

NOVEC *Cooperative* **Living**

HOLIDAY ROOTS

PAGE 10

From left, Amy, Jane and
Charlie Cawley with their dogs
Precious (not visible) and Mohawk.

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VIEWPOINT

Inspiring Youth and Lineworkers

We are coming to the end of yet another year, and this combined November-December issue of *Cooperative Living* will be the last one for 2024. It has been an exciting year, and we've been able to feature families, businesses, recipes and attractions throughout Virginia and Maryland. I want to take a moment to thank the dedicated magazine staff here at VMDAEC who work with your electric cooperative to make sure we continue providing high-quality content for you to enjoy.

Our Cooperative Focus story combines the holiday season with the recognition of a Maryland family farm that was one of the first residences to get hooked up to electricity via Choptank Electric Cooperative.

Read about the VMDAEC Education Scholarship



Foundation, which just celebrated giving away \$1 million in scholarships. Over 1,000 students have been awarded scholarships since 2003; some of their testimonials are captured in the article. This is not just a testament to the power of education, but also a reflection of the collective achievements of our communities and inspiring future leaders.

We also cover the devastation caused in September and October by Hurricane Helene and the combined effort by our member cooperatives to help those in need. It is truly inspiring to see lineworkers doing whatever it takes to get the lights back on through terrible conditions. Our thoughts and prayers go out to all the families affected by the storm.

As we prepare to celebrate a new year, we look forward with hope and optimism. Happy holidays to you and your family. ●

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

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PHOTO COURTESY WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA

Honoring Those Who Served

Wreaths Across America pays tribute to America's veterans

by Gregg MacDonald, Staff Writer

ON NOV. 11, 1919, PRESIDENT WOODROW WILSON PROCLAIMED THE FIRST COMMEMORATION OF ARMISTICE DAY. The date was chosen because it marked the end of WWI, which stopped at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month in 1918. Armistice Day became a national holiday in 1938 and was later changed to Veterans Day in 1954 to honor veterans of all American wars.

While most people are familiar with Veterans Day, not as many may be familiar with another national event that honors veterans about a month later.

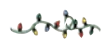
Since 2008, Congress has proclaimed one Saturday each December as National Wreaths Across America Day. It will be held this year on Saturday, Dec. 14, 2024. On this day, veterans and active military members will be honored by millions of volunteers placing live, balsam veterans' wreaths on the headstones of our nation's service members. "The fresh evergreens have been used for centuries as a symbol recognizing honor and as a living tribute renewed annually," says Karen Worcester, executive director of Wreaths Across America, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. "We want people to see the tradition as a living memorial to veterans and their families."

In 2023, Wreaths Across America and its national network of volunteers placed over 3 million veterans' wreaths at 4,225 participating locations in the U.S. and beyond, with help from more than 2 million volunteers nationwide.

One of those volunteers is U.S. Navy veteran David R. Sillaman, a Goldvein, Va., resident and a member of Rappahannock Electric Cooperative. Sillaman says that wreaths have been placed on the graves of more than 435 interred veterans over the past five years at 13 local cemeteries in Southern Fauquier County via the Wreaths Across America program.

"The Bealeton/Remington Ruritan Club sponsored this project with assistance from the Remington American Legion Post 247," he says. "Our goal this year is to place a live, balsam fir wreath at the headstone of every American veteran interred in a local cemetery in Southern Fauquier County. We do this to remember their sacrifice, honor their service, and teach the next generation about the value of freedom. They say everyone dies twice; once physically, and then again when they are no longer remembered. Please help us keep our veterans' memories alive." •

► For more information, visit wreathsasscrossamerica.org or contact David Sillaman directly via email at david_sillaman@msn.com.



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Million Dollar Milestone

VMDAEC scholarship foundation changes lives and makes communities better

by Laura Emery, Staff Writer



Empowering communities involves more than just providing electricity; Virginia, Maryland and Delaware's electric cooperatives embrace this concept.

In July 2003, the Virginia, Maryland & Delaware Association of Electric Cooperatives' Education Scholarship Foundation was incorporated. The goal was to invest in communities served by electric cooperatives by enabling local youth to pursue their academic dreams by awarding them educational scholarships.

"Some visionary co-op leaders, led by Worth Hudson [a Mecklenburg Electric Cooperative board member at the time], created the Foundation," explains Richard G. Johnstone Jr., retired CEO of VMDAEC. "Creating the Foundation fulfilled two historic co-op principles, one calling for co-ops to support the communities we serve, the other to support education and training for our members."

Twenty-one years later, the Foundation is marking a powerful million-dollar milestone. The Foundation recently

awarded its millionth dollar in scholarship money, making a difference in the lives of 1,162 students across the tri-state area.

The Foundation is funded through tax-deductible donations and bequests, as well as proceeds from fundraising events. Sam Brumberg, vice president of the Foundation since 2017, says, "Our story is about thousands of donors — co-op member-consumers — coming together and making small donations that add up for a greater purpose."

It's a story that parallels the founding purpose of electric cooperatives, where rural residents — neighbors — joined together and pooled their resources to create nonprofit cooperatives in the late 1930s to build electrical systems in rural areas.

"The Education Scholarship Foundation has afforded opportunities to over a thousand students thanks to the spirit of collective action that is embodied by the electric cooperatives," Brumberg explains. "These students were touched by the everyday miracles of their electric cooperatives — and many went on to become heroes that we depend on every day in our communities."

"We need to do all we can for our youth. Every little bit helps when you're paying for a college education."

— Rusty Brown, Education Scholarship Foundation board member since 2003

ELLA LEWIS

Heroes like Ella Lewis, a 2022 scholarship recipient, who is now a junior at Virginia Tech studying biological systems engineering. Lewis has taken part in two summer research fellowships, funded by the USDA, studying natural solutions to water pollution.

"As part of these programs, I was paid to travel abroad (including Paris, France), give poster presentations and participate in hands-on field work," Lewis explains. "Thanks to the VMDAEC Foundation

scholarship funds, I'm able to enjoy all the things in and outside of my course work without financial stress."

GRACIE GOODPASTURE

Gracie Goodpasture's educational journey took her all the way to Aberystwyth, Wales, in the summer of 2022. The former scholarship recipient graduated from Roanoke College in 2023 with a double major in biology and Spanish. While at Roanoke College, she was awarded a Summer Fulbright Scholarship to study at the University of

Aberystwyth.

During her senior year at Roanoke College, Goodpasture earned an internship with Boston Scientific in its cardiac rhythm division. "This internship led to a full-time job with Boston Scientific. I am the device representative in the operating room, working in Richmond- and Roanoke-area hospitals," she says. "Thanks to the Education Scholarship Foundation for directly helping me achieve my goal of working in electrophysiology. I am forever grateful."

NATALIE FLESHMAN

In 2019, Natalie Fleshman was awarded a Foundation scholarship. She attended Virginia Tech and studied interior design with a minor





in Italian, and then graduated in May of 2023 with a Bachelor of Science in Interior Design. Freshman then studied for her master's degree in

Florence, Italy, at the Florence Institute of Design International. She says, "There, I was able to refine my design skills and vision through studying finer details, such as lighting and furniture design. The scholarship I received was instrumental."

KENDRA OLIVER

Former scholarship recipient Kendra Oliver loved pretending to be a teacher as a child. She says, "I've known that I wanted to be a teacher since I was five years old. I love being a role model and helping young people become more successful in life."

Oliver, a 2023 James Madison University graduate, is now living out her purpose in the classroom. "I currently teach social studies at William Monroe Middle School in Green County, Va.," the Rappahannock Electric Cooperative member says. She expresses gratitude to the Foundation for the opportunity to receive a scholarship.



RINA DIRICKSON

A misdiagnosis changed the course of former scholarship recipient Rina Dirickson's life. "I was misdiagnosed with epilepsy and that experience, combined with my faith in God, led me into the field of research," she says. Dirickson is a sophomore at Johns Hopkins University with a double major in neuroscience and biophysics.

"During the summer of 2024, I had the opportunity to work under Dr. Sridevi Sarma on research that will hopefully make the diagnosis of psychogenic non-epileptic attacks more accurate and less likely to be misdiagnosed as epilepsy," she explains.



Dirickson says she wouldn't be where she is now if it weren't for the scholarship. "I cannot wait to see what the next three years will bring," she says.

PRIYANKA PATEL

Priyanka Patel, a 2023 scholarship recipient, is involved in cancer research while attending Virginia Commonwealth University, where she majors in chemistry. "Since receiving the scholarship, I've been able to engage in a variety of activities to supplement my higher education," she says. "Currently, I am doing various cancer research studies in both the Department of Biochemistry at VCU's School of Medicine and in the VCU Health Massey Cancer Center."

Patel used some of the scholarship money toward her National Emergency Medical Technician Certification, which helped her get a job at VCU Health Trauma Center. "I am so grateful to VMDAEC for enabling me to partake in these activities and simultaneously pursue my higher education," she says.



GARRETT WEBB

Garrett Webb used his scholarship to attend Southside Virginia Community College's Power Line Worker Training



School. "During my time at SVCC, I made some friends and I learned from some very outstanding instructors that taught me the

fundamentals, good techniques and essential information for a career in linework," he says. Of the 1,162 students awarded scholarships, 91 used their scholarships for lineworker training.

