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Sonja Cox, president and CEO
of Southern Maryland Electric
Cooperative, tells her story.

PHOTO BY GREGG MACDONALD



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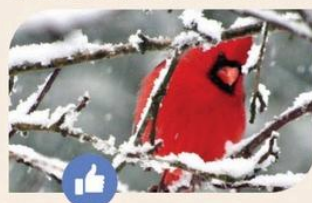
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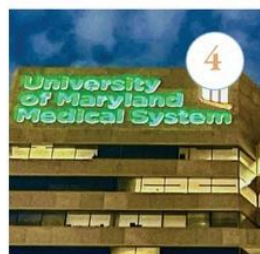
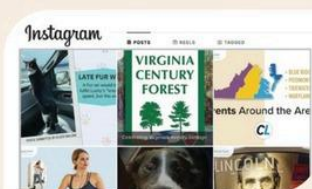
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VIEWPOINT

Moving Forward Together

March is Women's History Month, and the 2025 theme is "Moving Forward Together: Women Educating and Inspiring Generations." Our Cooperative Focus feature aligns perfectly with this theme, featuring Sonja Cox, the president and CEO of Southern Maryland Electric Cooperative. Her inspiring life journey is fascinating, having led her to the top position at one of the largest electric cooperatives in the country. We are excited to have her on our board and in a leadership role at the Virginia Maryland & Delaware Association of Electric Cooperatives. She is a valuable member of our team.

We also honor another remarkable lady, Nancy Hoover, who recently passed. She was the first woman to serve as chair



of the VMDAEC board of directors from 2000 to 2002. She was a recipient of the distinguished Leadership Award, the Association's most prestigious honor.

The March issue also includes an article about the 80th anniversary of WWII's Battle of the Bulge, a Mecklenburg farm using drones for crop planting, and a wildlife sanctuary that has recently been dedicated in Southern Maryland. Additionally, you'll discover a new columnist who is a master gardener, ready to help you choose the best plants to grow this month in both Virginia and Maryland.

We are honored to work with our cooperative members to deliver this publication to over 1 million readers in our tri-state area. Cooperatives do everything possible to best serve their members so that we can all grow together. ●

Brian S. Mosier

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

Cooperative Living

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OUR MISSION

To inform you about your cooperative and its efforts to serve your energy needs; how to use electricity safely and efficiently; and the people who define and enhance the quality of life in communities served by electric co-ops.

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Getting Wild in Southern Maryland

New national wildlife refuge dedicated in Charles County

by Gregg MacDonald, Staff Writer

IF YOU'RE A NORTHERN LONG-EARED BAT OR A DWARF WEDGEMUSSEL RESIDING IN SOUTHERN MARYLAND, YOUR LIFE MAY HAVE JUST IMPROVED. On Dec. 13, the U.S. Fish and

Wildlife Service took the first step in establishing the Southern Maryland Woodlands National Wildlife Refuge as the 573rd and newest unit of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

The 31-acre parcel near Nanjemoy in Charles County, Md., is the first of several land donations planned to permanently protect and conserve more than 300 acres of interior forest and riparian wetlands habitat, supporting northern long-eared bats, forest-interior songbirds, box turtles, dwarf wedgemussels and several species of salamanders of conservation concern. More land donations are expected over the next few months of 2025.

The Service says it will continue working with partners and willing sellers to secure voluntary conservation of up to 40,000 acres of wildlife habitat within four watershed-based focus areas in Anne Arundel, Prince George's, Calvert, Charles and St. Mary's counties in Maryland.

"Today, we mark an incredible milestone in locally led conservation efforts as we welcome the Southern Maryland Woodlands National Wildlife Refuge into our National Wildlife Refuge System," said former U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Secretary Deb Haaland during the refuge's dedication.

"Today's announcement is a great example of the collaborative conservation that happens when longstanding partners work together in support of community-led priorities to conserve and restore important landscapes," added former U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Martha Williams. •



The National Wildlife Refuge System is a network of 573 national wildlife refuges and 38 wetland management districts. There is a national wildlife refuge within an hour's drive of most major metropolitan areas. More than 69 million Americans visit these refuges every year. Refuges provide vital habitat for thousands of species and access to world-class recreation, from fishing, hunting and boating to nature watching, photography and environmental education. Recreational activities on national wildlife refuges supports regional economies to the tune of \$3.2 billion per year and supports more than 41,000 jobs.



PHOTO COURTESY TYLER NEWMAN VIA FLIKR



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▶ For more information on national wildlife refuges, visit fws.gov.

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POWERFUL CAREERS

It's OK to Change Your Mind

Consider all options while navigating potential career paths

by Jim Robertson, Staff Writer

An open mind and flexibility while navigating her career path allowed Rachel Harris to find a powerful career in geographic information systems with BARC Electric Cooperative in Millboro, Va. She is charged with maintaining and updating system maps for the co-op's electric grid and fiber network. As the GIS project manager, Harris is often called upon by her colleagues to provide troubleshooting solutions.

Growing up in Augusta County, Va., served by neighboring Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative, Harris had childhood dreams of becoming a veterinarian. She completed a degree in wildlife science and biology at Virginia Tech with hopes of becoming a wildlife biologist. Reality taught her that sometimes our passions do not always translate into promising careers.

"I studied the changes of a landscape over time through mapping different variables while in graduate school," says Harris, who earned a master's in forestry at West Virginia University. "My thesis focused on hardwood markets and insect detriment studied through satellite imagery in remote areas."

"Most things in life are not linear. We need to be able to jump on and off the path as needed to reach our destination." — Rachel Harris

Prior to joining BARC, Harris explored careers at a veterinarian office, financial institutions, orchards, vineyards, in forestry and in marketing at an agriculture co-op. She finally feels at home with her BARC co-op family.

Harris believes in and encourages others to allow room for deviation to achieve goals in life, especially regarding

career goals. "Most things in life are not linear," she explains. "We need to be able to jump on and off the path as needed to reach our destination. It's OK to change your mind. It is better to have a change of heart and be content than stick to a plan and risk your happiness."

The first GIS project manager ever to hold the role at BARC, Harris maintains the BARC system maps and assists with field surveying and staking. Properly maintaining the mapping system also impacts outage and restoration events. Reducing time to locate system attributes through an electronic map can help to reduce downtime on services to members.

She thrives on helping her co-op peers with issues by making their jobs a little easier or more understandable. "Being able to help solve problems and keep the system functioning properly is quite rewarding," she says. "Even if it does come with additional challenges. I also believe in finding a way to solve the problems at hand with available resources and not being afraid to ask for a little help along the way when needed."

Harris appreciates the commitment at BARC to employee development. While she gained solid mapping experience in college, it was not relevant to her current responsibilities. "My manager has been great in allowing me to participate in any training to help me better perform my duties and prepare me for future tasks that may accompany

my growth within the company," says Harris.

Relieved to have finally chosen the correct path on

her career journey, Harris is grateful for the employee-centered benefits and focused goals provided by electric cooperatives like BARC. Both members and employees receive a mutually beneficial experience. ●

► For more information, visit vmdaec.com/powerfulcareers.

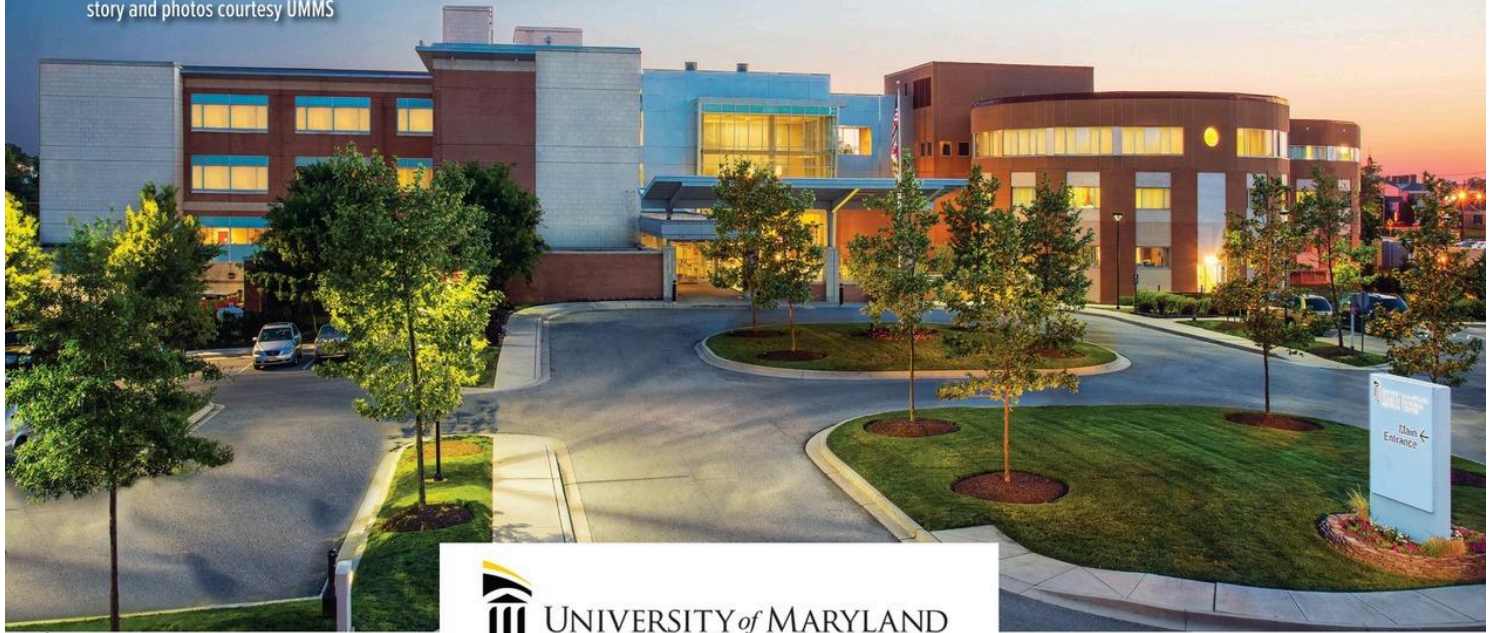
PHOTO BY AMANDA CUNNINGHAM

A Continuing Journey

University of Maryland Medical System celebrates 40 years

story and photos courtesy UMMS

UMMS —
\$5 billion in annual
revenues; more
than 28,000 team
members.



UNIVERSITY of MARYLAND
MEDICAL SYSTEM

Forty years ago, a new way to imagine healthcare in Maryland was born when visionary leaders saw the future potential of a single state-owned and state-funded hospital in downtown Baltimore facing financial challenges. Fast forward to today and University of Maryland Medical System is a thriving network reaching urban, suburban and rural communities across the state, providing 25% of all hospital-based care in Maryland.

“The history of University of Maryland Medical System is a story that is focused on an incredible journey that demonstrates the power of leadership, the power of partnership and the success of privatization,” says Mohan Suntha, M.D., MBA, president and chief executive officer of UMMS. “We are profoundly grateful for those who came before us and set the foundation upon which our future is built.”

In 1823, faculty from University of Maryland College of Medicine formed the Baltimore Infirmary in downtown Baltimore which was the first teaching hospital associated with a degree-granting medical school and the original residency program in medical education. This later became University of Maryland Hospital, commonly known as “University Hospital,” which operated as a state institution for more than 160 years.

In the early 1980s, University of Maryland Hospital was losing several million dollars annually when a group of hospital leaders had the foresight to approach the state to privatize the hospital, and the University of Maryland Medical System Corporation — albeit a network of a single hospital — was created in state legislation in 1984 under then-Governor Harry Hughes as a private, nonprofit corporation.

Today, UMMS has nearly \$5 billion in annual revenues and more than 28,000 team members, and offers care in more than 150 locations, including 10 hospitals, five standalone emergency departments and a network of urgent care centers.

