

# Sullivan County Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

## Sullivan County REC

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### Staff

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

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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

\*Credentialed Cooperative Director  
\*\*Board Leadership Certificate  
\*\*\*Director Gold Certificate

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

## From the CEO



# Watching paint dry

By Craig A. Harting

THE PHRASE “watching paint dry” is an American take on the English expression “watching the grass grow.” I’m hoping this article isn’t quite that bad, but I would like to talk about our website this month.

We just updated our website, and you may be interested in a few things. Under “About Us,” you’ll find our history, bylaws and information about the board of directors. Qualifications for being a director and duties of a director are listed here as well as how to run for a seat on the board.

With the cooperative, you elect a board of directors to approve the budget, set rates and policies, in addition to hiring the CEO. There are nine directors from around the system, but they all are charged with representing all members. There are three elected each year, and they each serve three-year terms.

### Online account

At the bottom of the homepage, there are several icon blocks. The first one is “Manage Account.” Clicking on this will allow you to create an online account where you can view your history of billing and payments on various graphs. More than five years of history are shown so you can go back in time.

You can pay your bill online with this account using a number of payment options: credit card, checking account or savings account. You can set your account up for automatic payment, which a third of our accounts (1,600) are doing now. Or you can schedule your own payment every

month when it’s convenient for you. Nearly half of our membership — more than 2,800 accounts — are using this method of payment.

### Paperless billing

How about paperless billing? I know it is not for everyone, but it really is convenient for many folks. With the online account, you can always go back and print a paper copy if you need it. We have nearly a third of our members using paperless billing.


One of these 1,400 members will win a \$250 bill credit on July 1. These are pretty good odds. Your name can be in the pool if you sign up for paperless billing before July 1.

### Outage map

A really useful feature is the “Outage Map,” the third large icon on the bottom of the homepage. This will take a long time to load the first time, but it gives you the inside view of what is happening in a storm. You actually see what we see in the Operations Center.

You can see all the outage areas and where the crews are. This is the best information we can give you as to the progress of restoration. Each outage can take several hours or more to repair, although some of them can end up having the same cause.

### Summertime

It is summertime and the grass is growing, but instead of watching it, check out some of the cool features on our website at [screc.com](http://screc.com). 

# Serving the community for 20 years

By John Zelewicz  
Penn Lines Writer

MANY have hopes and dreams of one day being able to own their own business. Sadly though, for many it remains just that — a dream. But Kelly and Shawn Johnson's dream became a reality when they became the proud owners of the Forksville Inn & Tavern 20 years ago.

Located in the beautiful Endless Mountains of Sullivan County, the Forksville Inn & Tavern is situated just outside of Forksville on Route 87.

While Shawn's family came from the area (his father was from Nordmont and his mother was from Eagles Mere), they never came to the Forksville area very often. That is until Shawn's sister and brother-in-law purchased the Hillsgrove Store. Shawn and Kelly came up to help them get settled in and, like many, fell in love with the area.

They say timing is everything, and so it was for the Johnsons. At the time, Waldo and Joan Kilmer owned the Forksville Inn and were looking to sell it.

Even though they had no experience with running a restaurant/bar, the Johnsons decided to take the plunge and purchase the Forksville Inn.

"We had no idea what it was like to run this type of business," Kelly says. "But when we walked in, it just felt right. We started looking at it in March and ended up buying it in August."

Since the business opened, there have been six owners. The Johnsons have owned and operated the business longer than any previous owner — over 20 years! Over the years, the business has operated under several names: Gardners, The Inn at Forksville, Forksville Inn, and now the Forksville Inn & Tavern.

When the Johnsons opened, they wanted to make sure the customers were happy, so they asked them what they wanted. One of the things they



**DREAM COMES TRUE:** Many dream about owning and operating their own business. For Kelly and Shawn Johnson, their dream became a reality 20 years ago when they purchased the Forksville Inn & Tavern.

heard over and over again was that the restaurant/bar needed to be consistent with their hours and specials. And it seems to be working. If you stop in during the week or weekend, you'll find the place filled with people enjoying one of the delicious meals they offer.

