

NOVEC *Cooperative* **Living**

WILDLIFE HEROES

PAGE 10

A juvenile red-tailed hawk
being treated after it was
hit by a car.

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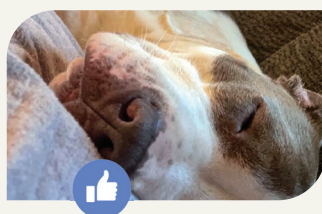




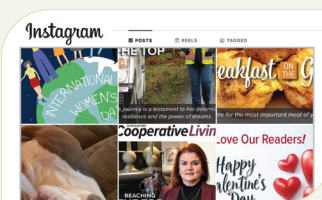
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VIEWPOINT

The Spirit of Renewal

When I think about this month, I recall hearing my mother say, "April showers bring May flowers." In the Mosier household, that was always her way of saying it was time to go to work and help my father plant our family garden. Even though it was a small garden (it seemed so big to me at the time), it certainly created many fond memories during my childhood.

With the spring season upon us, the April issue of *Cooperative Living* features articles about planting, gardening and the history of two agricultural organizations: Future Farmers of America and 4-H.

Our Cooperative Focus feature looks at wildlife rescue organizations, highlighting what to do — and not to do —



should you come across injured wildlife this spring. The article includes many adorable animal photos and covers a wide range of animal species, offering different tips for encountering each one.

April is Autism Awareness Month, and our Powerful Careers column features a young man who has persevered and is now a well-respected technician. This month's issue also includes an article about the 300th anniversary of the King William County Courthouse and a look at an upcoming celebration commemorating the momentous event.

This is a beautiful time of year when everything comes to life in a vibrant spirit of renewal. Hopefully, you'll get a chance to enjoy the springtime weather and spend some time outside at one of the events featured in these pages. ●

Brian S. Mosier

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

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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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PHOTOS COURTESY SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA MUSEUM

Utilitarian Art

Southwest Virginia Museum's quilt show displays the art of practicality

by Gregg MacDonald, Staff Writer

THERE MAY BE SEVERAL BIG STONE HOUSES IN BIG STONE GAP, VA., BUT ONE STANDS OUT IN PARTICULAR: THE SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA MUSEUM.

Designated a National Historic Landmark, the museum is housed in a Victorian stone mansion from the 1890s, boasting an original oak interior. According to the museum's website, its collection features over 60,000 pieces of furniture, folk art, historical artifacts and many other state-of-the-art exhibits that narrate the story of Southwest Virginia's exploration and development, from the pioneer era of the early 1700s to the mining "boom and bust" period of the late 1800s.

The museum also hosts numerous interpretive and special events throughout the year. One of these is the "A Stitch In Time" Quilt Show, which begins on April 1 and continues through May 31. Now in its 28th season, the event features quilts not only from the museum's vast collection but also from community members who display their own quilts. "A Stitch In Time" allows us an opportunity to celebrate the rich tapestry of our Appalachian heritage and what each of these quilts represent — a story woven with love, tradition and resilience," says Gretchen Cope, park manager at the Southwest Virginia Museum Historical State Park.

Cope adds that quilts, as we generally know them in America, were originally strictly practical articles. They were borne of the necessity of providing warm bed covers and hangings for doors and windows that were not sealed well enough to keep out the cold. Because the earliest American quilts, made by English and Dutch settlers, were considered utilitarian and connected to the early colonists' everyday life, little design information exists. Only in later years, when fabrics were being manufactured in America, making them more affordable and freeing quilt makers from the work of producing their own yarns and fabrics, did the more artistic type of quilting become more widespread.

"A Stitch In Time" allows quilters to share stories through a deep dedication to their art and expression," says Historic Preservation Specialist Burke Greear, "Remembering always that while a quilt is something we hold in our hands, art is something we hold in our hearts." •

► For more information about the museum and the "A Stitch In Time" Quilt Show, visit dcr.virginia.gov/state-parks/southwest-virginia-museum.