“When you think about who we are as a health system, we are everything from academic healthcare in urban-based environments like the city of Baltimore and Prince George’s County, to a rural healthcare provider on the mid-Shore; to delivering healthcare in suburban counties like Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Charles and Harford,” R. Alan Butler, chair of the UMMS board of directors, says. “We pride ourselves on innovation; today’s medical discoveries and research lead tomorrow’s clinical care at the bedside. While we are delivering the care of today, we take on the responsibility of educating the future healthcare workforce. We do this through partnership, and so when I look around today, I am incredibly excited about the partners that sit together.” ●

PHOTO COURTESY UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND CHARLES REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER, LAPLATA, MD

Small Bites, Big Benefits

Uncommon nutrition tweaks for better health

by Vanessa LaFaso Stolarski, Contributing Columnist

The hustle of daily life often launches us into poor health routines that catch up with us later. After all, it's easier to hit the drive-thru than it is to meal prep or plan. But what if you could make a big difference with just a few small changes? Minor adjustments to your eating habits can lead to significant health improvements without complicated diet plans. More to the point, forcing ourselves into a diet that does not align with our lifestyle or schedule fails to be sustainable.

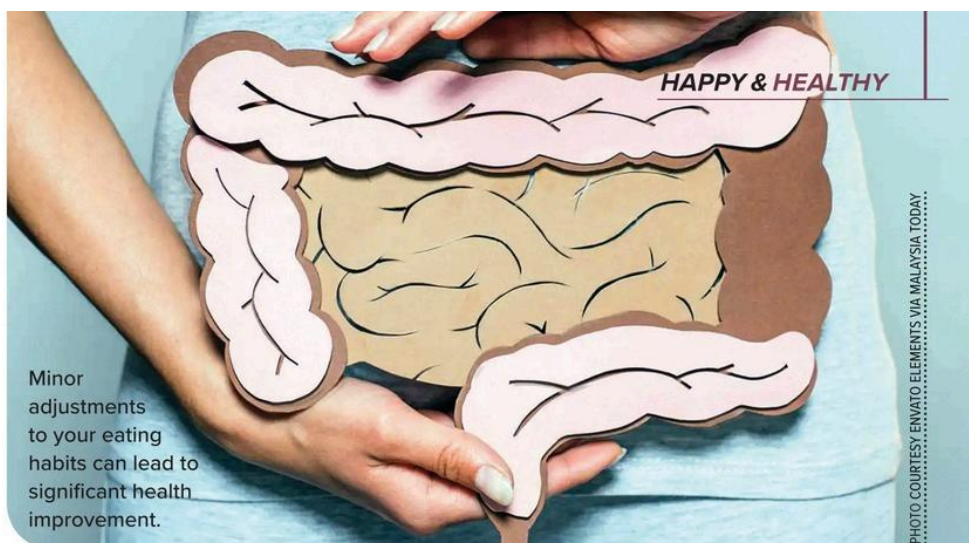
Here are some lesser-known nutrition changes that pack a powerful punch, especially when life gets away from us.

SPICE UP YOUR LIFE

Adding more herbs to your meals isn't just about flavor — it's a health boost in disguise. Researchers have found that herbs and spices contain phytochemicals that can help reduce inflammation, protect against cancer and improve insulin resistance. Try sprinkling some oregano on your eggs, add cinnamon to your coffee, or add a dash of turmeric to your veggies.



Sauerkraut is a rich source of probiotics and vitamins.



TIME IT RIGHT

It's not just what you eat but also when you eat that can promote positive health changes. Eating your main meal earlier in the day can lead to better weight maintenance and improved blood sugar levels. If you typically eat a big dinner, consider shifting your larger meal to lunchtime. This small change can help your body regulate its appetite signaling hormones and improve sleep cycles.

BEFRIEND THE BEANS

Beans are an underestimated powerhouse of health benefits. Their fiber content alone can guarantee better heart health, improved gut function and lower cholesterol levels. Adding just a half-cup of beans to your daily diet can significantly boost your protein intake, too, which aids in muscle growth and repair. Try throwing some kidney beans into a salad or adding black beans to your taco night.

MAGNESIUM MAKES MAGIC

To be clear, a person would have to eat like a pastured cow to get enough magnesium from food. It's typically the one supplement I instruct all my clients to take regardless of their diet. Magnesium is a mineral crucial to heart health, bone strength and energy production, and it regulates over 300 different biological systems. Eating magnesium-rich foods like pumpkin seeds, almonds or even dark chocolate (hooray!) can make a big difference in how you feel daily.

GUT-LOVING FERMENTS

Sauerkraut, pickles, kimchi and yogurt are packed with beneficial bacteria that are great for gut health. Fermented foods can improve your digestion and boost your immune system. Additionally, studies show that poor gut health can also negatively impact mental health, so introducing these to your daily lineup has the potential to improve anxiety levels and stress management. Diversified bacteria and the fiber to feed it is key to healthy gut function.

RETHINK YOUR DRINK

Swapping out just one sugary drink for a day for water or unsweetened tea can significantly reduce your risk of Type 2 diabetes and heart disease. It can also heal joint pain and promote weight maintenance. If plain water doesn't appeal to you, try infusing it with fruit or cucumber slices or choosing a flavored seltzer.

Remember, you don't have to make all these changes at once. Start with one or two manageable ones and build from there. ●

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

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Do You Live in Virginia or Maryland?

Here's what to plant this spring

by Scott Burrell, Contributing Columnist

Listen up gardeners, landscapers, arborists and outdoor enthusiasts — on March 20, it's time to “March” into spring. We will leave behind the dark days of dormancy and subfreezing temperatures and welcome warm breezes and a world transformed to green.

Some basics for those cultivating the land and seeking success with plants this spring are the following:

AVAST, ME HARDIES ...

Know your plant hardiness zone based on the 2023 USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map. The map is interactive and printable and available here: planthardiness.ars.usda.gov.

This newly revised map, which reflects your area's average extreme minimum temperature, has moved many of us up half a zone warmer than the previous 2012 map indicated.

I live close to Richmond, Va., which is now classified within Zone 7B, where the average minimum winter temperature ranges from 5 to 10 degrees. This zone is now the same as the coastal areas in Delaware and the Baltimore



Freckles is an annual romaine lettuce. Zonal hardiness will impact planting and harvest dates. Most of Maryland and Virginia are in Zones 6-7, which will work for this lettuce variety.



Standing out in a crowd: Tiramisu Coral Bells (*Heuchera villosa*). Who needs flowers when the foliage is as extravagant as the cultivar of this Virginia-to-Tennessee native?

Highlands. The 2012 map categorized this area as Zone 7A.

The Hardiness Zone Map, along with the American Horticultural Society's Heat Zone Map (ahsgardening.org), is a crucial predictor of plant survivability, considering factors like soil types, humidity, water availability, and the microclimates unique to your area.

SEEDS OF SPRING

Now that we've clarified that, let's discuss plants. I'm always excited for another wonderful introduction to Coral Bells (*Heuchera* genus). These perennials — plants that endure our cold winters and hot summers for over two years — showcase hundreds of cultivars with mounding leaves that vary (depending on the cultivar) from green to bright yellow, soft red, peach, and even almost black (like *Heuchera* Obsidian and Black Pearl).

One of my favorites is *Heuchera americana* (Dale's Strain), which is hardy in Zones 4-7. It's low-maintenance, native, and provides three seasons of interest with silver-overlaid leaves and delicate, wiry pink flower stalks. It is heat-tolerant, can function as a groundcover, adapts to various soils, and thrives in part shade to full sun. However, if you stress it too much with cold temperatures — think Zone 3 — or warm temperatures — think Zone 8-10 — you risk losing it. So, know your plant and be mindful of its preferred zones.

A short list of other fantastic low-maintenance, multi-season ornamental perennials and their cultivars to watch for in 2025 must include: the *Heucherellas* (crosses of Coral Bells and the native Foamflower/Tiarella);

the *Baptisias* (long-lived, with cultivars showcasing blue-purple, shocking yellow, and the soft cream flowers of *Baptisia* Vanilla Cream 2); the hardy *hibiscus*, *H. moscheutos* Edge of Night with bold purple foliage and saucer-sized pink flowers; the *Amsonia* (Bluestar) group; the perennial salvias like *Salvia greggii*; and the fall-to-late-winter blooming Helleborus, also known as Christmas or Lenten roses.

A NEW SEASON

People often ask me when to plant, prune or water their plants. My initial response is, “Whenever you have time.” Yes, you can plant in the spring but consider this: planting in the fall allows new perennials — herbaceous types (non-woody) and woody trees and shrubs — the whole winter to develop roots in preparation for the rigors of summer heat and water stress.

An exception is cool-season annuals like spinach, cilantro, kale, peas, kohlrabi, radishes and collard greens, which should be planted when temperatures are cool to moderately cold (generally above 38 degrees) in early March. The increasing day length leads to great overall production and allows them to mature before the hot days of June eliminate all but heat-hardy varieties such as Jericho romaine lettuce (*Lactuca sativa*), bred for Israel's desert heat and also showing good mildew and disease resistance in the mid-Atlantic.

It's a brave new world to “March” into, so get going! ●

Scott Burrell is a certified horticulturist who served as the horticulture director for the Virginia Historical Society for nearly 30 years.

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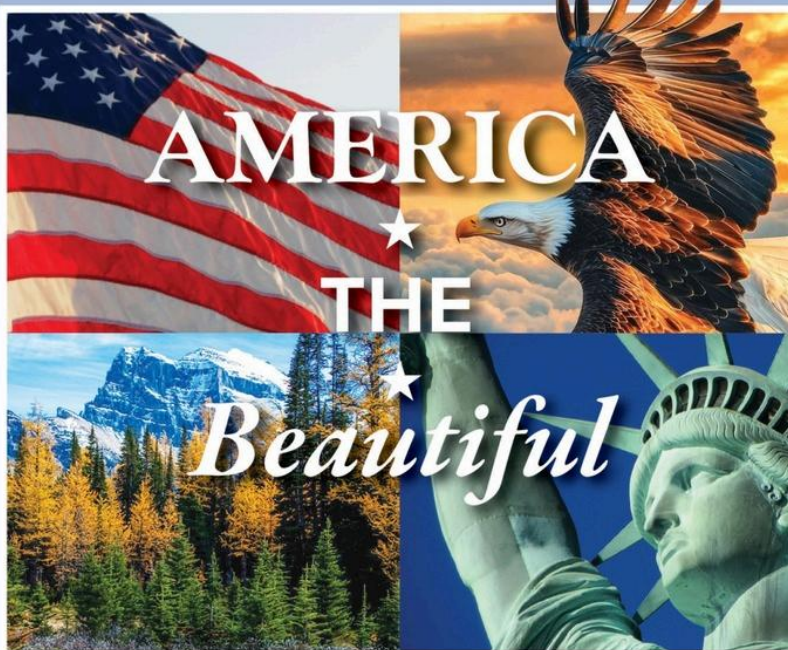
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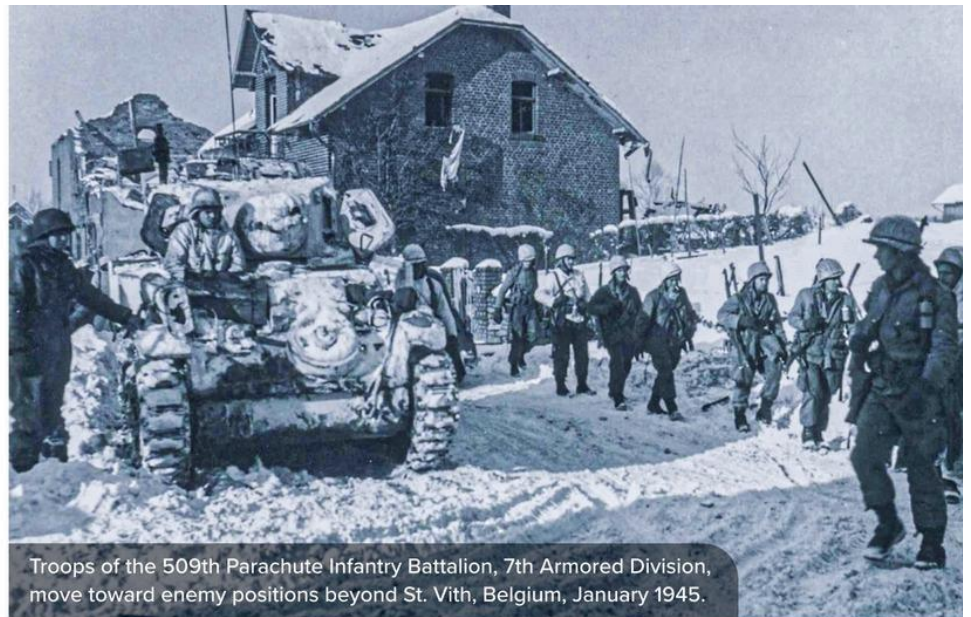
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The Battle of the Bulge: 80 Years Later