"Seeing our scholarship recipients playing important roles in our communities — along with those who are having a positive impact on others while pursuing their education — is another reason for donating to the VMDAEC Education Scholarship Foundation," says Brian Mosier, President & CEO of VMDAEC.

According to Brumberg, the Foundation's license plate program is a consistent source of funding. "The license plate program is an easy way that *Cooperative Living* readers can donate automatically every year. When you register your license plate or personalized plate with the Virginia DMV, the Education Scholarship Foundation gets a portion of your vehicle registration fee each year. It's also a great way to recognize the important work lineworkers do," Brumberg explains.

Rusty Brown, a director at Northern Neck Electric Cooperative who has served on the Foundation board since the beginning, says, "I believe we need to do all we can for our youth. Every little bit helps when you're paying for a college education." ●



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“Never be afraid to just try.
You never know what you’ll fall in love with.”

From Locating to Linework

Mother of three finds her passion working on a line crew

by Jim Robertson, Staff Writer

Growing up on a New Jersey farm and competing in a variety of youth sports, Megan Simmons thought she found her calling as a utility locator at age 19. A short pursuit of a nursing career led to the realization that she was meant to work outdoors.

Now living in Millsboro, Del., and a single mother of three, Simmons took eight years off to raise her children and rejoined the workforce in 2020, once again as a utility locator. A portion of her contracted work was with Delaware Electric Cooperative, headquartered in Greenwood. She seized an opportunity to join the co-op family at Delaware three years ago. Though new to the co-op industry, Simmons came aboard equipped with experience in her field and an eagerness to excel at DEC, known in the area as a great place to work.

A discussion with two DEC linemen who were participating in a job-shadowing activity for orientation prompted Simmons to say, “Women don’t do linework.” Their response to her was, “Why not?” They explained to her that another woman had come up from Puerto Rico and was working

as a lineworker in the Washington, D.C., area.

It was a life-changing moment for Simmons, who jumped at the next chance to apply for a position in linework at the co-op. “They put me through the wringer the first week,” Simmons says jokingly. She conquered each challenge and worked as a groundman on a crew for the first year. Currently halfway through her apprenticeship, she says, “I’ve loved it ever since I started.”

Simmons joins other apprentices every six months for a week of classroom and hands-on learning from seasoned industry professionals with the Virginia, Maryland & Delaware Association of Electric Cooperatives at its Eastern Shore campus in Salisbury, Md. The group will spend four years together while also gaining more than 8,000 hours of on-the-job training. After five years, Simmons will earn the title of journeyman lineman.

“I don’t really compare myself with others,” says Simmons with confidence. “My only competition is me.” Her crew and classmates look out for one another to make sure everyone goes home safely every day.

Simmons describes how children will watch her with looks of awe on their faces while she’s up on the pole or in the bucket. “It’s adorable. I love it. My daughter is 10 and tried out for football. She’s the only female on the team. She says ‘if my mommy can do it, I can do it.’”

In October, Simmons joined fellow lineworker Genevieve Boorman from Northern Neck Electric Cooperative and future lineworker Hunter Carden as instructors at the Girl Power high school career camp hosted by the electric cooperatives. She was asked several questions by the students about her career. Though only a few of them may pursue linework, Simmons found it fulfilling to help them all realize it was possible.

Simmons looks forward to growing her skills and knowledge while helping others and her community. “It’s always something different here every day,” she says. Her advice to young women and men: “Never be afraid to just try. You never know what you’ll fall in love with.” ●

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These subscribing cooperatives use the magazine to notify their members — who are also the owners of the cooperative utilities — about important co-op business news. Such news includes annual-meeting notices, board-of-director election-candidate profiles, voting proxy forms, proposed bylaw changes and rate adjustments, member committee meetings, and articles on other topics important to each cooperative's business operations.

The magazine also publishes energy-saving information, community-support stories, and other material in keeping with the fifth and seventh cooperative principles, "Education, Training and Information" and "Concern for Community."

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A Life Switch

Navigating the emotions of significant event changes

by Vanessa LaFaso Stolarski, Contributing Columnist

Life is a series of ebbs and flows, and while many of life's changes can bring joy and excitement — the birth of a new family member, weddings, job promotions — others can leave us grappling with unexpected feelings of loss and grief.

Empty Nest Syndrome, for instance, is arguably the most well-known example of this phenomenon. As children grow up and leave home, parents often experience a profound sense of loss. The once-bustling household falls quiet, and the daily routines that once revolved around childcare and family life suddenly disappear. Parents may themselves begin to question their identity and purpose, struggling to adjust to their new reality.

Similarly, when family members or close friends move away, we may feel a deep sense of absence in our lives. The casual drop-ins, shared meals, long-distance calls, and infrequent visits replace impromptu gatherings that once filled our days. The shift can leave us feeling disconnected and longing for the closeness we once enjoyed.

Even positive changes, such as a loved one gaining independence after an illness, can trigger complex emotions. While we celebrate their progress, we may also grieve the loss of our caregiver



PHOTO BY SPORA WEDDINGS VIA PEXELS.COM

role and the intimate bond it created.

So how do we cope? It's important to be aware of those feelings and acknowledge that it's normal and all part of the developmental life cycle. We're mourning not just the missing physical presence of those we care about, but also our identities in the roles we played in their lives. It's normal to feel a loss of purpose during these transitions. The key to navigating them lies in acknowledging our feelings and finding healthy coping methods.

EMBRACE THE GRIEF

Allow yourself to feel the full range of emotions that come with these changes. Recognize that grief is not just about death, but also about the loss of familiar patterns and roles. Journaling, talking with friends or seeking professional support can help you process these complex feelings.

REDEFINE YOUR RELATIONSHIPS

As circumstances change, so too must our relationships evolve. Find new ways to connect with your adult children. Get to know them within their own new life stages rather than stay stuck in how you knew them as dependents or children. Talk to distant relatives about setting up a call schedule when you reserve time just for each other to catch up.

REDISCOVER YOURSELF

Use this transition as an opportunity for personal growth and development. Explore new hobbies, volunteer in your community, or pursue long-held dreams that you might have put on hold. This is a chance to reconnect with your interests and passions.

Remember, adapting to life's changes takes time. Be patient with yourself as you navigate these emotional waters. As you work through your grief, you might find that these transitions open new doors to new experiences, new relationships and personal evolution.

As author Gail Sheehy once wrote: "If we don't change, we don't grow. And if we don't grow, we aren't really living." By accepting the grief that comes with these transitions, we invite deeper connections, renewed purpose and a richer, more fulfilling life. ●

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

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Community Roots

Tradition runs deep at Maryland Christmas tree farm

by Katie Luckett, Contributing Writer



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Charlie Cawley inspects the needles on a pre-cut tree for sale in their pavilion.



PHOTO BY MCKAYLA KIERNAN

Amy Cawley proudly holds two wreaths for sale, made fresh from trees on the farm.



Charles “Charlie” Cawley and his wife, Jane, aren’t just tree farmers. They are also the creators of holiday memories.

As the proud owners and operators of Cawley Family Farm, a Christmas tree operation in Denton, Md., and a staple on the Eastern Shore, the farm’s slogan “Experience a Family Tradition” stems from Cawley’s fond memories of cutting Christmas trees with his family growing up — one he hopes to share with other families who visit his farm for the holiday season each year. “Growing up, dad couldn’t afford a tree, so we had to go out to the woods and cut one down,” he remembers fondly. “I can still smell those trees.”

The Cawleys’ farm is located just across from Choptank Electric Cooperative’s headquarters and was purchased by the Cawley family in the early 1900s as a dairy farm. Charlie and Jane purchased the adjoining farm in 1988 and started planting Christmas trees in 1996.

The farm was one of the first residences to get hooked up to electricity by CEC in 1940. “Back then, granddad and dad kept dairy cows, and they even ran a milk route in Denton in the 1940s,” Cawley says. “But one day in 1963 when I was 10 years old, I came home from school and all the cows had been sold. It was a strange feeling, but

they later bought 200 feeder pigs to keep us all busy.”

Last year, the farm became connected to Choptank Fiber’s high-speed broadband internet. “Choptank Fiber has helped our sales system on the farm as we can now process digital transactions and allow speedy credit card payments from a mobile app, including Apple Pay,” says Cawley. “That’s important because we are the last tree farm left on the Eastern Shore, and we draw customers from all over.”

Tradition and farming run deep for Cawley, who continues to manage the farm with his wife Jane and his daughter Amy. His father, Wayne Cawley Jr., was the Maryland Secretary of Agriculture from 1979-1991. His grandfather, Wayne Cawley Sr., was on the original CEC board of directors during its founding, leaving legacies and impacting the agriculture and electric cooperative industries.

“Our farm is directly across from Choptank headquarters, so it stands to reason that we would have a connection,” Cawley says.

Cawley was a state and local community leader for many years before operating Cawley Family Farm. He served as an administrator for Caroline County, Md., worked for the Maryland Department of Agriculture, and was the Finance Director for Maryland Broadband Cooperative. Cawley



Cawley and his family are advocates for fresh Christmas trees not just for nostalgia, but also because of their environmental benefits.



was instrumental in getting broadband to Caroline County for rural residents lacking the benefits of high-speed internet. He currently serves as vice president of the Maryland Christmas Tree Association.