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The Future is Now

Dreamer lands powerful career

by Jim Robertson, Staff Writer

Less than two years ago, Kaleb Jeffries was featured in *Cooperative Living* as a young man fixated on his future with only dreams of a real career. Today, he's living out that dream following a fruitful internship with Sentinel Robotic Solutions. Thanks to a strong commitment to community embraced by the Sentinel team and the electric cooperatives they serve, Jeffries joined the Wallops Island, Va., company full-time in January 2024 as an engineering technician.



"It has been exciting to see his growth within the company," says Jason Taylor, director of UAS programs for Sentinel Robotic Solutions.

Jeffries conducts online searches for relevant business opportunities for his employer at state and national levels. His responsibilities include reviewing both facility maintenance issues and engineering lab projects and tool organization. He assists with preparations for upcoming UAS classes and missions, while supporting company product sales.

"Kaleb approaches each of these tasks with a structured mindset, developing checklists to ensure every item is completed efficiently," says Taylor.

Jeffries, diagnosed as a child with Autism Spectrum Disorder and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, grew up in Chincoteague on the Virginia Eastern Shore with a passion for weather patterns and events. He turned the fixation caused by his condition into an advantage as he pursued his interests.

"My experience with SRS has been wonderful. I love working with drones!" exclaims Jeffries, who serves as Taylor's secondary pilot in command and visual observer on missions. As a vital part of the flight crew, the visual observer assists the remote pilot by watching for other aircraft and objects while following the drone. One project planned during March included aerial inspections over 10 miles of transmission power lines for a cooperative in Kentucky, during which Jeffries would serve as the visual observer.

Jeffries also provides the meteorological aerodrome report during a mission.

"Being part of Kaleb's journey in the UAS industry has been incredibly rewarding for our team," says Taylor.

"His enthusiasm for learning and his ability to adapt to new challenges make him a valuable member of our organization. We look forward to his continued growth as he takes on greater responsibilities in the future."

Robin Sexauer, certified vocational rehab counselor for the Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services, played an instrumental role in connecting Jeffries with the right people and opportunities while attending Eastern Shore Community College, thus preparing him for his future career.

"He has more confidence and is becoming more independent," says Kara Jeffries of her son, who recently earned his driver's license and now drives himself to work each day. "I am so proud of him." •

Sentinel Robotic Solutions provides electric cooperatives with aerial system inspections and training for the Unmanned Aircraft Systems certification. To date, approximately 200 drone operators within the 16 member co-ops in Virginia, Maryland and Delaware have trained and earned their Part 107 UAS license.



Kaleb Jeffries helps represent Sentinel Robotic Solutions at the 2024 Gaff-n-Go Rodeo.

**POWERFUL
CAREERS**

PHOTOS BY JIM ROBERTSON

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Building Bolder Shoulders

Preventative and rehabilitative moves for shoulder health

by Vanessa LaFaso Stolarski, Contributing Columnist

The complex joints of our shoulders form the framework for daily functioning, whether we are active or not. Daily movements can sometimes cause more pain or discomfort than exercise or work-related injuries; movements such as reaching for a cabinet item, driving or even doing household tasks.

Since the shoulder joint is a ball-and-socket structure, our shoulders move in multiple planes, making them very prone to injury. As such, shoulder stretching can offer numerous benefits by increasing the range of motion, allowing the shoulder to move more freely, and reducing the risk of strains or tears. Regular stretching also improves blood flow, promoting faster recovery after workouts or injuries.

Shoulder impingements are a typical result of poor posture, especially from sitting at a desk all day or hunching over your laptop. Shoulders roll forward in these positions, and when repeatedly like this, the surrounding tissue shortens, causing tightness at the front of the joint. Additionally, the rotator cuff — a group of muscles in the back of the shoulders that stabilize the joint — can lose rigidity from being overextended for long periods.