Honoring World War II's final major European battle

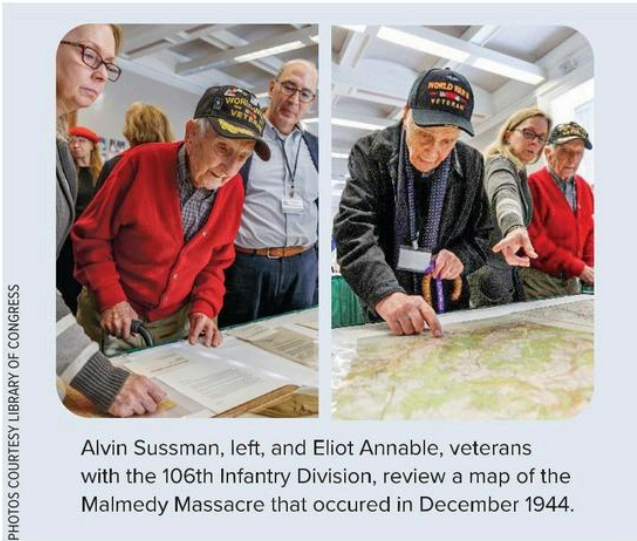
story courtesy of Family Features



Troops of the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion, 7th Armored Division, move toward enemy positions beyond St. Vith, Belgium, January 1945.

The Ardennes Offensive, commonly known as the Battle of the Bulge, was the single bloodiest battle fought by the U.S. during World War II. Waged in the bitter cold of mid-December 1944, it took the Allies a month to secure victory. The cost was staggering: nearly 20,000 Americans were killed in action, close to 50,000 wounded and another 20,000 captured.

In honor of the 80th anniversary of this pivotal battle, the Library of Congress Veterans History Project has launched an online exhibit to commemorate the milestone. While the battle itself is etched in the annals of history, the personal stories from those who endured it remain one of the most powerful testaments to its impact.



Alvin Sussman, left, and Eliot Annable, veterans with the 106th Infantry Division, review a map of the Malmédy Massacre that occurred in December 1944.

The online exhibit, "Serving Our Voices," features accounts from 12 Battle of the Bulge survivors. These stories are part of the thousands of narratives preserved by the project, which ensures that future generations can gain a deeper understanding of veterans' service and sacrifice.

One such story involves Eliot Annable, a 20-year-old

radio operator serving with the Army's 106th Infantry Division. Just days after arriving at the western front, Annable was under German artillery barrages on Dec. 16, 1944. In his oral history, he recalled the assault, describing the intensity as "almost enough to knock you on the floor."

The following five days became the most harrowing days of Annable's military service. While on a communications mission, he became stranded behind enemy lines and spent nearly a week evading the enemy in the Ardennes Forest without food, shelter or appropriate winter clothing. After traveling more than 30 miles, he safely rejoined his unit's remnants.

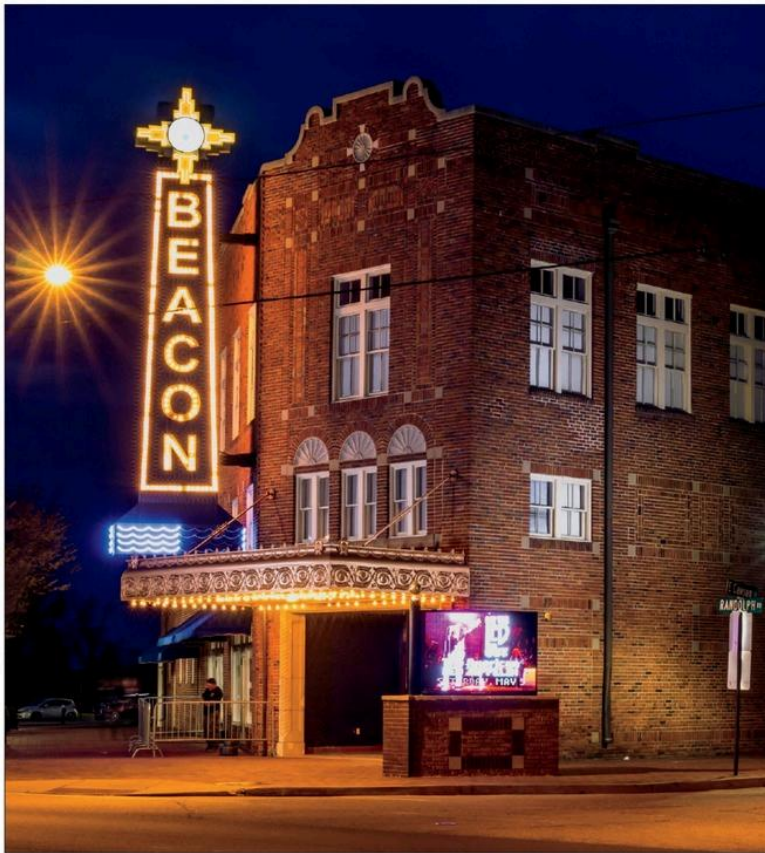
Back home, Annable's parents were gripped by uncertainty. On Dec. 31, 1944, his father wrote a letter expressing the family's anguish and love for their son, regardless of what happened. The moving letter and Annable's oral history provide an intimate view into one soldier's Battle of the Bulge experience.

Another featured veteran in the exhibit, Guy Martin Stephens, also served with the 106th Infantry Division. Unlike Annable, Stephens was captured by the Germans during battle. In his oral history, he recounted the surreal feeling of combat, the relentless hunger he endured as a prisoner of war, and the lingering effects of his time in captivity.

"It's hard," Stephens says. "It's something you can't ever ... your mind is just like a video, or camcorder, I guess. You put it in there. You get busy and get married. You get home, and you get an education, and get a job, and raise your family and everything like that. You can kind of gloss it over or try to push it back, but it's always there, you know?" ●

Veterans who served during the 20th or 21st centuries are invited to establish a collection, including interviews (video or audio), letters and original photographs, even if they did not see combat. Families can also submit collections posthumously to honor their loved ones.

► To explore more veterans' stories and learn how you can contribute to the program, visit loc.gov/vets.



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THE JOURNEY TO THE TOP

A CEO's journey is a testament to her determination, resilience and the power of dreams

by Laura Emery, Staff Writer

I remember my mother bringing a calculator to the grocery store,” says Sonja Cox, president and CEO of Southern Maryland Electric Cooperative, one of the largest electric distribution cooperatives in the country.

“She would have to add everything up in order to make sure she had enough money to pay for the food,” Cox recalls.

Cox grew up in the small town of Hartsville, S.C., and was aware that her mother, who worked long hours at a local sewing plant, was always

desperately trying to stretch a dollar past its breaking point. “There were times when my younger brother and sister and I didn’t know if we were going to get anything for Christmas,” Cox says.

Neither one of her parents finished high school, but Cox says her mother encouraged her to graduate. “She really wanted me to get a good job,” Cox says. Cox found further encouragement in tenth grade in a high school teacher who believed in her. “She was very kind to me. She really pushed me, and told me I could do great things,” Cox says.

“Great things,” however, didn’t seem likely to come easy for young Cox. Despite excelling at school, her home life was difficult. Her father suffered from an addiction to alcohol and was unable to keep a job for very long. His addiction defined their family dynamics and shaped much of Cox’s childhood.



Sonja Cox, age 16

“I hated being at home,” she remembers. “I would stay after school and do extracurricular activities when I could. I did

anything to get out of the house.”

While challenging to share, Cox says, “I’m willing to tell my story because a lot of people don’t understand how bad it can be to live with someone who is an alcoholic.”

School became a haven for Cox, and she poured herself into her schoolwork. She knew getting an education was the key to overcoming her circumstances.

It was in her sophomore year that she identified her career path. “I took a bookkeeping class in high school, and I was fascinated by accounting. Numbers always made sense to me,” she says.

Cox acknowledges that her parents’ financial struggles impacted her being drawn to accounting. “I wanted to have a better understanding of how to best manage finances through accounting,” she explains. “I didn’t want my children to grow up the way I did. Not that money is everything, because it isn’t — but it was difficult, and I didn’t want that for them.”

The following summer, just before her senior year in high school, Cox went to work for the sewing plant her mother worked at. She performed assembly line tasks, like putting plastic bags over pieces of clothing before they were put into shipment.

Just before returning to school, Cox was called into the office of the plant’s manager. “I can even remember his name,” she says. “Mr. Duvall said to me, ‘I appreciate you being here and working

so hard. But ... don’t come back next year asking me for a job.’ When I heard him say that, I was devastated. I said, ‘Why? What did I do?’ He said, ‘Nothing. But you can do better than this. You need to pursue your education.’”

It was a defining moment for Cox.

She couldn’t afford to attend college through the traditional route, so Cox went to work for Carolina Power & Light and took advantage of their employee tuition-reimbursement program. She attended college courses in the evenings while working full-time during the day.

In 1989, Cox married her coworker Robert. After only a short time together, Robert was offered a job at Baltimore Gas & Electric in Maryland. The couple moved to Huntingtown, Md., in 1990. Cox transferred her college credits to the University of Maryland and completed her bachelor’s degree in accounting in 1994.

FORGING AHEAD

Cox had her eyes set on a C-suite role. “I knew I wanted to be a CEO,” she says. “Not this CEO position, specifically, but I had a dream of reaching the top. And I knew I needed to become a CPA to do that.”

In 1998, she earned her Certified Public Accountant credentials. Everything was going according to

her plan until, according to Cox, “a good monkey wrench” was thrown into the mix.

In 1991, Cox gave birth to her second child — a son — who was born with a congenital heart defect. He was diagnosed with DiGeorge Syndrome, a genetic condition caused by a missing piece of chromosome 22. “We decided that I would take some time off to care for our son Josh. After about a year, my husband’s company agreed to pay for in-home nursing care five days a week, so I was able to go back to work,” she explains.

In 1999, a position opened at Southern Maryland Electric Cooperative. Cox had heard that electric co-ops were great places to work and she was already familiar with the industry, so she applied for the job and was hired as financial reporting supervisor.

“When I came to work at SMECO, I got my [Master of Business Administration],” she says. She rose through the ranks until becoming senior vice president and chief financial officer in 2006. “When I became CFO, my mother was so proud of me. She told all of her friends and all of her sisters

(continued on page 12)



Sonja Cox greets newly-elected director Ed Holland, and is joined by director Danny Dyer and retired director Fern Brown, left.

PHOTO COURTESY SMECO

The Journey to the Top

(continued from page 11)

and brothers,” Cox says.

Her ascent to leadership over the next 14 years showcased her ability to lead and innovate, as well as her dedication, adaptability and willingness to learn. Cox credits Joe Slater, former SMECO president and CEO, for mentoring her. “He wanted me to succeed and always encouraged me,” she says.

In 2016, Cox was named one of The Daily Record’s Top 100 Women of Maryland. The Daily Record described her as a consummate professional and lauded her as having a “gift of handling myriad issues” with leadership and drive that “sets an example for all employees at SMECO.” The feature also mentioned her duties as the point person on all fiscal/rate matters for the co-op, as well as the fact that she managed the human resources



“... make people feel like their jobs and their opinions are important and valued.”

— Sonja Cox, president and CEO,
Southern Maryland Electric Cooperative

department of a 500-employee organization.

In March of 2020, Cox assumed the mantle of SMECO’s fifth president and CEO. “My mother never got to see me become CEO, but I know she would have been proud of me,” she says. Cox became the company’s first female chief in its 83-year history.