“Our farm has continued to grow throughout the years and now consists of 15 acres of trees,” shares Cawley. “We grow Douglas fir, white pine, Concolor fir, Canaan fir, Colorado blue spruce and Norway spruce. The farm also sells pre-cut Fraser firs that are hand-selected from North Carolina and Pennsylvania, and wreaths and wooden ornaments made fresh from our farm.”

Cawley says the climate and sandy soil on Maryland’s Eastern Shore make it difficult to grow certain tree varieties. “We have to constantly watch for and treat insects and diseases on the trees as they grow,” explains Cawley. “Our newly installed drip irrigation system has saved many of our trees from drought during the hot summer months, although we lost a significant amount due to the record-breaking heat this year.”

The farm plants trees each spring and lets them grow for at least seven years, most growing an average of one foot per year. This past March, the family planted 1,300 Canaan fir, Douglas fir and white pine trees.

Cawley Family Farm opens annually for “choose and cut” trees in the lot the weekend before Thanksgiving. “The average tree lasts in water in a home for four to five weeks,” says Amy. “Some customers come out early and tag trees to claim them, waiting to come and cut closer to Christmas.” Each tree sold at the farm is shaken, baled and tied onto vehicles at no extra cost.

Cawley and his family are advocates for fresh Christmas trees not just for nostalgia, but also because of their environmental benefits. “Not only are they good for the air quality while growing, but the trees can be easily recycled at the end of the holiday season, used for mulch or as habitat for wildlife,” he adds.

Cawley says he loves the smell of Christmas trees and the fact that he is helping to create holiday memories for his customers. “We get all kinds of positive comments on our Facebook page, and it makes me feel good when I see people who first came here as kids now coming back to get a Christmas tree with their kids.” ●

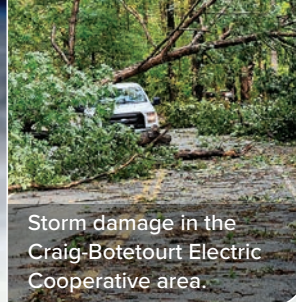


► Learn more about Cawley Family Farm at cawley.farm and follow them on Facebook at facebook.com/cawleytreefarm.



PHOTO COURTESY MEC

A Mecklenburg Electric Cooperative crew replacing a broken utility pole in the Powell Valley Electric Cooperative service area.



Storm damage in the
Craig-Botetourt Electric
Cooperative area.

A NOVEC crew working to restore power in the Powell Valley Electric Cooperative territory.



PHOTO COURTESY NOVEC

PHOTO COURTESY NASA

Storm Warriors

VMDAEC cooperatives band together after Hurricane Helene

by Gregg MacDonald, Staff Writer

On Thursday, Sept. 26, Hurricane Helene, a Category 4 storm, made landfall near Perry, Fla. Its 140 mph winds and resulting storm surges caused power outages, flooding, property destruction and loss of life as it made its way through Georgia, the Carolinas, Tennessee and into Southwest Virginia. According to Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin, this was the most significant disaster in the commonwealth since 2011.

Once the storm crossed into the VMDAEC members' service territory, crews from area cooperatives were on call and ready to help those in need. "As an electric cooperative, it gives us a sense of great pride in knowing that our industry is always willing to share resources when another is in need," says Choptank Electric Cooperative Vice President of Operations Lance Lockerman.

Powell Valley Electric Cooperative's Tennessee and Southwest Virginia service area was among the first of VMDAEC's member co-ops to feel Helene's wrath. "Friday night, we deployed a six-man crew to Powell Valley," says Mecklenburg Electric Cooperative President and CEO Casey Logan.

"Hurricane Helene caused major damage to our electric grid, with over 712 outages and 90 broken poles, leaving more than 11,000 PVEC members without power," says PVEC General Manager Brad Coppock. "Fortunately, nearly 40 linemen from our sister cooperatives in the VMDAEC — Northern Neck, NOVEC, Choptank and Mecklenburg — answered the call, working alongside our crews to restore service. The Principle of Cooperation Among Cooperatives shines through in times like these, and PVEC is deeply grateful for the support from our fellow co-ops in Virginia and Maryland."

In Craig County, Va., a woman was killed as a result of

the hurricane, as was a man in Tazewell County, according to the National Weather Service. "What's special about this storm is that the damage is so widespread. Everywhere we go, there's so much damage to fix, whether it's a single outage or a larger one," says Craig-Botetourt Electric Cooperative Director of Operations Troy Hall. "We'd like to thank all those who took the time to provide us with mutual aid, [especially] Prince George Electric Cooperative, Davis H. Elliott Inc., NOVEC, Hurst Landworks and Community Electric Cooperative."

Nearby, in the BARC Electric Cooperative service area, there were nearly 115 individual outages. "We had almost 5,000 members out and received mutual aid from SMECO and CVEC," says BARC Marketing & Communications

Coordinator Amanda Cunningham. "This was a battle for most co-op crews all weekend."

"At its peak, Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative had about 4,500 members out," says Communications Manager Preston Knight.

"Our crews and contractors carried this to the finish line, which was a big benefit to keep resources in harder-hit areas of Virginia and farther south," says Martin Driver, manager of SVEC's system operations. "Our guys are always ready to hit the road to help other co-ops, but we have to think of our members first, and that's how this storm played out. It's a big challenge and always leaves you appreciative of the coordinated efforts by those in the field and behind the scenes."

After getting member co-ops back online, several cooperatives continued working, sending crews to the Carolinas. "It's a privilege," says Louis Urbine, Southside Electric Cooperative director of operations, "to be able to play a small part in trying to restore some type of normal to so many who were devastated by this event." ●



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Centuries ago, Persians, Tibetans and Mayans considered turquoise a gemstone of the heavens, believing the striking blue stones were sacred pieces of sky. Today, the rarest and most valuable turquoise is found in the American Southwest—but the future of the blue beauty is unclear.

On a recent trip to Tucson, we spoke with fourth generation turquoise traders who explained that less than five percent of turquoise mined worldwide can be set into jewelry and only about twenty mines in the Southwest supply gem-quality turquoise. Once a thriving industry, many Southwest mines have run dry and are now closed.

We found a limited supply of turquoise from Arizona and purchased it for our *Sedona Turquoise Collection*. Inspired by the work of those ancient craftsmen and designed to showcase the exceptional blue stone, each stabilized vibrant cabochon features a unique, one-of-a-kind matrix surrounded in Bali metalwork. You could drop over \$1,200 on a turquoise pendant, or you

could secure 26 carats of genuine Arizona turquoise for **just \$99**.

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STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR A COMPLEX BUSINESS

At NOVEC, our job is simple: to deliver safe, reliable, and affordable electric service. Our customers' uncomplicated request is to keep the lights on and the monthly bills low.

Carrying out that mission is distinctly more complicated. Data center growth is simultaneously beneficial and challenging. Developing technologies like rooftop solar, storage batteries, and electric vehicles utilize a multi-directional distribution grid in a new way — toward the customer and also, from the customer.

Electric generation resources must support rapidly increasing customer demand for power both day and night. Customers expect fingertip information and convenience through their digital devices — and that means connectivity, powered by electricity.

NOVEC is guided by an annual strategic planning process that assesses internal and external business factors critical to the success of our customers, employees, and communities. Strategic initiatives resulting from the yearly review are designed to address our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The final Strategic Plan is measured by a set of key performance indicators.

Energy policy is becoming a major strategic theme in Virginia and demands the attention of businesses, policymakers, and legislators. There is a struggle to find a reliable and affordable solution to unprecedented electric load growth, retiring fossil fuel generating plants, and restrictions on new generating plants. As we plan for the future, your Cooperative is taking action to address these uncertainties, but your voice may also be needed as we advocate on your behalf.

Our safety message for this issue revolves around the holidays. Take time to enjoy this season with family and friends, but also be mindful of fire hazards like fireplaces, cooking devices, Christmas trees, and space heaters. Have an approved fire extinguisher ready and a family emergency plan in place.

Best Regards,



Dave Schleicher



P.O. Box 2710, Manassas, VA 20108
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For updates, tips on safety, energy savings ideas, and career information, find us on social media or go to novec.com.

NOVEC is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

ENERGY TIP OF THE MONTH

This holiday season, keep energy savings in mind. To save energy, use smaller appliances like slow cookers instead of the oven. Don a holiday sweater so you can lower the thermostat and decorate with energy-saving LED lights.



NOVEC'S MISSION

Improve the quality of life for members, employees, and communities by providing safe and reliable electricity at competitive prices.



Annual Meeting Focused on Sustaining Excellence

By Robin Earl

NOVEC's 2024 Annual Meeting at the NOVEC Gainesville Technical Center. Pictured in front is Blake Sparling, in back are Joe Sechler and Kevin Black.

Rain and gusty winds did not stop members from attending the Cooperative's Annual Meeting of Members Sept. 18 at NOVEC's Technical Center in Gainesville. They gathered to learn about the achievements and activities that are "Sustaining Excellence" at their electric cooperative.