If you have an active job that requires frequent reaching, carrying or lifting, shoulder stretches performed before and after your shift can help prevent injury or mitigate its worsening effects. Even a few minutes of stretching each day can significantly improve shoulder health. The key is consistency and proper technique. Start with gentle stretches, like the ones below, and gradually increase intensity as you adapt.



CROSS-BODY STRETCH

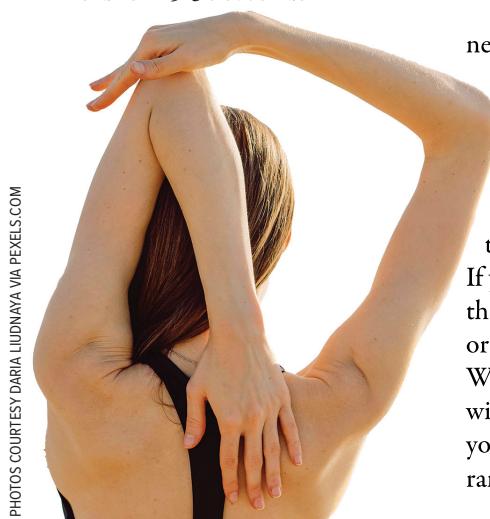
- Sit or stand upright
- Raise your arm across your chest
- Use the opposite arm to gently press or hug the arm closer to your body
- Hold for 15-30 seconds, then switch arms

OVERHEAD TRICEP STRETCH

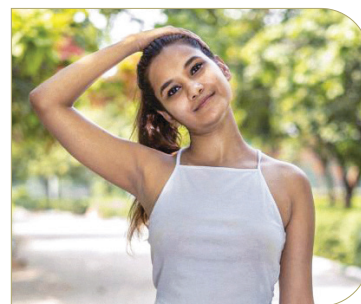
- Sit or stand upright
- Raise your arm overhead
- Bend your elbow, letting your hand hang behind your head
- Use your opposite hand to gently push your elbow down
- Hold for 15-30 seconds, then switch arms

CLASPED HAND STRETCH

- Stand upright
- Reach both arms around your back
- Clasp hands and rotate both so palms are facing out
- Lean chest slightly forward
- Hold for 15-30 seconds



PHOTOS COURTESY DARIA LIUDNYA VIA PEXELS.COM



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SCAPULA STRETCH

- Sit or stand upright
- Tilt your right ear to your right shoulder so you feel the left side of your neck stretching
- Relax your left arm and let it dangle at your side
- Place your right hand on your left forehead temple
- Gently pull your head to your shoulder like you are lengthening your neck
- Hold for 15-30 seconds



Remember that stretching should never cause pain. Avoid forcing your muscle tissue to extend or contract past the point of your personal flexibility. Inhale as you begin to perform the stretch and exhale at the point of tension. If this is new to you, take each stretch slowly. If you experience discomfort, ease off the stretch or consult a physical therapist or fitness professional for guidance. With patience and persistence, you will likely notice improvements in your flexibility, muscle tension and range of motion. ●

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

All health-related content and media provided by *Cooperative Living* or its website(s) is created and published for informational purposes only. It is not a substitute for professional medical advice and should not be relied on as health or personal advice. Always seek the guidance of your doctor or other qualified health professional with any questions you may have regarding your health or a medical condition.

An exterior featuring natural wood double front doors, an expansive front porch with ceiling fans, and painted wood columns and shutters.



PHOTO COURTESY
HIBBS LUXURY HOMES

PHOTO COURTESY HIBBS LUXURY HOMES

How Farmhouses Went Modern

Design trends for rural homes

by Jim Winnerman, Contributing Writer

You might be familiar with interior decorating styles known as mid-century modern, contemporary or, simply, modern. Less familiar to you may be a design approach known as modern farmhouse. It's a style of home decor that evokes a feeling of warmth and comfort.