Her first challenge after taking the position at SMECO’s helm was dealing with a global pandemic caused by COVID-19. Crises present unexpected, complex scenarios that evolve quickly, and Cox handled them quickly and efficiently. “Two weeks

after taking over as CEO, I had to figure out a way to send nearly 260 employees home to telework. We put a process in place and within 12 business days we were teleworking,” Cox says.

When asked to name some other accomplishments during her time as CEO, Cox references SMECO’s bid to privatize the electric system at the Indian Head Naval Surface Warfare Center. “SMECO will take over the electric system behind the fence, bring it up to safety code, install meters and handle other repairs. It’s a 50-year contract,” she explains.

Another big accomplishment during her tenure at SMECO was transitioning from a full-requirements wholesale power supply contract to contracting with various power suppliers to fulfill the co-op’s power supply needs. She explains, “We, with the assistance of ACES Power Marketing, manage our own power supply needs and we are not a member of a G&T. This was a very large undertaking.”

Scott White, a member of SMECO’s board of directors, says Cox is respected among SMECO employees and its industry peers. He says, “SMECO has made a lot of progress with regard to technological innovations, construction of power lines, substations and new facilities, and the expansion of customer services — and Sonja has been involved

with these improvements every step of the way.”

BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS

Electric cooperatives across the country are facing a similar challenge: filling leadership roles as older employees retire. According to a Jan. 31, 2023, article in RE magazine, “One silver lining to the dilemma is a trend among co-ops to further widen the net they cast for prospective senior staff, which has led to a small but noticeable uptick in the hiring of female CEOs and general managers.” Between 2020 and 2021, the number of female co-op CEOs jumped from 80 to 90, according to the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. As of January 2025, there were 98 female electric cooperative CEOs across the country, with Cox being one of only 10 on the East Coast.

As a female CEO in an industry with predominantly male CEOs, Cox acknowledges there are challenges. “When I’m talking to male colleagues — especially in engineering — they sometimes feel the need to explain things in layman’s terms. I will usually say, ‘I understand that. You can move forward. I don’t need that explanation.’ But, for the most part, the male co-op CEOs are generally very supportive — especially in the Virginia, Maryland & Delaware Association. I am friends with a lot of the CEOs that belong to the Association, and they are amazing leaders and great people.”

SMECO has been part of

PHOTO BY GREGG MACDONALD

From left, VMDEAC CEO Brian Mosier, SMECO CEO Sonja Cox and immediate past SMECO board chairman Scott White at the October 2023 VMDEAC board meeting.



VMDAEC, publisher of *Cooperative Living* magazine, since 2023. “We get tremendous value out of our membership in the Association. It’s been a good investment for us,” she says. Cox is the first female CEO in the VMDAEC network.

Says Brian Mosier, president and CEO of VMDAEC, “We are honored to have Sonja as our first female CEO represented on the VMDAEC Board and expect that trend to continue.”

John Hewa, president and CEO of Rappahannock Electric Cooperative, notes that Cox is not only successfully guiding one of the nation’s largest electric cooperatives, she is also a strong contributor when it comes to VMDAEC. “It’s become quite common for the leadership teams [among the VMDAEC member co-ops] to work alongside one another. Under Sonja’s leadership, she has helped grow the strength of our statewide program, fortified our mutual-aid across the mid-Atlantic states, and extended SMECO’s influence and helping-hand reputation across the national Association of Large Distribution Cooperatives.”

Belvin “Butch” Williamson, president and CEO of A&N Electric Cooperative, has served with Cox on several regional cooperative committees and says, “I enjoy her passion for SMECO and the community it serves. Sonja brings a different perspective

National statistics reveal that women outside of the electric cooperative world hold only 29% of chief executive roles.

that provides a refreshing outlook to the utility industry.”

LEADING INTO TOMORROW

There are certain qualities that Cox believes are important in the role of CEO. Cox says, “I manage my employees as a team. I don’t give out edicts; I ask for input. I think you also have to trust the people who work for you to do what you hired them to do, and make people feel like their jobs and their opinions are important and valued. You need to be willing to listen to people.”

Jason Lochr, president and CEO of Southside Electric Cooperative, has known Cox for nearly 20 years. “Sonja’s dedication to the employees and members of SMECO and the Southern Maryland community is unrivaled. Her commitment is evident not just in the success of her cooperative, but also in the respect that she has earned from her peers within the industry. As a lifelong Commanders fan, she knows the value of patience, perseverance and loyalty — qualities that she exhibits every day in the electric cooperative industry.”

Cox’s 2025 goals for SMECO include starting a three-year

communications project. “Our fiber communications system on the operations side is outdated and at end-of-life. We are replacing the communications system with a state-of-the-art system that will allow us to become more digital in the future,” she says. Cox is also

focused on setting up a methodical succession-planning process at SMECO.

BEYOND THE DESK

Cox lives in Leonardtown, Md., 20 miles from SMECO’s headquarters. “I love the people here; they are very friendly. I also love being near the water, and that we are in an area with a lot of good food and music,” she says.

She enjoys spending time with her husband and three grown children — Kristen, Josh and Gunnar — as well as her five-year-old granddaughter, Charlie, and two chihuahuas, Persi and Cassie. Cox also loves golfing, going on cruises and spending time at the beach.

Says Cox, “Growing up watching my parents struggle to provide for us was challenging, but it just made me more determined to achieve my goals and to provide a different kind of life for my family. I was able to do that for my children — but my greatest ‘riches’ will always be my family and friends. And being able to lead such a great team at SMECO.” ●

Another “First” Lady



Nancy Hoover, of Broadway, Va., was a trailblazer in the co-op world.

She was the first woman to serve on the board of directors for Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative, as well as the first woman to serve as chairman of the board of the Virginia, Maryland & Delaware Association of Electric Cooperatives, publisher of *Cooperative Living*. In 2003, she became the first woman to receive the coveted Leadership Award from VMDAEC.

“She was thorough, conscientious, passionate about the co-ops, and always kind to everyone in word and deed. She was a very special lady and will be missed,” said retired VMDAEC CEO Richard Johnstone after Hoover passed away in October 2024.



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Women’s Day

MARCH 8



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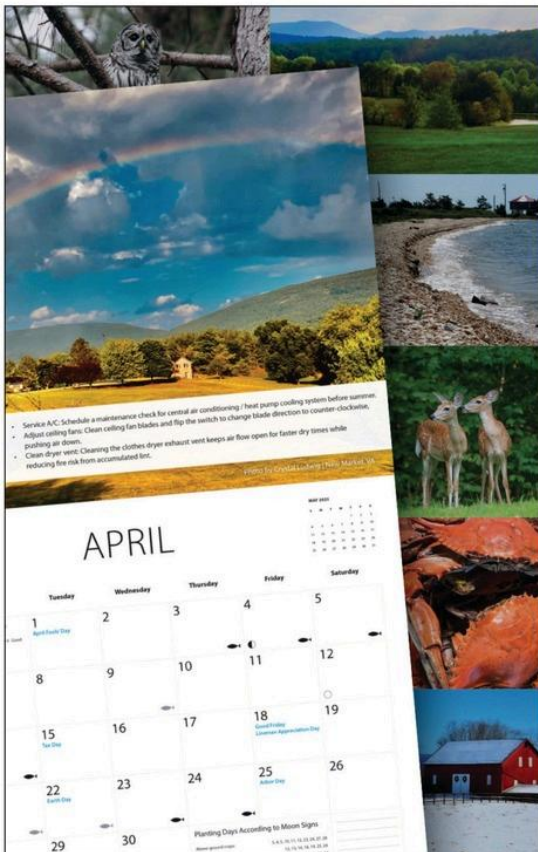
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Contact Sonja Kinney at 804-297-3429 or at skinney@vmdaec.com.



Attention Photography Enthusiasts!

Submit your photos now for a chance to be featured in ODEC's 2026 Energy-Saving Tips Calendar.

Submission Requirements:

- High resolution (3,000+ pixels wide)
- Landscape mode (wide, not tall)
- Unedited — no enhancements, watermarks or date-time stamps
- Include location

Send submissions to EnergyTips@odec.com

(Smartphone images are generally unacceptable)



WHERE DOES MY ENERGY COME FROM?



As a customer of NOVEC — a distribution electric cooperative — do you ever wonder where your electric energy comes from? With lots of conversation about load growth in Virginia, it's a good time for a short lesson in electricity supply.

NOVEC is a "poles and wires" distribution company. We endeavor to bring affordable and reliable electric energy from the regional transmission system to your homes and businesses through our electric lines. The monthly service and distribution charges on your electric bill pay for this infrastructure.

NOVEC takes service from the Dominion Energy transmission system, which includes 230kV and 500kV high-voltage lines across the state; they interconnect with transmission systems in other states. While Dominion Energy owns and maintains these transmission assets, the interstate transmission system is operated by PJM Interconnection. Located in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, it spans much of the mid-Atlantic region.

Generation of electric energy comes from many sources, including nuclear, natural gas, coal, wind, and solar plants located throughout PJM's territory. PJM manages this marketplace daily, but it also keeps an eye on future generation, by dispatching the lowest-cost plants each day and running a capacity market to encourage development of new generation. On peak load days in summer and winter, Virginia generally has a shortage of power generation, so PJM uses the transmission system to bring electric energy into the commonwealth from neighboring states. Supply charges and the power cost adjustment on your electric bill pay for transmission and generation.

PJM's first priority will always be safety and reliability — just like NOVEC — followed closely by affordability.

With spring around the corner, we will soon start backyard projects like planting trees, building new patios or installing fences. Remember to call 811 — it's actually the law — if you plan to dig. Also ensure your contractors call to locate underground utilities. For more information, visit VA811.com.

Best Regards,

Dave Schleicher

NOVEC VALUES

- | | | |
|------------------|------------|--------------|
| • Integrity | • Safety | • Excellence |
| • Accountability | • Teamwork | • Innovation |



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For updates, tips on safety, energy saving 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

Lengthen the life of your clothes dryer with regular cleaning. Clean the lint filter after every load to improve air circulation and safety. Check the lint trap opening and use a vacuum cleaner to remove any lint that's fallen inside the opening.



Where Are They Now? NOVEC Catches Up with Former College Scholarship Recipients

By Robin Earl

**THIS STORY IS THE SECOND
IN A TWO-PART SERIES.**

We contacted recipients of NOVEC college scholarships to see what they are up to and how the college experience has influenced their lives — and livelihoods.



Saman Fatima's interest in technology is inspiring her to pursue innovative solutions in healthcare.

Saman Fatima, 19, graduated from Osbourne Park High School in 2023 and is pursuing a bachelor's degree in computer engineering and electrical engineering at the University of Virginia; she expects to graduate in 2027. Through internships, Fatima said, "I've had opportunities to work on robotics, machine learning, and chip design projects, which align with my passion for blending hardware and software solutions to solve real-world problems. My goal is to design innovative solutions, such as medical assistant robots to support doctors and nurses in treating chronic conditions and handling high-pressure scenarios like pandemics ... Participating in the Break Through Tech AI program has been transformative for me. It deepened my understanding of AI technologies and inspired me to think about how machine learning can enhance medical and societal applications."

APPLY FOR COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS FROM NOVEC

APPLICATIONS ARE DUE APRIL 1

Scholarships are awarded to students living on NOVEC lines in Fairfax, Fauquier, Loudoun, Prince William and Stafford counties, as well as the City of Manassas Park.



Applicants must be graduating seniors with a GPA of 3.5 or higher and provide two letters of recommendation.



Applicants will be asked to list their extracurricular activities.



One scholarship is available for a vocational or trade school student, and another for a student attending an HBCU.



Other scholarship opportunities are available.



NOVEC



Don't delay, get your applications in today!

www.novec.com/scholarships



Madison Humphries, a graduate from William & Mary with a master's degree, is currently working in South Carolina as a business analyst.