Members also reelected Mark Bruno and Wade House each to another four-year term on the Board of Directors.

Message from the Chairman

During the business meeting, House, NOVEC's board chairman, stated NOVEC is strong financially. He noted NOVEC's residential rates are the least expensive among both co-ops and investor-owned Virginia utilities. "And those low rates did not take away from our responsibility to keep the lights on. We have kept our system robust," he said. House also offered a heartfelt thank you to Co-op employees. "The reason NOVEC is successful is its people."

Before President and CEO Dave Schleicher approached the podium, House thanked him for his visionary leadership over the last three years. Schleicher will retire on April 1, 2025. In anticipation of his departure, NOVEC launched a national search for a new CEO.

Message from the President and CEO

Schleicher highlighted NOVEC's 2023 achievements:

FINANCIAL: Assets totaled \$1.4 billion with net margins of \$27.9 million. Energy sales reached 10.1 billion kilowatt hours sold. The Co-op earned the distinction of being the largest energy sales distribution cooperative in the nation.

RELIABILITY: On average, customers experienced one outage of 46 minutes in 2023. Peak demand was up 15%.

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION: NOVEC's score of 758 in the 2023 J.D. Power Residential Satisfaction Study is above the electric co-op average. In the 2023 Cooperative Insights transactional survey, NOVEC earned a score of 8.73 on a 10-point scale.

SAFETY: Lost-time injuries dropped from four in 2022 to two in 2023. All employees were trained in CPR and first aid in 2023, and all staffers — not just those who drive NOVEC vehicles — completed the Smith System driver safety course this year.

Schleicher also discussed the business impact of data centers. NOVEC serves 55 data center buildings with more than 120 in the planning and construction stages. The annual capital budget exceeds \$300 million.

In 2024, data centers account for 70% of the Co-op's system energy and is projected to grow to 96% by 2034. Growth over the next 10 years is expected to range between 15% and 20%.

He explained that 85% of customers' bills are generation and transmission that NOVEC procures and passes through "at cost" to customers. Electric generation prices generally track natural gas, so energy prices were consistently low over the past year, allowing NOVEC to reduce rates in January 2024 by about 20%.

Schleicher cautioned Virginia's energy policy is problematic. The Commonwealth's construction limitations on new electric generation, unprecedented customer demand, and shift to intermittent renewable resources likely will result in increased electric generation costs, as well as necessary transmission construction to move power from states with sufficient generation to Virginia. He urged state officials to take a constructive and balanced view of energy policy.

NOVEC is growing the renewable resources in its power portfolio and will continue to seek out beneficial large-scale solar and battery storage projects.

- 43 MW of solar energy generated from members' rooftop solar panels
- Nearly 2,000 members enrolled in the electric vehicle rate that encourage off-peak charging
- 80 MW to be generated from a battery storage project at four sites in Prince William and Loudoun counties
- 16 MW to be generated from a solar project in Prince William County
- 49.9 MW generated from waste wood at NOVEC's Halifax County Biomass Electric Generating Facility

Additionally, Schleicher emphasized NOVEC's community commitment. Through Operation Round Up, 24,120 Cooperative customers donated more than \$110,000 in 2023 to help 198 of their fellow members in need. Schleicher also noted CoBank's Sharing Success program that matched NOVEC's \$10,000 donation to area food banks. NOVEC Hands Engaged in Local Public Service (HELPS), an employee-managed 501(c)(3) organization, donated \$67,000 to 67 charities.

Looking Ahead

As NOVEC works toward future successes and anticipates future challenges, Schleicher says the Cooperative is committed to Sustaining Excellence in all that it does to provide members with reliable, safe, and affordable electricity.



From left, leadership team members, Dan Swingle and Wilbur Rollins talk to a NOVEC customer.



NOVEC customers, employees, and board of directors gather under the truck bay at the NOVEC Gainesville Technical Center to hear updates about the Co-op.



President and CEO Dave Schleicher gives a presentation and answers customer questions at the 2024 Annual Meeting of Members.



NOVEC employees Roy Robinson and Jessica Torres Cervetto greet customers as they enter the 2024 Annual Meeting of Members.

Luke Cassidy Calls on His Marine Training to Protect NOVEC Facilities

By Robin Earl

Working for a local electric cooperative could be considered public service. Keeping the lights on for your neighbors certainly qualifies. Perhaps that's why NOVEC has so many military veterans in its ranks. A recent reckoning counted 22 veterans employed at the Co-op; they are lineworkers, customer care and field services workers, business analysts, and substation experts.

Security Specialist Luke Cassidy joined NOVEC two years ago after spending 11 years — from 1994 to 2005

— as a U.S. Marine, and another 20 or so in law enforcement. He left the service as a staff sergeant, after serving in combat zones in Bosnia, Iraq, and Kosovo.

Although a qualified rifleman, Cassidy said he specialized in psychological warfare. As a member of a Special Forces unit, his job was to win over the local populations — “to convince them to stay out of the way so they didn't get hurt.”

He explained, “The most important thing we did was to humanize our soldiers to the locals. It's easy to kill an anonymous stranger in a uniform, but harder when the soldier is a guy named Bill from Idaho who has two kids at home.” Cassidy was the team chief of his specialized unit, and he also acted as a liaison with the State Department.

Cassidy retired from the federal government after four years as police chief with the National Zoological Park Police.



After 11 years in the service, Luke Cassidy left the U.S. Marine Corps to take up a career in law enforcement.

As a security expert in NOVEC's Risk Management Department, Cassidy still sees persuasion as a key part of his job. “Prevention is always better than fixing something after it's gone wrong,” he said. As he puts protocols in place, he communicates with workers to show them the value of the safety measures so they adopt them wholeheartedly. “I know that the most important part of security measures is making sure that people follow them, every time, to create a safer environment for everyone — our employees and our customers.”

Cassidy is in charge of security for all of the Co-op's physical locations, including NOVEC's substations. He completes risk assessments and puts safety measures in place. “My job is to reduce the possibility of damage or risk to the electrical grid. When I see a situation that could be made safer, I work with the folks involved to show them national standards. We discuss good, better, and best ways to do things. It's a very collaborative process because I'm working with people whose jobs have different priorities and visions.”



Luke Cassidy checks on the operation of the security gate at one of NOVEC's Manassas locations.

When a new facility is being planned, Cassidy is part of the conversation. “It’s better to incorporate safer practices into the original build than to try to add them later,” he said.

Cassidy said, “I am not an engineer. I have no left brain at all. My job is to get someone who is focused on their job to adapt techniques that are important for the safety of the whole organization.”

In 2023, a third-party security agency completed a comprehensive security evaluation of NOVEC’s buildings, warehouse yards, substations and other electric system locations. (The same professionals also assessed NOVEC’s information technology, looking for vulnerabilities.) The agency found that the Co-op’s physical and cybersecurity protections are strong.

This November, NOVEC takes a moment to thank all veterans for their service. Like Cassidy, they are making a difference every day.

NOVEC DONATED TO VETERANS ORGANIZATIONS IN 2024

Project Mend-A-House

The 501(c)(3) charitable organization arranges home repairs and upgrades for military veterans, senior citizens, and people with disabilities in the city of Manassas, Manassas Park, or in Prince William County.

Ringin In Hope

This organization hosts running events that benefit a host of different charities, including the Wounded Warrior Project, Operation Gratitude, Fisher House, Operation Renewed Hope Foundation, and Warrior Bridge. Ringin In Hope has a Jingle Bell Rock and Run scheduled for Dec. 14, a Salute to Our Troops on May 26, 2025, and a Pig Out run on Sept. 2, 2025. All are in Ashburn.

VetPar Inc.

The donation to VetPar sponsors the annual Northern Virginia Veterans Parade, held the first Saturday of November in Old Town Manassas.



Hands Engaged In Local Public Service

NOVEC HELPS Supports Veterans Associations

NOVEC HELPS (Hands Engaged in Public Service), an employee-managed 501(c)(3) organization separate from NOVEC, donated \$4,150 in 2024 to organizations supporting veterans. NOVEC HELPS Board Chair Nan Musick said, “Helping our veterans is so important after the many sacrifices they and their families make.”

NOVEC HELPS members will assist at Wreaths Across America at Arlington National Cemetery on Dec. 14. NOVEC employees Jessica Torres Cervetto and Tina Moser will be honoring their fathers, who are buried at Arlington.

In addition, NOVEC HELPS contributed to:

The Bedford Boys Tribute Center: This museum in Bedford, Virginia honors the memory of 20 hometown men who were killed on D-Day — June 6, 1944 — during World War II.

VetPar Inc.: The donation to VetPar sponsors the annual Northern Virginia Veterans Parade, held the first Saturday of November, in Old Town Manassas.

The HEAL Foundation: HEAL, in Catlett, provides mental health services for adults and teens, with a focus on military veterans and first responder communities. The 501(c)(3) offers equine-facilitated psychotherapy and equine learning/team building experiences.

Veterans of Foreign Wars: The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. is a nonprofit veterans service organization comprised of eligible veterans and military service members from the active, guard, and reserve forces. The VFW offers many programs and services that support veterans, service members, and their families.

