24-hour shifts during storms, taking calls from members and keeping line crews informed of outages.

As time passed, members also had to upgrade their service because their homes and farms were using more power. Fred was tasked with visiting these locations, then laying out the new services and meter poles.

By the time Fred retired in 1990, Claverack's territory extended into a corner of Lackawanna County, above Harvey's Lake in Luzerne County, into Wyoming County and Bradford County, north of Dushore in Sullivan County, a little bit into Tioga County, and into northern Lycoming County near Roaring Branch.

"We [Claverack] covered all of the rural areas, while Penelec had all the towns," Fred says. "We did grow in size from when I first started. More miles of line and more members on each mile slightly increased our density."

## Cooperative dedication

From the start of Fred's cooperative career in 1955 to now, many things have changed at cooperatives in Pennsylvania. While change can be hard — especially for us rural folks — one thing that hasn't broken or needed to be fixed is our dedication to serving our members.

Fred and his story are a testament to the lifelong dedication your cooperative has to the community and to making advancements that keep improving service to you. 📌

## SAFETY MESSAGE:

It's never too early to discuss electrical safety with children. Remind them of these tips:

1. Don't climb trees near electric power lines.
2. Don't fly kites near electric power lines.
3. Never put anything (other than a plug) inside an outlet.
4. Don't plug too many items into an outlet.
5. Never take a plugged-in item near water, such as a pool, bathtub, or sink.
6. Stay AWAY from downed electric power lines and tell an adult about them. 📌



**COMMITTED TO COMMUNITY:** Sullivan County Rural Electric Cooperative (SCREC) Journeyman Lineman Kendall Achey operates an auger at Sullivan County Elementary School, where new playground equipment was installed before the start of the school year. One of the seven cooperative principles is "concern for community," which SCREC staff embrace by volunteering and lending a hand throughout cooperative territory.

## Dave Kepner Promoted to Crew Chief

**SARAH PARRISH**, COOPERATIVE COMMUNICATOR

**DAVE KEPNER HAS BEEN PROMOTED** to crew chief of the Operations Department at Sullivan County Rural Electric Cooperative (SCREC).

Dave had formerly been a senior lineman at the co-op before taking his new role in June.

"I saw it as an opportunity to push and challenge myself in many ways, from all the responsibilities of the position to the hope of personal growth," Dave says.

As part of his new position, Dave will plan, organize, and schedule the day-to-day work for line crews and then delegate the tasks. He will also manage oversight and safety on job sites.

"The position requires a lot of responsibility," SCREC Manager of Electric Operations Todd Molyneux explains, "but Dave is very detail-oriented and is going to do a great job at being crew chief."

Dave, his wife Heather, son Grayson, and family cat live outside of Forksville.

Congratulations, Dave, on this well-deserved promotion. 📌



**PROMOTED:** Dave Kepner of Forksville has been promoted to crew chief at Sullivan County Rural Electric Cooperative. Here, he secures himself to a pole before climbing to the equipment above.

# The Power Behind Sullivan County REC: Our Employees

*A Monthly Spotlight*

**SARAH PARRISH**, COOPERATIVE COMMUNICATOR

**ANOTHER PENN LINES, ANOTHER** employee spotlight! This month we showcase Tyler Worthen, operations assistant II.

Tyler, his wife, Amanda, and two children, Bella and Isaac, live in Hillsgrove with their bunny, guinea pig, and three cats. Tyler likes to spend his free time playing cornhole — in fact, he and his buddy thought they were pretty good until they played in a tournament ... practice makes perfect! He also enjoys video games, summer outdoor activities, fishing and working on his truck — a 1981

Dodge D150, a Lil' Red Express clone. He is also the assistant coach for the Loyalsock Youth Football Program.

Tyler has a bachelor of science degree in computer and information science from ECPI University in Virginia Beach, VA. He also served eight years in the U.S. Navy and worked for six years as a sales and service technician for Frontier Communications.

In November 2020, Tyler joined the cooperative as a lineworker.

"The job was closer to home, and I felt that I could gain more knowledge

and have the potential to grow in a career here, rather than at Frontier," Tyler says.

As a lineworker, he enjoyed being outdoors, the physical labor, and crazy storms. His favorite perk was being part of a tight-knit team. Tyler, however, wanted to use his IT knowledge, so when the position of operations assistant II was created, he applied. He began this journey of his career this past March, and hasn't slowed down since.

Tyler has many responsibilities: ensuring the cooperative's maps are accurate, managing metering and advanced metering infrastructure, gathering real-time information from substations and the distribution system, programming and troubleshooting electrical equipment, overseeing alternative energy interconnections, investigating stray voltage, understanding emerging technologies, and handling radio communications. Tyler also plans to go back to school for electrical engineering.

"It'll help further my understanding of the engineering and design side of power systems," he says. "This position is mentally challenging; it's hard trying to remember everything I learned 10 years ago! But I really like using my IT knowledge."

It takes dozens of different talents to make your co-op work — electrical engineering, accounting, IT, communications ... the list goes on. Each person's devotion to serving our members keeps us up and running. 📍



**MEET THE WORTHENS:** Tyler Worthen, operations assistant II for Sullivan County Rural Electric Cooperative, visits Hershey's Chocolate World with his wife, Amanda, and children, Bella and Isaac.