After graduating from Liberty High School in 2018, **Madison Humphries**, 24, earned a bachelor's degree in 2022 and a master's in 2023 from the College of William & Mary. Although she started her academic career focused on chemistry, she switched to a double major in government and public policy. She is currently working in South Carolina as a business analyst for Deloitte Consulting's Government & Public Services practice.

Nicole McNamara, graduated from Westfield High School in 2018. She earned a bachelor's degree in 2021 and a master's in 2023, both from Virginia Tech. She credits a mentor from the Hyatt Regency Washington with guiding her to her current position as an event planning manager at the hotel on Capitol Hill. Last year, she also helped coach field hockey at Westfield High School.

Tori Morin, 20, also graduated from Westfield High School (2022), and is attending North Carolina State University with a planned graduation in 2026. Morin gained experience as a strategic alliance intern at Iron Bow Technologies, and as a marketing intern at Power Move Marketing. While at Iron Bow, Morin "explored next-generation technological solutions for enhancing customer experiences and driving business growth." Away from the classroom, she said, "Being a cheerleader at N.C. State, I have experienced significant life events that have broadened my perspective on life beyond college. Cheerleading has taught me invaluable lessons, including the importance of collaboration and unity."

Sneha Rajaraman, 20, graduated from Freedom High School, Academy of Engineering and Technology. She is a junior at Cornell University's College of Engineering, expecting to graduate in 2026. She has worked as a software engineering intern at the Federal Aviation Administration and was a global technology solutions intern at Verizon. But Rajaraman knows there's more to life than data. She said, "Beyond academics, I enjoy exploring new recipes in the kitchen, whether I'm cooking a meal or baking a fun dessert."



Sneha Rajaraman is a junior at Cornell University's College of Engineering.

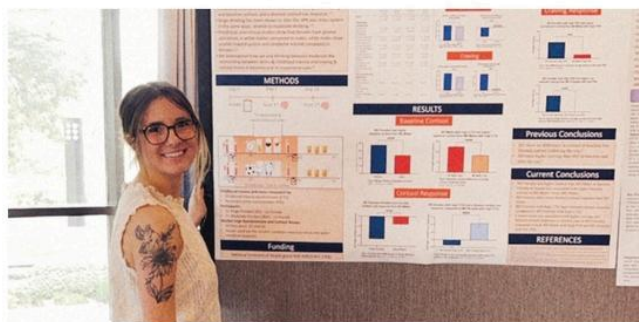
Isabella Sasso, 19, graduated from Westfield High School in 2023 and is expecting to graduate from the College of William & Mary in 2027. Like Rajaraman, she is looking to gain experience in the computer science field. Sasso has also discovered that she "enjoys curating playlists and finding deeper meanings behind music. I am now pursuing college radio and I help out with a radio show called Por La Cultura, which is run by PLUMAS (Political Latinxs United for Movement and Action in Society) at William & Mary."

Natalie Shand, 23, is a graduate of Freedom High School (2019) and Miami University (2023). She is a second-year Ph.D. student at Auburn University in Alabama, studying psychology and neuroscience with a focus on substance and mental health disorders using functional magnetic resonance imaging.



Dao Tran graduated from the University of Virginia in May 2024.

Another Westfield High grad, **Dao Tran**, 21, graduated in 2021. She received her degree from the University of Virginia in May 2024 and is currently a full-time graduate student in international relations at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. Tran said she was looking at law school until embarking on an internship at the National Security Policy Center (NSPC) in Charlottesville. "The NSPC introduced me to some incredible mentors and to the variety of possible careers in the national security apparatus. This internship greatly influenced my decision to go to grad school instead, in pursuit of a career as a defense civilian." Tran is also studying Mandarin Chinese.



Natalie Shand presented her research at a conference during the summer of 2024 in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

An aerial photograph of a two-story house with a grey roof and white siding. Several solar panels are installed on the roof. The house has a red door and a white garage. The surrounding area is green with trees and a lawn.

NOVEC Solutions Can Help With Your 'Orphaned Solar System'

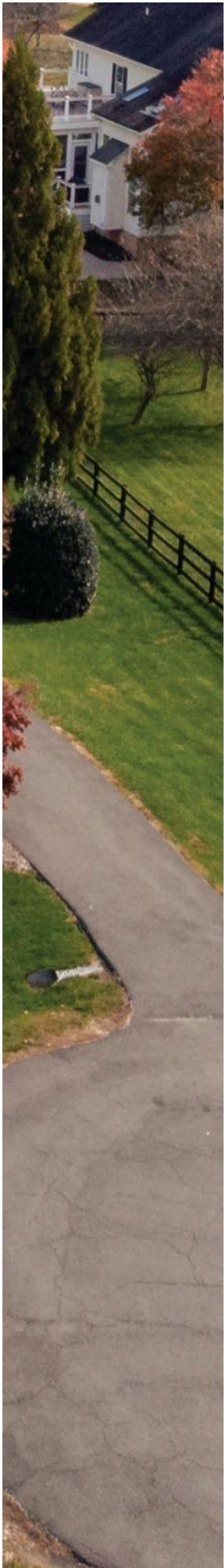
By NOVEC Solutions Staff

In recent years, the bankruptcy of several major solar companies has left some homeowners with abandoned, compromised, or non-operational solar systems. NOVEC Solutions maintains a long-standing and trusted partnership with locally owned and operated solar power expert Prospect Solar. This partnership provides a service to bring these “orphaned solar systems” (OSS) back to life.

WHAT IS AN ORPHANED SOLAR SYSTEM?

An OSS is a solar panel system that is not operating as expected or has been abandoned. A solar system may be considered orphaned in these situations:

- **Incomplete installation:** The system was not fully installed or functional.
- **Installer has shut down:** The installer went out of business while the system was still under warranty.
- **The system was installed by an unresponsive or unreliable company.**



SOLUTIONS

NOVEC Solutions and Prospect Solar are ready to work together to address your OSS. The first recommended service is a 20-point inspection that meticulously assesses the overall health of your system. This inspection covers everything from inverter and module maintenance to structural integrity, conduit runs, and connections. Trained technicians inspect for critter or insect invasion, frayed or worn wires, or roof leaks; check the fittings and monitoring equipment; and take photos of the entire system for future service needs. The 20-point inspection provides crucial insight for effectively servicing the system, while also providing a clear understanding of the system's performance and any potential maintenance needs.

Following the 20-point inspection, NOVEC Solutions and Prospect Solar can offer customized services depending on your needs.

SERVICES INCLUDE:

Operations and maintenance plans include annual inspections and preventive maintenance, as well as the repair and replacement of any defective parts under warranty. Remote troubleshooting and prompt reporting of issues ensure timely dispatch.

Array cleanings involve cleaning the solar panels with water, soft brushes, and (if needed) mild detergents as allowed by the manufacturer.

Refurbishing existing systems includes diagnostic troubleshooting and repair of any current equipment that is damaged, in order to extend the life of a pre-existing system.

Repowering takes servicing your array a step further by building on the existing infrastructure and enhancing the system performance with new technology. This can include battery additions, replacing current modules and/or inverters with higher-efficiency units, and system additions or extensions.

Decommissioning and reinstallation entails safely disconnecting the system electrically and removing the system from your roof or property; the solar array may or may not be returned to the roof. After removal, the solar panels may be discarded (to be donated, reused or properly disposed of), or they may be reinstalled at a later time, as the equipment is kept on-site or in a secure facility.

NOVEC Solutions understands the importance of maintaining the integrity of your solar investment. Our partnership with Prospect Solar provides expertise and solutions to keep your solar investment performing at its best.

Please visit
novecsolutions.com/solar
to schedule a
FREE consultation today.



Prince William School Division Gets High Marks for Sustainability

By Robin Earl



Beville Middle School students learn about solar panels.



Solar panels are installed on the roof of Kyle Wilson Elementary School.



Students from Occoquan Elementary School perform at the groundbreaking ceremony for their new net-zero school building.

When leaders of Prince William County Public Schools (PWCS) were considering a plan to make school buildings more environmentally sustainable, they made a conscious effort to think outside the recycle bin. Geothermal HVAC renovations are nearly complete at one elementary school; half of the county's 98 schools have moved from standard lighting to more efficient LED lighting; and solar arrays have been installed at six locations. NOVEC provides electricity for 52 of Prince William County's 98 schools.

As a result of these and other innovations, PWCS has saved \$79.8 million in would-be energy costs (25.7%) since 2012, according to Jessica Weimer, supervisor of energy management and sustainability for PWCS. In the last 12 years, the school division has achieved the environmental equivalent of taking almost 50,600 passenger cars off the road for a year, or planting more than 6 million tree seedlings and growing them for a decade.

Beville Middle School was the first facility to install solar arrays on its roof. The Dale City school's solar project came online in April 2024 and Battlefield High School's began operating in May. By the end of June, the two facilities had produced 540 megawatt hours (MWh) of power. Gainesville High School also has had solar installed, and Kilby Elementary, Kyle Wilson Elementary, and Forest Park High School were equipped for solar energy generation by the end of 2024.

"I'm thrilled we're bringing solar panels to PWCS," said Jennifer Rokasky, PWCS energy education coordinator for energy management and sustainability. "This initiative will help the school division save money and offset its carbon footprint."

All solar-equipped schools except Kilby Elementary are NOVEC-serviced facilities. The Co-op worked with PWCS's solar provider to facilitate the solar system sizing and the interconnection with NOVEC, said Clare Bargerstock, manager of system metering. He said he has also worked on similar projects with schools in Fairfax and Loudoun counties.

PWCS has designed its first net-zero school; when it opens in late 2025 or early 2026, Occoquan Elementary School in Woodbridge will generate as much energy as it consumes. Vernon Bock, chief operating officer of PWCS, said that when designing for net-zero energy, the design team considered “site orientation, tighter building envelope, increasing daylighting while reducing glare, optimized window-to-wall ratio, and high-performance systems, including solar photovoltaic arrays and geothermal/ground-source heat pump.”

Sustainability Education

PWCS’s commitment to environmental sustainability goes beyond school construction; it extends to its students, their experiences and curriculum. Rokasky said that each school with solar systems “will have access to a dashboard where they can monitor their solar output, download data, and learn more about how solar panels work. If students are interested in learning more, a PWCS team member can visit to provide lessons on how solar energy works and its impact on the school’s energy use.”

During the 2023-24 school year, 71 schools participated in the “Energy Challenge,” where students and staff contribute to energy conservation efforts, waste reduction, and recycling.

With a goal to “use the building as a teaching tool,” children are able to enjoy outdoor experiential learning opportunities — gardens, outdoor classrooms, and green spaces. Children and teachers are encouraged to recycle classroom materials, and at six elementary schools served by NOVEC — Chris Yung, Ellis, Mullen, Piney Branch, Innovation, and Sinclair — students sort organic scraps for composting. The school division increased participation to 12 schools this year, and has plans to expand to 24 schools by the 2025-26 school year.

In recognition for these planet-friendly efforts, Dale City and Mullen elementary schools, both NOVEC facilities, achieved “Green Ribbon” status from the U.S. Department of Education in April for:

- effective environmental and sustainability education;
- improving health and wellness for students and staff; and
- Reducing environmental impact and cost.

On tap for the future: PWCS will complete a study on the feasibility of switching from gas to electric vehicles, and will consider additional strategies — adding more renewables, continuing with LED upgrades, and investigating other emerging energy technology. For more information, visit pwcs.edu/departments/facilities/energy.

Keep the Electric Meter Clear

By Robin Earl

Planning a home renovation? Call NOVEC early in the process to make sure any prospective changes don’t block or interfere with your electric meter. Whether you are adding or expanding a backyard deck, building a shed, or renovating a basement, any change to the area around the electric meter could be a problem.

Access to meters must be maintained at all times to make sure your electric service is not interrupted. In an emergency, when a structure needs to be deenergized, NOVEC needs immediate access to the building’s meter base.

Talking with NOVEC early in the project design phase will help you avoid power interruptions, outage restoration delays, costly redesigns and delays, so that your project can run smoothly and on schedule.

Call NOVEC at 703-754-6750 to discuss your plans with a meter expert so that your home upgrade can proceed smoothly.



Before planning renovations that might impact your electric meter, contact NOVEC for guidance on how to avoid meter access issues.