Willing Warriors: Willing Warriors is a privately funded 501(c)(3) charitable organization offering cost-free getaways from the hospital environment. At its facility in Haymarket, wounded, ill, and injured veterans and their families can come to relax, spend quality time together, and reconnect.

OFFICE CLOSURES

VETERANS DAY, Monday, Nov. 11

THANKSGIVING, Thursday, Nov. 28,
and Friday, Nov. 29

CHRISTMAS, Tuesday, Dec. 24,
and Wednesday, Dec. 25

NEW YEAR'S DAY, Wednesday, Jan. 1

Outages can be reported at any time by calling 703-335-0500, logging in to SmartHub or texting “#OUT” to 85700. NOVEC’s outage map at novec.com/stormcenter provides information in case of an outage.

OPERATION ROUND UP®

Rounding Up to help those in need

Participants in NOVEC’s Operation Round Up® (ORU) program volunteer to round up their bills each month to the next dollar. This spare change adds up quickly, and NOVEC provides these resources to local nonprofits, which in turn use those funds to assist NOVEC customers who might not otherwise be able to pay their electric bills.

A household with a past-due account or an account that has fallen into disconnect status may apply to one of the nonprofits for assistance. The agencies determine a customer’s eligibility to receive emergency energy assistance.



HOW DO I CONTRIBUTE TO OPERATION ROUND UP?

Sign up online through your SmartHub account or call NOVEC’s Customer Care Center at 703-335-0500. One-time donations from NOVEC customers or those outside our service territory are also welcome. Mail a check for any amount, payable to NOVEC Operation Round Up. Send to: NOVEC ORU, P.O. Box 2710, Manassas, VA 20108. More information may be found at novec.com/oru.

HOW MUCH CAN I EXPECT TO CONTRIBUTE EACH YEAR?

The “rounded up” amount averages a total of \$6 per year for each customer. Your monthly bill shows the donated amount.

HOW DOES ORU WORK IF I AM ON NOVEC’S BUDGET BILLING?

Budget billing allows you to avoid significant variations in your monthly NOVEC bills by averaging the previous 11 monthly bills and the current month’s bill. Those enrolled in budget billing are welcome to participate in ORU. The donated amount is based on the actual amount of electricity used in a given month, and that amount is itemized on the bill.

NOVEC Youth Tour Applications Now Available. **Apply Before Jan. 1 Deadline**

Youth Tour is a unique opportunity for high school sophomores and juniors to explore Washington, D.C., while visiting monuments, learning about electric cooperatives, and creating lifelong friendships.



See more information
by visiting
novec.com/youthtour.



APPLY NOW!

*If you are a NOVEC member
and are experiencing financial
hardships that prevent you from
paying your electric bill, contact
one of the following organizations.*

The Salvation Army

Loudoun Corps
703-771-3371
loudoun.salvationarmypotomac.org

Northern Virginia Family Service

703-792-3366
nvfs.org

Western Fairfax Christian Ministries

703-988-9656
wfcmlva.org

ACTS

(serving Manassas and Dumfries)
703-441-8606
actspwc.org



Exclusive Offer On Backup Generators for NOVEC Customers

NOVEC and NOVEC Solutions (a for-profit subsidiary of NOVEC) are excited to announce an exclusive limited-time offer to customers who are in the market for a Generac generator, the No. 1 selling brand of backup standby generators.

Winter weather can bring polar vortexes, snowstorms, ice, and power outages. Now's the time to act fast and secure your home with a standby generator by taking advantage of this exclusive offer until the end of December. Don't wait for the next outage — take control and stay prepared with a solution that delivers instant power when you need it most.

WHY A HOME STANDBY GENERATOR?

- **Instant Power:** Automatically kicks in during an outage, keeping all your appliances running smoothly with no effort on your part.
- **Boosted Safety:** Powers critical systems like refrigeration, lighting, and medical devices, ensuring your family's safety and comfort.
- **Hassle-Free Operation:** Works silently in the background without needing manual fuel handling or start-up procedures.
- **Home Value Upgrade:** Adds value to your property and makes it more appealing to potential buyers.

EXCLUSIVE OFFER FOR NOVEC:

- \$500 off installation — Hurry, offer ends Dec. 31!
- 1 year of 24/7 monitoring and maintenance included.
- 10-year worry-free warranty — complete peace of mind.

Finally, when you order your Generac generator before the end of December, you may qualify for a financing option where you pay nothing — zero money down, no payments — until the project is finished!

There is no better time to invest in your whole home protection than right now. No upfront costs, 10 years of protection, and \$500 off your installation are only available until Dec. 31.

Don't let a storm catch you off guard. ACT NOW to power up and stay protected. Call us at 1-866-387-8063 to schedule your free quote.

Take care of your family by keeping them safe and prepared!

Financing available to qualified homeowners. Ask your sales representative for more information.

It typically takes 60 to 90 days from point of purchase to full installation.

Recycle Your Holiday Greens at NOVEC Gainesville Technical Center

Remove all decorations, metal ornament hooks, and light strings, and let NOVEC recycle your holiday trees and wreaths.

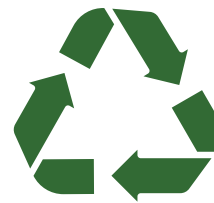
WHERE:

Gainesville Technical Center
5399 Wellington Branch Dr.
Gainesville, VA 20155

WHEN:

Dec. 26 to Jan. 12, 2025

For more information, contact NOVEC's vegetation management department at 703-335-0500, ext. 1600, or email vegetationmgmt@novec.com.



RECYCLE

On Call “Fore” the LPGA



NOVEC was a Community Supporter of the 2024 Solheim Cup at Robert Trent Jones Golf Club in Gainesville in September. NOVEC provides electric service to the golf course, and lineworkers Brian Savage and Zach Bell, along with other lineworkers from the Co-op, were on standby during the event to ensure smooth operations.

Hosted by the Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA), the Solheim Cup is the LPGA's version of the Ryder Cup, featuring the best female golfers from the U.S. and Europe. Team USA emerged victorious.

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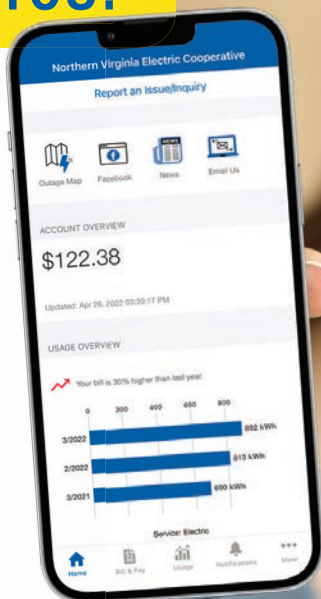
- Pay your bill.
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- Report an outage.
- No credit card payment fees.
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Easily access it through NOVEC's mobile app or at novec.com.

**You're on the go.
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Don't let falling temps raise your budget

Save energy this winter by **keeping your thermostat around 68–70°F during the day.** If you're away from home or ready to tuck in for the night, dropping your thermostat a few degrees more is an easy way to save without sacrificing comfort.

Want more energy efficiency tips this winter? Visit ee.odec.com.

EnergizeEfficiently

ODEC Old Dominion Electric Cooperative*

— 2024 — HOLIDAY GUIDE

Make your shopping, snacking and memory-making a little easier with this year's Cooperative Living Holiday Guide.



KRIS KRINGLE MARKET

Belle Grove Plantation will be hosting its fifth annual holiday market — Kris Kringle Market — on Saturday, Nov. 23, and Sunday, Nov. 24, from 10 a.m.–4 p.m. It will feature dozens of local artisans and vendors and is free to the public. There is a charge to tour the Manor House. For more information, visit bellegrove.org.



HIGHLAND COUNTY

Virginia's least populous county — Highland County — invites you to come enjoy winter traditions in this picturesque mountain community. Wintertide will be held on Saturday, Dec. 7, and will include something for everyone. There will be a craft market, a visit from Santa and tastes of the season. Come back in February for Big Fish Cider's Wassail and celebrate Virginia maple syrup with the 65th Highland County Maple Festival on March 8-9 and 15-16, 2025. For more information, visit highlandcounty.org.

THE VIRGINIA PEANUT GROWERS ASSOCIATION

Give the gift of peanuts this holiday season! Virginia peanuts are large, crunchy, flavorful and nutritious — and they're one of the most popular peanuts in the world, according to The Virginia Peanut Growers Association. Shop for famous Virginia peanuts from various retailers and have them shipped in time for gift-giving and holiday snacking enjoyment. For more information, visit aboutpeanuts.com.

ELK RUN MINING COMPANY

Located in Harrisonburg, Va., along the sidewalk at the lower edge of the Water Street parking deck, Elk Run Mining specializes in Virginia gemstone jewelry. The owner personally mines, cuts and polishes beautiful Virginia gems, and then creates settings of silver or gold. These handmade pieces of jewelry make the perfect holiday gifts for family and friends of all ages. For more information, visit elkrungems.com.

Finally, if you're still stuck on what to give, consider *Cooperative Living* magazine. For \$10, you can give a year's worth of happy reading to the recipient of your choice. To give a gift subscription, contact Nina Jacobs at njacobs@vmdaec.com.