"We kept the menu pretty much as it was before, although we did update it a wee bit and took off a few items that the previous owners had," Shawn reports. "But overall, we kept a lot of the same things that were on the menu when we bought the place."

While the Johnsons are hands-on when it comes to the Forksville Inn & Tavern, they recently hired Mark Lebo as general manager to help oversee day-to-day operations.

## Dealing with the pandemic

As with many other businesses across the country, the Johnsons have had to deal with business uncertainty during the pandemic. Many businesses had to face the uncertainty of state mandates limiting the number of people they could have, and at certain times were required to be closed completely. Like many other businesses, the Johnsons had to find ways to meet their customers' needs. Fortunately, the Johnsons are creative people and found ways to do that.

"One of the things we did was offer family meals," Kelly says. "These box meals consisted of steaks, baked potatoes, barbecue, and chicken and biscuits for eight people. We would put the meal together and sell it at one

price. People could take their meals home and cook them, or we would cook it, and it would be ready to eat.”

Annual events had to either be canceled or reworked to meet state mandates. Normally, the Forksville Inn & Tavern would offer a Valentine’s Day Dinner package consisting of dinner with entertainment provided by comedian Earl David Reed. It always sold out quickly, but due to the pandemic, they weren’t able to offer that this year. While it was a tough decision to cancel this popular event, Kelly explains they still found an innovative way to serve the needs of their customers.

“This year we did something different,” Kelly says. “We set up ‘dinner domes’ outside in our parking area. These were individually heated domes, which allowed for 16 reservations. It was a set meal of steak, scallops and salad. Each dome was heated, and diners could stay in the dome for two hours. They sold out in 25 minutes.”

Like many other restaurant/bar businesses, the Forksville Inn & Tavern offers a wide range of entertainment to provide their customers with more than simply a delicious meal. They have had bands, Super Bowl parties, a Halloween hayride, and the list goes



**FOOD AND FUN:** Fabulous food and fun are available at the Forksville Inn & Tavern, where there is a wide range of food items from hamburgers to black diamond steaks and their ever-popular fish dishes.

on and on. One of their more popular activities is Thirsty Thursday Tune Night, a time when local talent such as Mike Moreland and Josh Norton provide live entertainment.

### Looking toward tomorrow with a hopeful heart

The Johnsons are hopeful 2021 will be a better year and that the regulations in place due to the pandemic will ease up.

“This year will be totally off the cuff because we don’t know what’s going to happen,” Kelly says. “Some things we’re looking at are a smaller menu and more specials. We’re making some good changes; we’re moving up.”

Sullivan County Rural Electric Cooperative is appreciative to the Johnsons for their support during major outages. There are times when lineworkers, who have been working all day, need a hot meal to keep going. Thankfully, the

Johnsons have been willing to prepare them something to eat even if the kitchen is closed.

“Weather in Sullivan County is beyond unpredictable,” Kelly says. “We are so appreciative of our linemen, who keep us going when the weather is bad. We’ve gotten those late-night calls and those early morning calls many times and we’re always willing and ready to help any way we can.”

Do you have a meeting or special event coming up, such as a birthday party, bridal shower or baby shower? Do you have a hard time trying to figure out what to have to eat or where to go? Look no further! The Forksville Inn & Tavern has a catering menu, and does both on and off-premises catering.

“We do everything from picnic foods to full sit-down and family-style meals,” Kelly says. “Some of our best catering jobs involve baked chicken, beef roasts on a spit and our biggest request, baby baked potatoes. We meet with the customers to make sure all their needs are met and then we are available for any of those last-minute changes.”

Over the past 20 years of running the Forksville Inn & Tavern, the Johnsons have had some highs and lows. According to Kelly, one thing that’s stayed the same is the customers who have continued to support them over the years.