Notice of Northern Virginia Electric Cooperative's fuel mix and emissions data for 2024

Northern Virginia Electric Cooperative (NOVEC) purchases power to provide service to its power-supply portfolio customers through various wholesale contracts. Power-supply service for NOVEC's market-based customers is independently procured on a daily and periodic basis by NOVEC from PJM Interconnection LLC energy and capacity markets.

The Halifax County Biomass Electric Generating Facility, a NOVEC affiliate, supplies 6.4% of the Cooperative's purchased power. The Cooperative also contracted for 6.5% from hydropower in 2024.

Supply from the above renewables — as well as the remaining 87.1% that comes from power purchased

largely through bilateral third-party contracts and the PJM spot market — make up the supply service to NOVEC's power-supply portfolio customers.

The PJM grid has a fuel mix and emission data profile of 44% natural gas, 32% nuclear, 15% coal, 8% renewables, and 1% other fuels. Between what NOVEC purchases from the PJM market and its own bilateral contracts, NOVEC's non-carbon and renewable purchases made up 47.7% of its overall power supply mix for 2024.

For additional information on PJM regional emissions, visit pjm.com/library/reports-notices.aspx. For additional information on NOVEC-specific emissions, visit novec.com/powersupply.

TOGETHER, LET'S CONTROL POWER BILLS

As winter temps drop, your heating system uses more energy to keep your home warm. This can drive up electricity use and your bills.

We're here to help. Reduce energy use and manage your bills with these tips:



Set the thermostat at 68°F or lower and dress in cozy layers.



Don't use space heaters. They are energy hogs that use more electricity than you think.

Find more easy ways to save and custom energy calculators, at the NOVEC.com Energy Resource Center!



KEEPING LIFE BRIGHT

NOVEC is an equal opportunity provider and employer.   





*Classic Chic —
the toast of
France*

Style and Sophistication for a Fraction of the Price!

I Lost a Fortune at the French Races, but Fortunately I Found This Bag



Ready! Set! Go!" The starting gate opened and 19 horses galloped off, each jockeying for the lead. While Apache, the horse I bet on, was the odds-on favorite, his rival Napoleon pulled ahead in the race's final seconds.

In less than a minute I lost a fortune at the Paris horse races.

After a brief moment of disbelief, something caught my eye. It seemed like every woman in Paris was carrying the same classic handbag! I had to have one for my own, so I had our handbag designers interpret this classic offer. Presenting the **Parisian Chic Claire Handbag**.

Inspired by the equestrian gear I encountered in the stables after the race, the **Claire Bag** is the color of saddle leather with metal adornments that recall horse bits and stirrups. Sturdy and chic, the Claire Bag is ideal for the woman on the go. See for yourself why the **Parisian Chic Claire Handbag** is the toast of France!

Backed by our **satisfaction guarantee**, you can revel in its sophistication risk-free for 30 days. Should it fail to dazzle, return it for a full refund of the item price.

Handbag Specifications:

- Brown vegan leather.
- 8 1/2" x 4" D x 6 1/2" H, 9 1/2" H w/handle.
- Two interior open pockets, two interior zipped pockets, one outside zipped pocket.

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From left, the Callahan family; Jarrett, Eddie, Jimmy, Ryan, Ryan's son Easton, and Louis. They operate Opie Farms Inc. in Opie, Va.

Drones over Opie

Mecklenburg County farm uses aerial technology to save time and money

by Michelle Greene Dean, The Delmarva Farmer

In rural Southside Virginia, it's rare to see a drone dropping cover crop seed on a field of soybeans, especially when they are already sprouted and ready for harvest. But that's precisely what Opie Farms is "up" to in Opie, Va., near South Hill.

"This process saves time and money," says Jarrett Callahan, a fifth-generation member of Opie Farms Inc. "Sometimes the cover crop is already coming up when we start harvesting the soybeans." Cover crops, sometimes called green manures, are seeds for plants grown to improve soil health, rather than for harvesting.

Jarrett's uncle, Eddie Callahan, purchased a DJI T40 model drone and a 17,500-watt Generac generator to help with the fuel and labor costs of planting cover crops.

"We have had the drone for about two years. We also apply fertilizer with

the drone," says Jarrett's father, Jimmy. "It only takes about five minutes to outline a field on an app on your phone," Jarrett, also one of the farm's drone operators, says. "It then is downloaded to the drone controller. It isn't like a GPS in your car."

When asked the deciding factor in purchasing the drone, Jarrett says it's "timelier to spray and spread, also more cost-efficient application over existing crops. We switch out in rotation batteries to keep it going, a total of three batteries. The battery will last about 10-15 minutes or two hopper loads."

Brothers Eddie, Jimmy and Louis Callahan formed Opie Farms Inc. in 1990. Jarrett and Eddie's son Ryan, who joined the operation after college, are the fifth generation.

The elder Callahans have worked the land since they were very young. Farming is in their genes, they say. Both sides of their family were also farmers.

Their grandfather, Eddie Lee Callahan Sr., was the second-generation farmer to begin tilling the land that Opie Farms now works. Eddie Lee Sr. and his wife Mattie raised seven children and farmed the land about four and a half miles west of South Hill, Va. Eddie Sr. died at a young age, but Mattie and their seven children managed to keep the farm going.



A DJI T40 model drone used by the Callahan family to help with fuel and labor costs associated with planting cover crops.

Eddie Lee Callahan Jr., known as Pete, worked hard to make a good life for his wife, Jean Green Callahan, and their four boys, on the land he worked after returning from his service in the U.S. Army. The boys have worked in the fields from a very young age and haven't stopped.

This is a legacy for this fifth-generation farm. Their grandparents started with a mule and plow. Opie Farms uses emerging technology and is a multifaceted operation that grows tobacco, corn, wheat and rye, and operates a cow/calf business.

Over the years, they added more acreage and currently farm in both North Carolina and Virginia. For Jimmy, "taking on what Daddy did" and "hoping that the younger Callahan generation will continue," makes him smile. ●



Cover crop seed used by Opie Farms to improve soil health.



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This article comes from The Delmarva Farmer, an agricultural newspaper for the mid-Atlantic region.

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HELLO, Moody March!

story and artwork by Anne M. Dellinger, Contributing Columnist

Ah, it's March ... the most temperamental month of the year in the Northern Hemisphere

Can you guess why the third month has earned this title? If you said because of its wild, erratic weather patterns, you are a keen observer. You may even be familiar with some folklore involving a lion and a lamb that recognizes and predicts the shifting moods of March's weather madness.

The phrase "*in like a lion, out like a lamb*" means if March begins with a roar of wintry frigid-cold weather, then the month should end with gentle weather, like a little lamb ushering in spring.

This seems like a reasonable assumption because when March starts, it is still winter and by the end of the month, spring has officially begun.

However, some years the *lamb comes in first* and triggers "early spring" things to happen.

If the first days of March arrive with a gentle, sunny disposition, then flowers will start blooming, kids will hunt for their shorts and flip flops, and grown-ups will leaf through their seed catalog.

But March is a swing month, caught between winter and spring. In this unsteady position, weather patterns can change March's mood drastically within a short period.

Overnight the soothing, spring-like breezes can swiftly disappear into gloomy, frigid gusts.

If freezing rain or snow are part of the roaring wintry mix, then tender buds and blooms will crystallize. Shivering kids will quickly grab their winter coats and beanies. Disappointed grown-ups will put the seed catalog back on the shelf.

Whenever the lion has the last word about March's weather, spring seems a

long way off. And that makes everyone a little glum.

In the meantime, no matter when the lion and lamb enter and exit March, there are four weeks to fill with actions for awakening and renewal.

As you look forward to the spring season, you can celebrate the changeable nature of March with these activities.

READ ACROSS AMERICA — MARCH 2-6, 2025

This event begins on March 2, Dr. Seuss' birthday, and encourages children and youth in every community across the U.S. to observe the joy of reading.

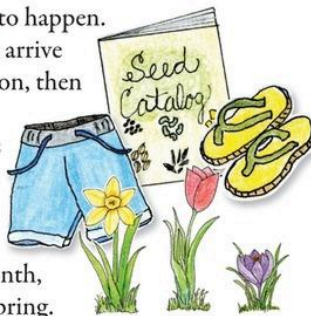
Keep books everywhere you spend your time. Put them in your car, in your room and your backpack.

Visit the library and be sure to secure a card.

When March weather is uninviting, find a comfortable spot inside and get lost in an adventure.

PLANT SOMETHING

Seeds can be started inside and kept on a sunny window sill. Remember to keep the soil moist and follow instructions on the seed packets for transplanting into larger pots when warmer days arrive. A potted garden is easy to maintain and is an ideal growing spot when a patch of ground is not available.





Earth Day and Zinnia Seeds!

On April 22, honor the planet that owes its life to the sun by ordering some heirloom zinnia seeds for a garden plot or containers ... the pollinators will be most appreciative! To order heirloom zinnia seeds:

Send \$2 and a self-addressed (4x9 or 6x9) envelope with two stamps to: Anne M. Dellinger, 3328 Red Banks Road, Mt. Jackson, VA 22842.

EXPLORE AND DISCOVER

When the weather becomes more "lamb-like," make plans with your family to venture out on some hiking trails in a wooded area or state park.

If possible, go prepared with a backpack that holds a hand lens, pencil, small notebook and a camera. Be sure to get down on the forest floor where you can get a close-up view of new life poking up through the leaf litter. Mother Nature always has awesome surprises waiting to be uncovered. All you have to do is look! As you go about making discoveries, take time to record your findings so you can relive your little adventure when back home.

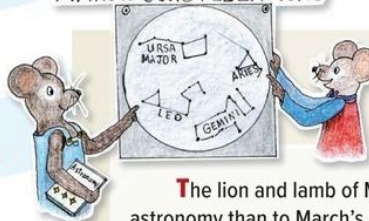


Hopefully you will want to keep on exploring during this transitional period of the year, especially when the days get longer and warmer.

And, if a fickle March mood swing happens to ruin your plans, remember these words by writer Hal Borland, *"No winter lasts forever; no spring skips its turn."*



MARCH CONSTELLATIONS



CALLING ALL Super Sleuths

The lion and lamb of March folklore may relate more to astronomy than to March's unpredictable weather. It is believed, by some, that a certain constellation that rises in the East in early March and another constellation that sets in the West at March's end are recognized as the basis for the familiar saying — *"in like a lion, out like a lamb."*

Help Hay Seed and City Slicker learn more about these March constellations and take a chance for a \$25 Amazon gift card by following the directions below.

- Find and name the two constellations hidden in this magazine, giving the page number.
- Observe March's weather throughout the month. Begin by recording the temperatures and weather conditions on a calendar during the first week or so. Then do the same observations at the end of the month. How would you interpret your findings using the lion and lamb analogy to describe the weather of March 2025?

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.

NOVEMBER - DECEMBER

Super Sleuths

The November-December Super Sleuths was about the holiday season. For a chance to win a **\$25 Amazon email gift card**, kids were asked to find a string of holiday lights hidden in the pages of the magazine and give the page number, share what kind of lights are used in their family's holiday celebration, and name their favorite type of holidays lights.

The winning answers are:

- Page 2
- "We use multi-colored LED lights outdoors, multi-colored lights on the tree, and white twinkle lights in the Christmas village."
- "Rainbow-colored lights."

OUR WINNER IS CHIARA.

Congratulations, Chiara!



Savory Breakfast Muffins

recipe and photo courtesy of Lindsay Harold

Ingredients:

36 frozen tater tots, thawed
½ lb. breakfast sausage, browned
9 large eggs
½ cup milk
salt and pepper
about 1 cup shredded sharp cheddar cheese

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease a standard muffin pan and place 3 tater tots in each well. Divide sausage bits evenly between the muffin wells. Beat the eggs and milk until smooth. Mix in salt and pepper to taste. Pour the egg mixture over the tater tots and sausage, dividing evenly. Muffin wells will be nearly full. Place a pinch or two of shredded cheese on top of each one. Bake for 20-25 minutes or until set. Serve warm. Yields 12 servings.