All of us at *Cooperative Living* wish our readers and their families a very happy, healthy and safe holiday season! ●

Virginia Gemstone Jewelry

Elk Run Mining Company



540-421-7663

49E W. Water St. | Harrisonburg, VA
22801 www.elkrungems.com



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A one-year subscription is available for \$10 per year.

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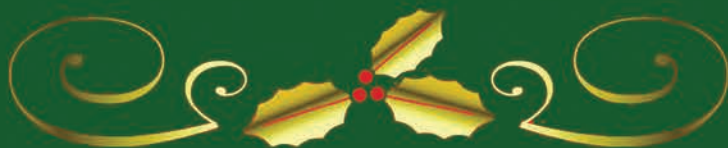
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**Virginia Peanut
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Association**



Stay merry and bright this holiday season with the following energy saving tips



EnergizeEfficiently



Switch to LED bulbs. Not only are they safer and last longer, up to 25 strings can be connected without overloading a socket.

Look for ENERGY STAR® holiday lights. They use 75% less energy than your usual incandescent string lights.

Use an outdoor timer. Schedule your lights to turn on only when it's dark outside and shut off at bedtime.

Break with tradition. Newer, easy-to-install options like laser light displays and outdoor LED projectors make your home stand out while using less energy.

Visit ee.odec.com for more energy saving tips. 

ODEC Old Dominion
Electric Cooperative®

'Tis the Season

story and artwork by Anne M. Dellinger, Contributing Columnist

As the calendar turns to the last two months of the year, did you know that the "fifth season" is about to begin?

You won't find this *extra* season included in the traditional winter-spring-summer-autumn lineup, but it is widely recognized and eagerly anticipated ... especially by kids! (Can you guess what it is called?)

This special period of time only lasts from late November to Jan. 1, but its 5-6 weeks are jam-packed with events, excitement, expectations and pure delight. This is when Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanzaa and New Year's Eve are all celebrated, so it is obviously called — the **Holiday Season!** (Did you guess correctly?)



Even though the season itself is brief, the lead-in to these five holidays starts early.

You probably noticed decorations for November and December celebrations already on the shelves when you picked up your school supplies back in August!

Despite the fact that it was still summer, your holiday spirit may have started stirring a bit. Just seeing the seasonal trimmings can quickly awaken fleeting thoughts of the year-end fun to come.

Now that the holiday season is almost here, those happy feelings will soon turn into actions.

Before long, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins and friends will join together to repeat holiday rituals and traditions. Along with sharing lots of good food and exchanging gifts, there will be hugging, good-natured teasing, and the recalling of old memories (even the embarrassing ones).

What is your favorite holiday memory? Do you have a holiday memory that you would like to forget?

As this year's holiday season approaches, why not plan a few memory-making activities ahead of time for

you and your cousins (and all the fun-loving relatives) to do together?

Look over these suggestions that are associated with Thanksgiving and Christmas. Then ask your mom or dad to help you get the items needed for each project.



Thanksgiving Spy Juice

Cranberries are a big part of the Thanksgiving meal. Remind your mom to pick up an extra bag for this fun activity.

By using cranberries and baking soda you can create an invisible, secret message to share with friendly, trusted eyes. The words will quickly disappear, so fast reading is required!

Items needed:

- half a bag of cranberries
- water
- baking soda
- printer paper, cut to size of cake pan
- cotton swabs, cut in half



Boil cranberries in 3 cups water for 15-20 minutes, keeping lid on pan as cranberries will pop and explode.

Crush the cooked berries and push them through a colander or sieve to collect the concentrated cranberry juice. Pour the juice into a cake pan, making sure that the paper that you're writing a message on will fit. If the juice is really thick and syrupy, add about ½ cup of water. It has to have enough water so it can soak into the paper.

To make **invisible ink**, dissolve 2-3 teaspoons of baking soda in ½ cup warm water, stirring and dissolving it as best you can. Using the non-cotton end of the cut cotton swabs, dip it into the baking soda solution and use it to write your message on the paper. Let the message **completely** dry (use a hairdryer to speed things up).

decorating...baking...
family time...
school closed...
shopping...gifts...music





To reveal your message, float your paper briefly on top of the juice and then gently submerge it. Read the message immediately because it will quickly disappear as the juice is absorbed into the paper.

Here is the science behind this project — the red pigment in cranberry juice is an acid. When it is added to a base (an alkaline substance), it will change color. Baking soda is a base, so when your baking soda message comes in contact with pigments in the cranberry juice, the message will change color and become visible.

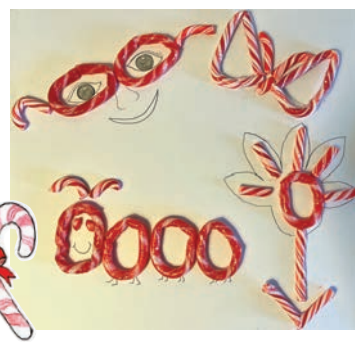
But the message will be short lived. As soon as the cranberry juice dilutes the baking soda, the paper will become acidic again and the message will *disappear*. Pretty cool!

Candy Cane Creations

Bending hard, stiff candy canes into different shapes seems like an impossible task. But when they are heated, the sugar crystals are weakened and the once rigid candy becomes soft and flexible. As it cools, the sugar crystal bonds reform and the candy hardens into its new shape.

To get started, you will need:

- several candy canes — cellophane can be left on individually wrapped candy canes. It adds support as the cane is being reshaped.
- oven
- parchment paper
- cookie sheet
- sheet of paper
- markers



Heat oven to 250 degrees. Place candy canes on cookie sheet lined with parchment paper. Put in oven for 4-5 minutes. Remove with oven mitts and gently twist into desired shapes after the candy cools. Lay the creations on a large sheet of paper, decorate the paper with markers (if desired) and admire your handiwork.

The holiday season holds many magical moments; however, nothing beats the cozy, comforting sense of belonging that happens when family members share good times together. It's the best gift of all. *Enjoy!* ●



CALLING ALL SUPER SLEUTHS

Each of the holidays occurring during the holiday season will be observed in unique ways. But no matter the culture, the origin, the foods or the rituals, there is one custom these holidays all have in common ... celebrating with light. It could be candles, lamps, roaring yule logs, fireworks or twinkling LED lights. Whatever form it takes, light will be a fundamental part of each celebration.

Hay Seed and City Slicker are ready to decorate and have discovered that they need an extra string of lights.

Look over the following statements or questions and submit your answers:

- Find a string of holiday lights hidden in the magazine and give the page number.
- What different kinds of lights are used in your family's holiday celebrations?
- What lights are your favorite ... candles? Strings of all one color? Color changing? Blinking? Icicles?

For a chance to win a **\$25 Amazon email gift card**, enter online at co-opliving.com/super-sleuth or send answers with name, address and phone number to:

Cooperative Living Super Sleuths
4201 Dominion Blvd., Suite 101
Glen Allen, VA 23060

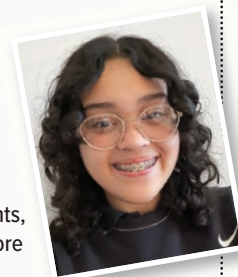
Kids Korner submissions are for children under the age of 16.

SEPTEMBER'S SUPER SLEUTH WINNER

The **September Super Sleuths** was about keeping a "buff" brain. For a chance to win a \$25 Amazon email gift card, kids were asked to find a drawing of a bicycle helmet hidden in the magazine and give the page number. They were also asked to say whether or not they wear a bike helmet when riding, and if they like the way the helmet looks and feels while wearing it. Lastly, they were asked to say how they would change bike helmets to get kids to wear them more often.

The winning answers are:

- Page 34
- Yes
- Yes
- "I would suggest offering better designs, like ones with children's favorite shows. Adding new electronic features, like lights, to the helmets would also make kids more interested in wearing helmets."

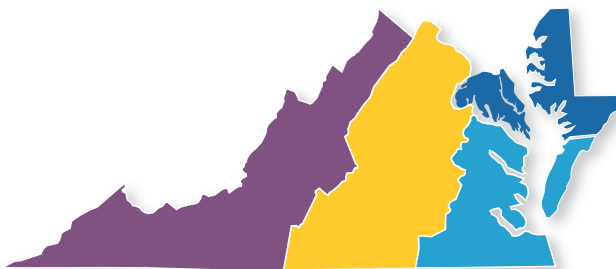


OUR WINNER IS ISABELLA.

Congratulations, Isabella!

Events Around the Area

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



BLUE RIDGE WEST

NOVEMBER

15-16 WINCHESTER. Women of the Moose **15th Annual Holiday Bazaar.** 215 E. Cork St. Times vary. Chapter1367@mooseunits.org.

16 BERRYVILLE. 3rd Annual Berryville Turkey Trot 5K & 1 Mile Kids Fun Run. Chet Hobert Park. 9 a.m. & 10 a.m. Runsignup.com.

23 CLIFTON FORGE. Clifton Forge Town Tree Lighting. Clifton Forge Town Hall. 6 p.m. Facebook.com/cliftonforgemaintstreet.

23 MIDDLETOWN. Belle Grove Plantation Kris Kringle Market. 336 Belle Grove Rd. 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Bellegrove.org.