The origin of the farmhouse can be traced to Germany and Scandinavia when they were built to house farm workers. Then it was not a style, but a necessary shelter for a way of life. Farmhouse architecture arrived in the U.S. in the 1700s. Since then, farmhouses have undergone various iterations, from being purely functional as they were in Europe to slowly morphing into a variety of styles of interior and exterior design adopted by everyday families.

Today's modern farmhouse version became largely popularized by the show "Fixer Upper," hosted by Chip and Joanna Gaines. The show aired for five seasons on HGTV, a network focusing

on reality programming related to home improvement and real estate. The Gaineses did not start out to popularize a style of decor. They were just following their instincts. Chip was a contractor who was renovating homes in Waco,

after another, their personal appeal and approach to interior design gained popularity.

Prominent features included were architectural elements, like the use of natural materials such as wood and stone, and an open and airy floor plan conducive to a comfortable lifestyle. The decor was an eclectic mix of furnishings and accessories. Color choices were warm and neutral hues that did not overwhelm a room. There are no set guidelines, just a homeowner's interpretation of what feels right for them. Modern farmhouse design can incorporate a traditional wooden kitchen table set in a large kitchen with vaulted ceilings and wooden accent beams, while the overall design is sleek, functional and bright.

The practical part of modern farmhouse design is frequently expressed through open shelves in living spaces. In family rooms, shelves contain family heirlooms and collectibles. In the kitchen, clear glass cabinet doors display



PHOTO COURTESY NORMA O'BRYAN, DISCOUNT DRAPERIES

A great room features a fireplace of recycled brick, hardwood flooring and a windmill ceiling fan.

Texas, and Joanna was a self-taught designer who decorated the homes and authored a blog about what they were doing.

Eventually Joanna's blog caught the eye of an HGTV executive, and in 2014, their show premiered with each episode featuring a home they were renovating. As their show aired, featuring one home

everyday functional utensils, like dishes, textiles and other practical objects meant to be used, as well as rustic cooking decor.

Early farmhouses did not have walls made from drywall like those found in most new and existing homes. Walls were shiplap, beadboard or tongue-and-groove boards, and the use of the same material today is an important part of modern farmhouse decor. Painted in shades of white and installed vertically or horizontally, either approach delivers the coziness found in the rustic charm of historic farms.

KITCHEN CREATIVITY

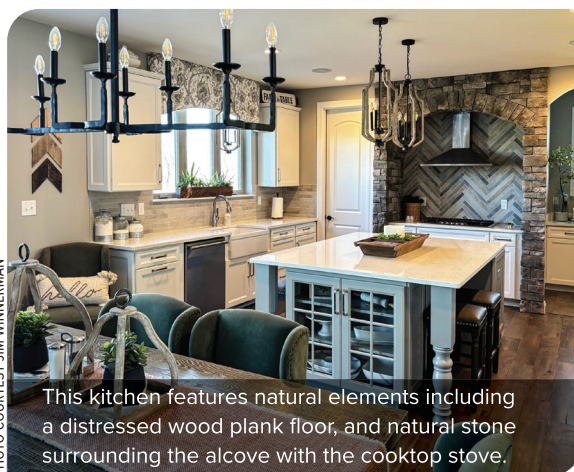
Although stainless-steel kitchen appliances would not seem to fit the modern farmhouse approach to decor, they are easily incorporated into a kitchen that features the clean straight lines of Shaker cabinets, shiplap walls and other natural elements like soapstone sinks.

Similarly, while modern farmhouse design does not usually incorporate busy, repetitive patterns on furniture, walls or draperies, kitchens can again be an exception. It is not unusual for a subtly patterned tile backsplash to be used above the oven where a geometric design works well and does not compete with white subway tile installed nearby.

Wallpaper designs include vines, flowers and leaf botanicals while stripes and diamond patterns work as a valance over a kitchen sink window.

Variations in surfaces can also work, using natural accents like a hammered copper vent or a farmhouse apron sink in a contrasting color, even if they are more intense and absent elsewhere in the home. The colors in the pattern shouldn't be overwhelming and should conform with the modern farmhouse color palette.