Breakfast ON THE Go!

Make time for the most important meal of your day

Sunshine Smoothie

recipe courtesy of Family Features/Culinary.net

Ingredients:

2 cups orange juice
2 cups grapefruit juice
2 bananas, peeled and cut into chunks
1 cup vanilla yogurt
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Directions:

In blender, blend orange juice, grapefruit juice, banana chunks, yogurt and vanilla extract until smooth. Serve immediately. Serves 2-4.

Note: If smoothie is too tart, reduce to 1 cup grapefruit juice.

Mixed Berry Whole-Wheat Muffins

recipe courtesy of Family Features/Healthy Family Project

Ingredients:

1 ¼ cups white whole-wheat flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon baking soda
½ teaspoon salt
1 large egg
½ cup maple syrup
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
¾ cup plain nonfat Greek yogurt
¾ cup unsweetened applesauce
½ cup chopped strawberries
½ cup blueberries

Directions:

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Grease muffin pan and set aside. In medium bowl, whisk flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt. In a separate large bowl, mix egg, maple syrup, vanilla, yogurt and applesauce. Add dry ingredients to wet ingredients and stir until just combined. Do not overmix. Fold in strawberries and blueberries. Pour batter into prepared muffin tin, filling cups about ¾ full. Bake 15 minutes, or until tops are golden brown and toothpick inserted in center comes out clean. Remove from oven and let cool in muffin tin 5 minutes before removing. Serves 12.

GOT A
TASTY TREAT
TO SHARE?

Email your favorite **Mexican dishes, side dishes and 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.

Because of volume we cannot guarantee publication of all recipes. Reader recipes are submitted in good faith. Cooperative Living cannot warrant results.

Home Energy Calculator

Optimize Your Energy Use with Our Home Energy Calculator

Take control of your energy consumption by exploring the details of your home setup. Our Home Energy Calculator guides you through each aspect of your home's energy profile, from the number of occupants and home size to thermostat settings, heating, cooling, and beyond. By identifying key factors like insulation, windows, air leaks, and appliance usage, you'll gain insights to improve efficiency and reduce energy costs. Start building your personalized energy-saving plan today!

Home Profile

Setup your home details

Number of Occupants

Home Size

Can you help us determine the size of your home?

Small Home

400 - 1,499 square feet
1 - 3 Bedrooms

Medium Home

1,500 - 2,999 square feet
3 - 5 Bedrooms

Large Home

3,000+ square feet
4 - 7 Bedrooms

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A proper grooming routine starts with the right tools.

It's a Wash

Grooming advice to keep your dog clean and healthy

story courtesy of Family Features

Regular grooming can keep your dog looking and smelling his or her best, but it's also important for maintaining health. If you choose to groom at home rather than opting for (often expensive) professional care, it's also an opportunity to examine your pet for potential concerns.

A proper grooming routine starts with the right tools. Consider these suggestions from The Humane Society of the U.S.:

- Dog-friendly nail clippers
- Rubber-bristled brush
- Dog-friendly toothbrush and toothpaste
- Dog-friendly shampoo and conditioner
- Cotton balls
- Blunt-ended shears or small clippers with guides
- Microfiber towel

TRIMMING NAILS

When your dog's nails nearly touch the ground, it's time for a trim, typically every 3-4 weeks. Trimming the part of the nail that turns down helps prevent pain and damage to paws.

If your dog has white nails, avoid cutting the "quick," the pink part that's visible on white nails, which bleeds when cut. For dark nails, simply trim a bit at a time until evidence of the quick is visible.

BATHING AND BRUSHING

Frequency for baths and brushing depends on your dog's coat type — be sure to research optimal grooming schedules based on his or her breed. In general, The Humane Society

of the U.S. recommends these guidelines:

- Short, smooth or wiry coat: Brush once a week with a rubber-bristled brush.
- Long, silky or curly coat: Brush once a day with a rubber-bristled brush or wire slicker brush. Use a steel comb to prevent tangles or mats, if necessary.
- Double coat: Use an undercoat rake or de-shedding tool to gently de-shed once a week in addition to regular brushing routines.

When it's bath time, use a shampoo formulated for dogs and a damp cloth or cotton ball to clean around the eyes and ears without pushing anything into the eyes or ears. Dry with a microfiber towel or hair dryer on a low setting.

CUTTING FUR

Be careful and work slowly to avoid mistakes and keep your dog calm and comfortable. Brush, bathe and completely dry prior to cutting fur with blunt-ended shears or small clippers with guide combs. Specifically trim hair covering the eyes and private areas and between your pup's paw pads. It may be helpful to watch a tutorial online to ensure success.

BRUSHING TEETH

You can prevent gum disease and plaque buildup by brushing your dog's teeth with a soft toothbrush and dog-friendly toothpaste. Make sure your pet is comfortable and start slow, staying on the outside surfaces of teeth and gently rubbing back and forth. Focus on the area where the tooth surface meets the gum. ●

Urgent: Special Summer Driving Notice

To some, sunglasses are a fashion accessory...

But When Driving, These Sunglasses May Save Your Life!

Drivers' Alert: Driving can expose you to more dangerous glare than any sunny day at the beach can... do you know how to protect yourself?

The sun rises and sets at peak travel periods, during the early morning and afternoon rush hours and many drivers find themselves temporarily blinded while driving directly into the glare of the sun. Deadly accidents are regularly caused by such blinding glare with danger arising from reflected light off another vehicle, the pavement, or even from waxed and oily windshields that can make matters worse. Early morning dew can exacerbate this situation. Yet, motorists struggle on despite being blinded by the sun's glare that can cause countless accidents every year.

Not all sunglasses are created equal. Protecting your eyes is serious business. With all the fancy fashion frames out there it can be easy to overlook what really matters—the lenses. So we did our research and looked to the very best in optic innovation and technology.

Sometimes it does take a rocket scientist. A NASA rocket scientist. Some ordinary sunglasses can obscure your vision by exposing your eyes to harmful UV rays, blue light, and reflective glare. They can also darken useful vision-enhancing light. But now, independent research conducted by scientists from NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory has brought forth ground-breaking technology to help protect human eyesight from the harmful effects of solar radiation light. This superior

lens technology was first discovered when NASA scientists looked to nature for a means to superior eye protection—specifically, by studying the eyes of eagles, known for their extreme visual acuity. This discovery resulted in what is now known as Eagle Eyes®.

The Only Sunglass Technology Certified by the Space Foundation for UV and Blue-Light Eye Protection. Eagle Eyes® features the most advanced eye protection technology ever created. The TriLenium® Lens Technology offers triple-filter polarization to block 99.9% UVA and UVB—plus the added benefit of blue-light eye protection. Eagle Eyes® is the only optic technology that has earned official recognition from the Space Certification Program for this remarkable technology. Now, that's proven science-based protection.

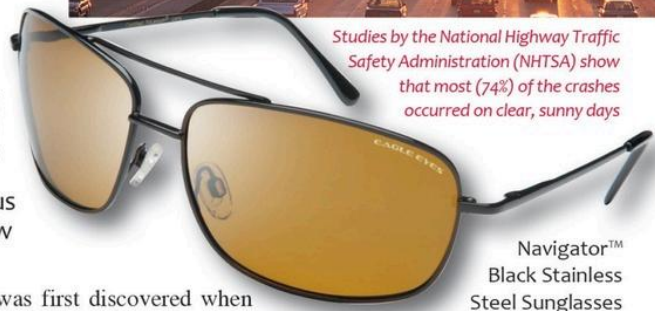
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Icy walkways, titanium knees and cawing for help

Adventures in a wintry wonderland

by Margo Oxendine, Contributing Columnist



I am so very glad March is here. It means I can go for my walk on the lane again. It's been too cold and icy to venture

for much other than to scurry to the car and then make a 32-point turn to head down the driveway.

I decided sometime in January that I could "at least" walk down the driveway to get my mail. I recently lost quite a bit of weight, but here's what I learned: it is much easier putting pounds back on again than losing them in the first place.

Heavy snow arrived in early January. It was beautiful, and I reveled in it. That is, until I ventured out to shovel my steps and create a path to the car. It was possibly the heaviest snow I've ever experienced. I carved a narrow path down to the car and left the rest piled high on the sides.

As I shoveled, my brain screamed: "You fool! You just had two heart surgeries! What are you thinking?"

The piles of snow never began to melt. They just became iced over, so much so that I could walk atop them and barely break through, even with my new extra pounds.

So, one bright sunny 15-degree day, I decided to walk down and get the mail. It was a big mistake.

You know how I often talk about the importance of carrying your cellphone when you go for a walk? Well, that day, for some reason, I forgot it. Sure enough, halfway through, I slipped on ice and fell flat on my backside. That backside was soon frozen in no time.

I knew it would hurt like the dickens, but I got to my knees. Or what passes for "knees" now that they're titanium. I have no more kneecaps. It's pretty difficult to maneuver.

But there was no "purchase" on the ice. Not a single bare spot to put my foot down and get some leverage. I was stuck, flat out, in my driveway. I reached for my phone. My pocket was empty. What a fool!

I hoped someone driving down the busy highway would glance up and see a colorful heap — that would be me — crumpled in the driveway and come to help. But no. So, I started hollering, "Help! Help me, please!" This is the second time I've had to do that in



several months. And just as many helpers seemed to hear me: none.

My neighbor, who often helps me out of tough spots, was down in his house. I could see his truck. But I also know he's a little hard of hearing. Would he hear my plea? Probably not.

Turns out, he did hear something. Something he later told me he thought was a crow cawing.

As I lay there in the icy freeze, I could see his truck. And ... yes! He came outside and walked to it. I yelled even louder. He got in the truck! He then drove away, out to the highway. Ack!

But then, salvation. His truck turned up my driveway!

Here's the thing: He couldn't get me up. There truly was nothing to get a grip on in order to stand up.

Luckily, he had a cellphone in his car. I used it to call 911 and ask for a deputy to come haul me up. One arrived in short order. And then two more soon after. It was apparently a slow crime day. Between the three of them, they managed the hauling task of getting me to my feet. They then escorted me to my porch.

While I babbled my thanks to them, one said, "Some women will do anything to get three strong, handsome men to her house!" Well, he's got that right. ●

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 CHRIS MORRIS, CBE 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 **March 20**. The winner will receive a **\$25 Amazon email gift card**.

Head Inland, Young Foodie

Piedmont seafood restaurant does not disappoint

by Peggy Hyland, Contributing Columnist

Thanks to a reader's suggestion, my companion and I spent a sunny Saturday heading to Bedford, Va., to visit Clam Diggers Seafood. What caught my attention was discovering that they originally started along the Chesapeake Bay and kept the same suppliers after relocating to the Piedmont. It felt strange to travel away from the water for the freshest seafood, but I had to see for myself.

Immediately, I was excited to see the many options on the menu and wanted to try a bit of everything. Luckily, you can order a wide variety of items a la carte, so I didn't have to make a definite choice. Of course, we had to start with the bacon-wrapped scallops. The smoky bacon complemented the tender scallops perfectly, enhanced by a zesty sauce that held them together. The spicy crab dip was creamy and rich, offering just the right amount of lingering heat.

If you've only ever had fried clams, Clam Diggers is the perfect spot to try fresh ones. The clams were incredibly fresh and lightly steamed, tasting delightful with a generous sprinkle of Old Bay. Growing up in Maryland, I have strong opinions about crab cakes, so I was thrilled to find one that reminded me of home. It was silky,



co-opliving.com



Got a restaurant for Peggy to review? Let us know at editor@co-opliving.com.



Crab cake



Shrimp burger



Spicy crab dip



Steamed clams

light on filler, and tasted as if the crabs had recently been caught.

After enjoying our appetizers, we turned our attention to the main courses. The scallops were perfect, featuring a luxurious texture that highlighted their freshness. My companion chose roasted potatoes as his side dish. They were tender on the inside, slightly crunchy on the outside, and beautifully seasoned. I ordered the shrimp burger, opting for the Asian barbecue sauce based on our server's suggestion. It was a true delight: generous pieces of shrimp, fantastic texture, and caramelized on the outside from the glaze of the sauce. It was spectacular, and I couldn't stop raving about it all the way home.