29 MIDDLETOWN. Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony. 4:45 p.m. 540-869-2226. Middletownva.gov.

29-DEC. 1; 7-8 SINGERS GLEN. Heartland Christmas Market. Ostlund Christmas Tree Farm. 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Ostlundchristmastrees.com.

DECEMBER

6 CLIFTON FORGE. CFMS Christmas Parade. Downtown Clifton Forge. 6 p.m. Facebook.com/cliftonforgemaintstreet.

6 FRONT ROYAL. Blue Ridge Singers Christmas Concert Series: Golden Light. Front Royal Presbyterian Church. 7:30 p.m. 540-635-6947.

6 WINCHESTER. Abram's Delight Candlelight Tour. Abram's Delight Museum. 6-8 p.m. Cshull@winchesterhistory.org.

7 HIGHLAND CO. Wintertide. Highlandcounty.org.

7 STANARDSVILLE. Holiday Craft Fair. American Legion Bldg. Rte. 230. 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Craftsbysebi@gmail.com.

8 HARRISONBURG. Poinsettia Tea. Hotel Madison. 2 p.m. Lyfelynk.org.

8 MIDDLETOWN. Christmas Parade. Historic Main St. 2 p.m. 540-869-2226. Middletownva.gov.

15 WINCHESTER. Blue Ridge Singers Christmas Concert Series: Golden Light. First Baptist Church. 3 p.m. 540-635-6947.

31 MIDDLETOWN. First Night Middletown. 540-869-2226. Middletownva.gov.

PIEDMONT

NOVEMBER

16 BRANDY STATION. Annual Christmas Bazaar. Brandy Station Fire Dept. 9 a.m.-2 p.m. 540-270-1666. Mahjwh@verizon.net.

16 SOUTH HILL. 42nd Annual Friends of the Library Arts and Crafts Bazaar. 408 W. Danville St. 9 a.m. Friendsofrta@gmail.com.

22-23 HAYMARKET. Haymarket Town & Country Garden Club Holiday Shoppe. 3510 James Madison Hwy. Times vary. Htcgardenclub.com.

23 MINERAL. Christmas Bazaar. St. Jude Catholic Church. 9 a.m.-2 p.m. 540-894-4266.

29-30, DEC. 1, 5-8 MANASSAS. Miracle on 34th Street: Live Musical Radio Play. 9419 Battle St. 7:30 p.m. Virginiaartfactory.org.

DECEMBER

3 MONTPELIER. Grand Illumination. The Montpelier Center for Arts & Education. 6-7:30 p.m. Montpeliercenter.org.

6 MADISON. Madison County's Friday Night Christmas Lights & Parade. Main St. 5:45 p.m. 540-948-4455. Madisonva.com.

7 MONTPELIER. Santa's North Pole. The Montpelier Center for Arts & Education. 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Montpeliercenter.org.

8 UPPERVILLE. Blue Ridge Singers Christmas Concert Series: Golden Light. Trinity Episcopal Church. 3 p.m. 540-635-6947.

14 PRINCE GEORGE. 11th Annual Nick of Time Holiday Bazaar. Newville United Methodist Church. 9 a.m.-1 p.m. 804-458-2200.

NOTICE: Beginning January 2025, Happenings listings will remain free of charge for nonprofit organizations and electric cooperative sponsored or related events. A charge of \$50 will be assessed for all other listings per issue.

PRINT DEADLINES: Dec. 1 for Jan. 15-Feb. 28
Feb. 1 for Mar. 15-April 15

Email: happenings@co-opliving.com
Send to: Happenings, 4201 Dominion Blvd., Suite 101, Glen Allen, VA 23060
Online: co-opliving.com/happenings

TIDEWATER

NOVEMBER

23 ONLEY. Annual Kiwanis Craft Show. Nandua High School. 9:30 a.m.-2 p.m. 757-442-4427.

29 CAPE CHARLES. Festive Fridays Winter Wonderland. Historic District. 5-8 p.m. Capecharlesvirginiascap.com.

DECEMBER

6, 13, 20 CAPE CHARLES. Festive Fridays Winter Wonderland. Historic District. 5-8 p.m. Capecharlesvirginiascap.com.

7 WALKERTON. The Upstairs Downstairs All Around the House Art Show. Locust Grove Farm. 10 a.m.-4 p.m. 804-239-9409. Locustgrove1665.com.

7 CHINCOTEAGUE. Old-Fashioned Christmas Parade. Main St. 6 p.m. Chincoteaguechamber.com.

7 HEATHSVILLE. Golden Village Christmas. Rice's Hotel/Hughlett's Tavern. 10 a.m.-2 p.m. 804-580-3377. Rhhtfoundationinc.org.

14 CAPE CHARLES. Cookie Trail. Hotel Cape Charles. 2-5 p.m. Capecharlesvirginiascap.com.

14 ONLEY. Greens, Gifts and Goodies Sale. 8:30 a.m.-1 p.m. Facebook/wcac1925.

31 CAPE CHARLES. Crab Pot Drop. Historic District. 5-8 p.m. Capecharlesvirginiascap.com.

MARYLAND

NOVEMBER

23 ST. MICHAELS. Eastern Shore Sea Glass & Coastal Arts Festival: Holiday Edition. Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum. 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Cbmm.org.

30 DENTON. Alpaca Celebration. 8955 Tuckahoe Rd. 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Tuckahoealpacas@gmail.com.

DECEMBER

6-7 CHESTERTOWN. A Dickens of a Christmas. Main St. Mainstreetchestertown.org.

13-14 CHESTERTOWN. A Feast of Carols: Chester River Chorale Holiday Concert. Presbyterian Church of Chestertown. Times vary. Chesterriverchorale.org.



It's time to protect the good times.

This season's flu, COVID-19, and RSV vaccines are available.

People 60 and older are more likely to get very sick from or be hospitalized for flu, COVID-19, and RSV. Vaccines can help keep that from happening. Help protect your older loved ones to keep the good times rolling.

Get started at [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov)

**RISK LESS.
DO MORE.**
Get this season's vaccines



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and Human Services.

Things I am Grateful For

Happy Thanksgiving to everyone!

by Margo Oxendine, Contributing Columnist



It's been a rough year — probably the worst in recent memory — for me.

Yet, there is still very much for which I am grateful.

And since Thanksgiving is this month, I'll make a list:

I am grateful to the hundreds of *Cooperative Living* readers who sent cards, gifts and emails with their best wishes. I'm sorry I never wrote those thank you notes; the pile seemed insurmountable. I thanked many of you in these columns and answered every email. But there are many of you I feel I let down, including myself.

It wasn't just the two heart surgeries. It was also the demolished cars, none of which were my fault. Each one required a lot of calls and letters and searching for replacements to deal with, including dealing with the bank and insurance companies. All of that took a heck of a lot out of me.

I'm on my third car in four months, and I sure hope it's the last for a while. I was grateful to find it just five miles from home. It's not in the best shape and needs a lot of expensive work. If this car were a horse, it would be described as

"rode hard and put away wet." Still, I'm grateful to have something to get me to the grocery store and the library.

I am very grateful for the countless rides to and from Charlottesville. If I ever have to go back, it will be too soon. I will, but not for at least a year. I'm grateful for that, too. I know no one really wanted to make the long drive to C'ville and back, but most did it in good spirits and with abundant goodwill. We had as much fun as we possibly could. One kindly fellow volunteered to drive me home from a hospital stay, and we'd never even met before! God bless you all!

I am grateful to the great friend who loaned me her nice car for six weeks until I found one that sufficed and wasn't soon demolished.

I am grateful to the friend who took my grocery list, drove to Covington and brought me good food, including a tub of homemade chicken noodle soup. I am also grateful to the Covington library for keeping the shelves stocked with books I wanted to read. I have burned through as many as a book a day out on the porch, going nowhere else.

I am grateful that I was told to exercise by walking. Yay! It's my



favorite thing! I started "small" the day after my first hospital release. Now, I'm back to my regular two miles a day, rain or shine. (Well, if it's not pouring rain.)

Every day, I am grateful for three new things to eat: chicken salad, cottage cheese, and these nifty little Lindy's ice creams in flavors like peaches and cream — just 160 calories! I am thrilled to eat these every day.

I am grateful to have somehow lost almost 50 pounds without even trying! I am not thankful that only two or three pants still fit; I wish there were more.

My hair did something for which I turned out to be grateful. Before the first surgery, I could not get it colored. After the second surgery, when I had a gaping scar on my throat, I didn't dare have it colored, either. What did my hair do? Somehow, it turned blonde. Yes, I'm a blonde now! I am getting used to it and not paying a small fortune at the salon for color. I guess I will need a new column photo ... sometime.

So, am I looking forward to Thanksgiving? You bet I am! I don't care about the turkey; chicken salad and cottage cheese will be fine. I am living Thanksgiving every single day!

Happy holidays to you and yours! And thank you to everyone again. I am grateful to all of you! ●

To order a copy of Margo's *"A Party of One,"* call 540-468-2147 Mon.-Wed., 9 a.m.-5 p.m., or email therecorderoffice@gmail.com.