“As owners and operators of the inn for the last 20 years, we’ve experienced some terrible times and some amazing times,” Kelly says. “Regardless, we love our customers. They welcomed us with open arms and we love every one of them. Sullivan County is an amazing place to live and work, and being part of the community is wonderful.”

Current hours for the Forksville Inn & Tavern are Sunday-Thursday 11:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. and Friday-Saturday 11:30 a.m. to 9 p.m.

For more information about the Forksville Inn & Tavern, upcoming events or meal specials, you can find them on Facebook. 🌟



**NEW CONCEPT:** To ensure people could enjoy a romantic Valentine’s Day dinner (despite the pandemic) the Johnsons set up outdoor “dinner domes.” The heated domes kept customers warm and toasty while they enjoyed their holiday meal.

# Wayne Gavitt retires from board after 45 years

By John Zelewicz  
Penn Lines Writer

WHEN someone retires after 45 years of service, it can be a bittersweet moment. You're thankful that you had the opportunity to work with them. You're happy they can finally take some time to relax and enjoy life. And yet you're also sad that you won't get to see them as often. And you'll miss the years of experience they had to offer.

So it is with thanks and sadness that we say goodbye to Wayne Gavitt. After 45 years of serving on the co-op's board of directors, Wayne has decided to retire.

Wayne began as a director in 1976. At the time, Bill (Wesley) Thomas was the manager for Sullivan County Rural Electric Cooperative (REC). Wayne and his wife, Ruth Ann, had built a new home near Millview and had just become co-op members.

"I wanted to attend the co-op's annual meeting that year, but I was just too busy," Wayne says. "After the meeting, Bill Thomas called me and asked me if I would stop to see him. When I did stop in, Bill tells me that he's done something that he hopes I'd go along with. He then informed me that I had been elected to serve on the co-op's board of directors. And that's how I became a co-op director for Sullivan County REC."

At the time, Wayne didn't know much about co-ops. He wasn't even sure what the difference was between a co-op and an investor-owned electric company like Penelec. But there are courses available to help new directors learn what co-ops are all about. These courses are normally offered every year in State College.

"I enjoyed going down and having an opportunity to meet people from other co-ops," he says. "Of course, I wasn't always able to go due to work, but when I could go, I went. I completed one level of certification, which was all you needed back then. They even gave us a test at the end of the course."



**HAPPY RETIREMENT:** In honor of Wayne Gavitt's 45 years of service on the co-op's board of directors, CEO Craig Harting presents him with a commemorative lamp.

## Directors play an important part

Wayne explains that while the co-op is led by a day-to-day manager, directors play an important part in the direction the co-op will go. Directors have to look at the big picture, not just what's happening today but what might happen in the future. They work to ensure that things keep moving the way they should. Directors are also responsible when it comes to choosing the CEO for the co-op.

"One of the board's major responsibilities is finding and hiring a CEO," Wayne says. "We've been fortunate in that we haven't really had that many changes in managers. We've had Bill Thomas, then Ed Dezich, and now, Craig Harting."

Of course, being a director means more than simply coming to a meeting every month. It also means being a representative for the co-op.

"Being a director for the co-op means that people recognize you when you're out in public," he says. "It also means that from time to time you'll get a call about the power being out or a downed tree on the line, that sort

of thing. It's a feel-good thing to be involved with something so important to people. We work to keep the lights on."

Wayne served as chair of the board five times for a total of 14 years and vice chair three times for a total of five years. He also served as vice chairman of the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association (PREA) Board of Directors and was awarded the PREA Eminent Service Award in 2010. Wayne was Sullivan's delegate to PREA for 22 years.

Wayne's last board meeting was Thursday, April 15.

"I just felt that after 45 years it was time to get off the board," he says. "I'll miss the involvement with the other board members; you get to know the people. It's been a good experience for me and I've met a lot of great people. I'm going to miss the fellowship. Even though I'm 84, I'm optimistic about the future. Life is good."

We at Sullivan County REC want to wish Wayne all the best and thank him for his years of service to the co-op and the community. ☀