The food arrived quickly, but we never felt rushed. We had ample time to enjoy the appetizers and then relax with our main courses. By the time we reached dessert, we were stuffed, so we took our brownies to go and savored them at home. They struck that delicate balance of texture, combining fudgy richness with a cakey lightness.

I never would have imagined driving several hours inland to enjoy some of the best seafood Virginia has to offer, but Clam Diggers truly did not disappoint. ●

Clam Diggers Seafood

109 S. Bridge St., Bedford, Va.

Thursday-Saturday, 11:30 a.m.-9:30 p.m.

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OLD HOT ROD CAR PARTS. 409 and 427 Chevy blocks, heads, intakes; aluminum intakes for any make, 4-speeds, Holley carbs, 3x2 intakes, 2x4 intakes, any old hot rod parts, old metal signs. Collector will pay cash. 804-943-2283 or send pictures to 66stingraycoupe@gmail.com.

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.

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AUCTIONS

ESTATE OF WANDA ELLIOT. Church Road, VA — Starts on March 21 at 6 p.m. Lots start closing on April at 6 p.m. Shop Tools, Equipment, Boating & Fishing Items, Household Items, Decor & Much More! Over 500 Lots! Something for everyone! CARWILE AUCTIONS INC. www.carwileauctions.com. Facebook & Auction Zip. VAAR392. 434-547-9100.

SUBMIT: We accept classifieds by email (classifieds@co-opliving.com), telephone (804-297-3429) or mail to: Classifieds, 4201 Dominion Blvd., Suite 101, Glen Allen, VA 23060. Please type or print your ad as you would like it to appear and how many months it should run. Include your name, street, email address and pre-payment. Checks should be made to Cooperative Living. Ads with incomplete information will be returned to the sender.

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: March 5 for April issue; Publisher reserves the right to designate classification or reject any ad. No personals, please.

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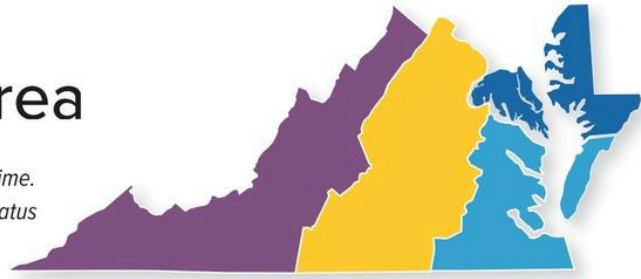
- (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) fax: 202-690-7442; or
- (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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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

MARCH

15-16 HIGHLAND CO. Highland County Maple Festival. highlandcounty.org.

23 WINCHESTER. Author-led First Battle of Kernstown Tour. 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Kernstownbattle.org.

APRIL

4 WINCHESTER. Kernstown Battlefield Opens for the Season. Fridays-Sundays. 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Kernstownbattle.org.

PIEDMONT

MARCH

15 BEAVERDAM. Patrick Henry's Ride for Liberty. Patrick Henry's Scotchtown Museum. 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Preservationvirginia.org.

21, 28 MINERAL. Fish Fry. St. Jude Catholic Church. 4:30-7 p.m. Louisacatholics.org.

APRIL

4, 11 MINERAL. Fish Fry. St. Jude Catholic Church. 4:30-7 p.m. Louisacatholics.org.

5 VICTORIA. Car, Truck & Motorcycle Show. Victoria Railroad Park. 10 a.m.-3 p.m. 571-393-7338. Casonisusan@gmail.com.

12 BEAVERDAM. Scotchtown's Annual Fiber Festival. Patrick Henry's Scotchtown Museum. 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Preservationvirginia.org.

12 MINERAL. 41st Annual Belmont Ham & Oyster Dinner. 7124 Belmont Rd., 4-7 p.m. Cherylmarshbcow@gmail.com.

TIDEWATER

MARCH

15 STRATFORD. Commemorating the Lives: The Lee Women of Stratford Hall. 483 Great House Rd. 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Stratfordhall.org.

19 STRATFORD. Reclaiming Women's Power in the American Revolutionary Era: Virtual Lecture with Dr. Jacqueline Beatty. 483 Great House Rd. 7 p.m. Stratfordhall.org.

22 MACHIPONGO. Peninsula Tractor Organization's Plow Day. Corner of Machipongo Dr. and Lankford Hwy. 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Peninsulatractor.org.

APRIL

5 STRATFORD. Stratford Hall Brews & BBQ Festival. 483 Great House Rd. 11 a.m. Stratfordhall.org.

5 KING WILLIAM. 86th Annual King William Ruritan Club Fish Fry. 156 Ruritan Ln. 4-8 p.m. 804-363-1781.

5, 12 CHESAPEAKE. Eggspedition. See website for participating locations. 9 a.m. Cityofchesapeake.net.

MARYLAND

MARCH

17 EASTON. St. Patrick's Day Parade. Downtown Easton. 5:30 p.m. Discovereaston.com.

APRIL

11 CHESTERTOWN. Chester River Chorale Concert: Angels. Presbyterian Church of Chestertown. 7:30 p.m. Chesterriverchorale.org.

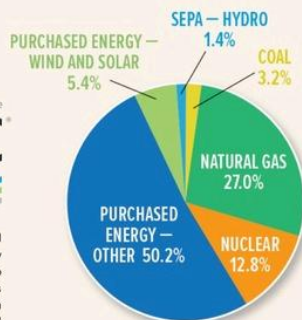
12 CHESTERTOWN. Chester River Chorale Concert: Angels. Presbyterian Church of Chestertown. 4 p.m. Chesterriverchorale.org.

PRINT DEADLINES: April 1 for May 15-June 15
May 1 for June 15-July 15

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



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



The following Virginia electric cooperatives — A&N, BARC, Community, Mecklenburg, Northern Neck, Prince George, Rappahannock, Shenandoah Valley, and Southside — purchased electricity from Old Dominion Electric Cooperative (ODEC) in 2024. In addition, all of these cooperatives, except A&N, purchased a small amount of hydroelectric power from the Southeastern Power Administration (SEPA). ODEC also provided power to Choptank Electric Cooperative in Maryland and Delaware Electric Cooperative.

In 2024, ODEC generated or purchased approximately 14.3 million megawatt-hours of electricity for resale to its member distribution cooperatives and to non-members. Emissions from all of ODEC's owned (and shares of partially-owned) generating facilities averaged approximately 0.000150 tons per megawatt-hour for nitrogen oxide, and approximately 0.000030 tons per megawatt-hour for sulfur dioxide. SEPA supplied approximately 200,088 megawatt-hours of electricity to the eight Virginia cooperatives indicated above. The chart displays the percentages of total energy supplied by ODEC and SEPA to all ODEC members in 2024. The power supply mix of individual ODEC members may vary as a result of purchases or generation of power directly from other resources.

For questions related to this summary data, please call Laura Rose at 804-968-7160.

COUCH POTATOES



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WE WANT TO SEE YOUR PHOTOS!

If your photo is published in this column, we will send you a \$20 Amazon gift card via e-mail. Send your high-resolution images to saycheese@co-opliving.com. Please include your first and last name, along with a description of the photo.

You may also mail your photo(s) to: Say Cheese, 4201 Dominion Blvd., Suite 101, Glen Allen, VA 23060. Do not send originals; photos cannot be returned.



UN-PUG AND UNWIND ▶

Bear knows how to kick back and relax after a ruff day.

PHOTO SUBMITTED BY NINA PRYOR

◀ LOUNGING LIKE A BOSS

Max is too cool for drool.

PHOTO SUBMITTED BY SARAH SPORER



SOFA-BULOUS ▶

Kiki Dee is sitting pretty in her pearls.

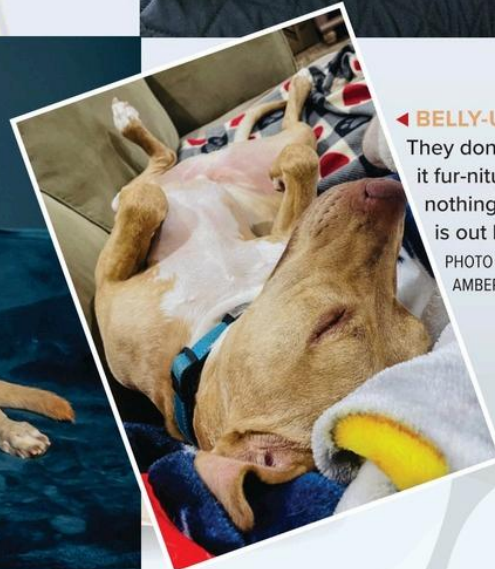
PHOTO SUBMITTED BY
EMILY SINK



◀ BELLY-UP BLISS

They don't call it fur-niture for nothing. Schmitzy is out like a light.

PHOTO SUBMITTED BY
AMBER NIEBAUER



◀ DOGGONE COMFY

No point in hounding Cooper. He has no plans to move.

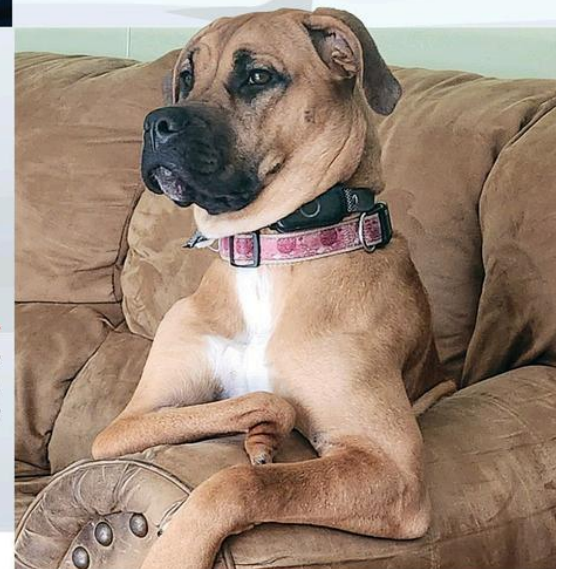
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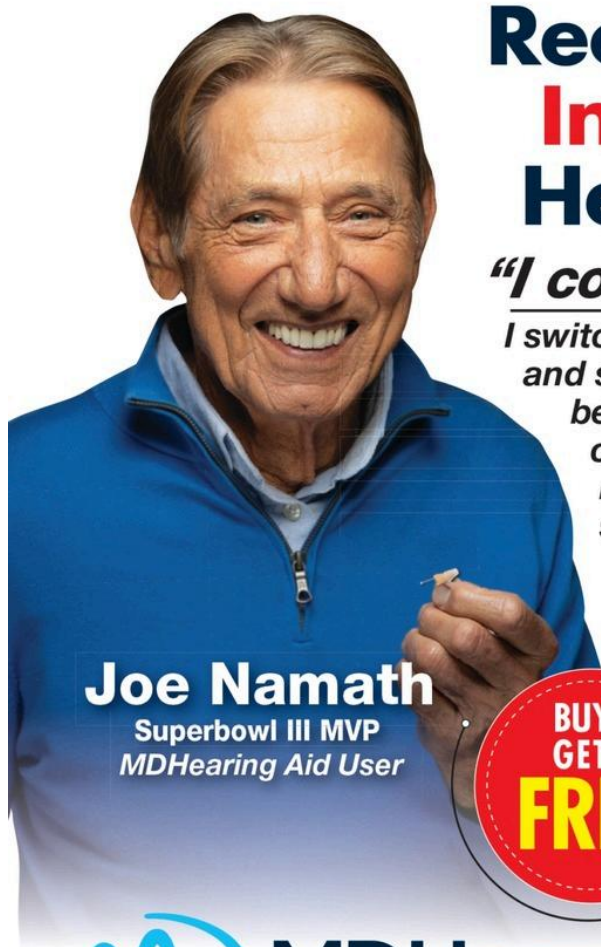


THE CUSHION LIFE ▶

Shuggas enjoys some quality TV time.

PHOTO SUBMITTED BY HOLLY WALKER





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