PHOTO BY KEN NEWMAN, PGEC MEMBER



WHEREZ IT?

Look for the CL logo, like the one above, in the pages of this issue of *Cooperative Living*. Submit the page number where you found it, along with your name, email and phone number to **WherezIt**, c/o *Cooperative Living*, 4201 Dominion Blvd., Suite 101, Glen Allen, VA 23060 or go online at co-opliving.com under "Contests." Deadline is **Nov. 20**. The winner will receive a \$25 Amazon email gift card.

A Rare Vintage

Orange County restaurant specializes in savory satisfaction

by Peggy Hyland, Contributing Columnist

Nestled on a hillside on the edge of the Piedmont, Vintage Restaurant & Pub blends its historic surroundings with modern tastes. The small menu focuses on seasonal offerings, so every dish is packed with fresh flavors prepared with a sophisticated touch.

The main dining room is elegantly apportioned with supple leather couches and exposed brick walls. There are also several smaller, more private dining rooms for more intimate events and family gatherings.

We settled in to peruse the beverage menu, which featured creative cocktails and mocktails, along with a well-sourced and diverse wine list with offerings for any budget. The service was attentive and helpful. Vintage's attention to detail is evident in even the simplest of things: our breadbasket came with inventive kinds of butter, including a fantastic red pepper one that we could not resist. We were then presented with a chilled ratatouille with Gruyère while we worked our way through the many enticing options on the menu.

My companion began with the beef tartare, which was perched atop a fried potato cake. This was no ordinary potato cake — it was delicate, silky and exquisite, a splendid base for the luscious beef. I opted for the ahi tuna ceviche tostada, with delicate fish, zesty pineapple and fresh cilantro, a tropical/Asian treat. The meal was served leisurely, so we savored every bite before moving on to our mains.

I was drawn to the roasted pork tenderloin, which was supple and tender. It came with caraway spaetzle, butter-poached beets, apple and confit garlic. The beets were fabulous on their own, and the whole dish was a harmonious



ahi tuna ceviche tostada



chilled ratatouille with Gruyère



espresso-rubbed bison striploin



peach melba tart

triumph. The combination of coffee and meat captivated my companion, so he opted for the espresso-rubbed bison striploin. It had a lovely char on the outside, with a lean and silky texture on the inside. The earthy rub perfectly complemented the meat, paired with perfectly crisp-tender haricots verts (French green beans) and crispy shallots, and a sensational sweet potato soufflé.

For dessert, I went straight for the peach melba. It had a delicate, flaky crust, salty Marcona almonds on top, and a delicious freshly whipped cream garnished with thinly sliced peaches and raspberries. He chose the blueberry parfait, the perfect combination of sweet and tart. It was silky smooth and garnished with candied fennel and a crunchy streusel topping.

Vintage Restaurant offers lunch and Sunday brunch and private tasting menus, with or without wine pairings. If you are staying at the Inn, you can book a tasting experience as part of your stay.

I have fond memories of coming to the Inn at Willow Grove for Easter and Mother's Day brunches with my grandmother and I was so pleased to see that a place that delighted me as a child could also delight me as an adult. Whether this is a destination or a day trip, Vintage Restaurant will delight you too. ●

Vintage Restaurant & Pub
(The Inn at Willow Grove)

14079 Stones Throw Dr., Orange, Va.

Phone: 540-317-1206.

innatwillowgrove.com/dine



Holiday Brunch Casseroles

Make the most of your holiday gatherings by enjoying one of these delectable casseroles

French Toast Casserole

recipe courtesy of Family Features/Culinary.net

Ingredients:

1 loaf French bread (about 1 ½ lbs.),
cut into 1-inch cubes
5 large eggs
1 ½ cups unsweetened milk
2 tablespoons brown sugar
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
1 teaspoon cinnamon
¼ teaspoon nutmeg
¼ teaspoon sea salt
maple syrup, for serving

topping:

2 tablespoons unsalted butter
or coconut oil, melted
2 tablespoons brown sugar
½ cup chopped pecans
1 cup frozen strawberries
1 cup frozen blueberries
confectioners' sugar, for dusting

Directions:

Grease 9-by-13-inch baking dish. Place bread cubes in baking dish. In large bowl, whisk eggs, milk, brown sugar, vanilla, cinnamon, nutmeg and salt. Pour mixture evenly over bread cubes. If making casserole ahead, cover baking dish and refrigerate overnight. If baking immediately, let stand 30 minutes at room temperature to allow bread to soak up egg mixture. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. **To make topping:** Drizzle casserole with melted butter and sprinkle with brown sugar and pecans. Top with strawberries and blueberries. Cover and bake 35 minutes. Uncover and bake an additional 10-20 minutes, or until topping is browned and egg mixture has mostly set. Remove from oven, cover loosely with foil and let stand 10 minutes. Dust with confectioners' sugar. Serve with maple syrup.



Cranberry Strata

recipe courtesy of Family Features/Culinary.net

Ingredients:

8 cups French bread (crusty)
8-oz. pkg. cream cheese
½ cup dried cranberries
6 eggs
2 ¼ cups milk
⅓ cup maple syrup
½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
or nutmeg

Directions:

In a greased 2-quart rectangular baking dish, arrange half of the bread pieces, about 4 cups. Cut cream cheese into 8-10 slices and arrange over the bread chunks. Sprinkle cranberries over bread chunks. Top with remaining bread pieces (4 cups). In a medium bowl, beat together eggs, milk and maple syrup. Pour over bread in dish. Sprinkle with ground cinnamon or nutmeg. With back of spoon or spatula, lightly press down to saturate bread with egg mixture. Cover and chill for up to 24 hours. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Bake covered for 45 minutes. Uncover, then bake for 20 minutes more. Let stand for 10 minutes before serving. Serve warm and topped with maple syrup.

Breakfast Lasagna

recipe courtesy of Wendy Lankford

Ingredients:

3 cups beaten eggs
butter
15 strips bacon, cooked
1 lb. frozen hash browns
2 cups cooked sausage
cheddar cheese, shredded
chives, for garnish

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Cook eggs in butter until still a little runny; crumble bacon. Butter a 9-inch square baking dish. Layer hash browns, sausage, egg, cheese, hash browns, bacon, egg, cheese and end with hash browns. Bake until hash browns are done, about 30 minutes. Remove from oven and top with more cheese. Run under broiler until cheese is bubbly. Serve with chopped chives as garnish if desired.

Got a tasty treat to share?

Email your favorite **quick dish recipes** to cooperativekitchen@co-opliving.com, or mail to Cooperative Kitchen, c/o Cooperative Living, 4201 Dominion Blvd., Suite 101, Glen Allen, VA 23060 and include your email address.

You also can submit them online at co-opliving.com/cooperativekitchen. Selected recipes will be published in future issues of *Cooperative Living* and/or at 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.

BUSINESS

FIREARM-RIGHTS RESTORATION. Call for free consultation: Attorney John Janson at 434-953-8794 (Virginia Bar #91236).

REAL ESTATE

ARE YOU PART OWNER OF A FARM OR INVESTMENT PROPERTY? With family members, partners or unknown parties? Do you want to separate or cash out your interest? Call today for a free consultation. (VSB #91236) Attorney John Janson at 434-953-8794. Johnmjanson@gmail.com.

RUSTIC HUNTING CAMP located north of Lexington in Rockbridge Co. Two-story structure with two bedrooms on one acre surrounded by national forest. \$50,000. Call 757-420-6965.

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FREE

STAY INFORMED ON CHURCH/STATE ISSUES – like religious liberty, a National Sunday Law coming soon. Send mailing address to tbsmads@yahoo.com, TBSM, P.O. Box 374, Ellijay, GA 30540. 888-211-1715.

EVENTS

FREDERICKSBURG, RMR 27TH ANNUAL CHRISTMAS TRAIN SHOW. Dec. 14-15. Sat. 9 a.m.-5 p.m., Sun. 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Displays, Vendors, Santa & Activities for the young. www.rmrrailroaders.com.

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RATES: **Non-business:** \$100 per 25-word block plus \$5 per word over 25; OR "Mini" ad – \$5 per word (max. 10 words). **Business, agent and broker ads:** \$150 per 25-word block, plus \$5 per word over 25. **Display Real Estate:** \$350 per block.

DEADLINE: Dec. 5 for January-February issue; Publisher reserves the right to designate classification or reject any ad. No personals, please.

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- (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) fax: 202-690-7442; or
- (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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▼ A MIGHTY PINE HOLIDAY

Grant is fur-ever dreaming of a white Christmas.

PHOTO SUBMITTED BY ALETA SHELTON



▼ SIT, STAY, SLEIGH

Sandy is picture-perfect for the Christmas card photo.

PHOTO SUBMITTED BY
SUSAN BENDER-MCGOLDRICK



▼ MEOW-Y CHRISTMAS

Conan brings tidings of comfort and joy. PHOTO SUBMITTED BY DANIEL BERTORELLI



▼ HOWL-IDAY PHOTO OPP

Orion and Brody make Santa's Nice List after posing perfectly.

PHOTO SUBMITTED BY ISHITA DEB



▼ DACHSHUND THROUGH THE SNOW

Rogan is a festive farm dog.

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BY KYM RAMSEY



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