A kitchen island styled as a table with rustic turned legs beneath its countertop,



This kitchen features natural elements including a distressed wood plank floor, and natural stone surrounding the alcove with the cooktop stove.

copper drawer knobs and pulls, and a butcher block surface all work anywhere in a modern farmhouse kitchen.

When looking for basic design materials, look for historical pieces or items that could be found in nature. Examples include wood, slate, marble, soapstone, brick, aged brass, cast iron and tin. Most importantly, both comfort and function are goals in modern farmhouse decor, versus aesthetics, trends or a consistent sense of design.

MODERN EXTERIOR

While interior decor for a modern farmhouse design is popular when existing homes are remodeled, builders, architects and contractors of new homes have been quick to add a modern farmhouse exterior aesthetic to their portfolios.

Kim Hibbs, president of Hibbs Luxury Homes in St. Louis, Mo., and Park City, Utah, has been designing and building modern farmhouse homes since they started becoming popular. “We find that the style appeals to people because it combines the cozy feel and charm of a traditional farmhouse inside and out, while allowing homeowners to surround themselves with interior decor that makes them feel good,” he says. “True to the use of the word ‘modern,’ it incorporates contemporary design, furnishings and color schemes with natural elements of stone and wood reflective of the times.”

Considerations for an exterior

design include the siding and color, roof, lighting, and the all-important entrance that invites guests from the curb to the front door.

As for color, the same approach applies outside as it does inside. Neutral hues, such as whites, creams and beiges, are commonly used for a clean and fresh exterior. That palette provides a background which easily incorporates elements such

as natural stone on a portion of the facade, wooden shutters, and wooden porch railings and posts that evoke a rustic, familiar feel.

A combination of vertical or horizontal siding is often blended with cedar shingles under the roof peaks to add interest and texture, while vintage barn-style lantern light fixtures or industrial lighting are popular near the front door.

Nothing exudes a modern country exterior like a welcoming, comfortable front porch as part of the entrance architecture. Embellished with a porch swing, a wooden bench or vintage rocking chairs, a porch can create a sitting area that invites visitors to sit down and relax before entering the house.

Popular modern farmhouse porch decor includes colorful pillows on the furniture, a “Welcome” porch sign, and accent side tables painted to match the color of the front door.

A front door can be contrary to an overall paint scheme. Pale colors work, but almost any color can add texture and interest to the entrance. In fact, it is more welcoming to have a door in a pleasant shade of red, yellow or blue that conveys a happy vibe to arriving guests. ●

Jim Winnerman is a freelance writer with published articles in several National Electric Cooperatives Statewide Editors Association publications.

Changing with the Times

Virginia agricultural youth programs have evolved

by Kathy Dixon and Alice Kemp, Virginia Farm Bureau Federation

One began as an organization to help farm boys learn leadership skills. Another started as corn clubs that encouraged farm boys to grow high-quality crops. Today, the National FFA Organization and 4-H have evolved to keep up with the times.

Since its establishment in 1928, the FFA has promoted youth development and has become a nationally recognized standard in agricultural education. Black and other minority students began joining the FFA in 1964, and girls were admitted as members in 1969. In 1988, what was initially known as the Future Farmers of America rebranded itself as the National FFA Organization to better reflect diversity in its membership.

Early 4-H programming emphasized agriculture and homemaking skills for rural youth. From the 1980s to the early 2000s, the organization expanded its curriculum to include STEM, civic engagement and the arts. Today, there are 4-H clubs in Virginia's 96 counties and most cities, with about 160,000 members. Virginia FFA has 14,110 members in 227

chapters and boasts the country's first FFA chapter charter — the Weyers Cave chapter in Augusta County.

FFA was modeled after Virginia's

Future Farmers of Virginia, which was started in 1925 by four Virginia Tech agricultural educators. "Farm boys didn't have as much confidence in themselves as their city cousins did," explains John Hillison, retired Virginia Tech agriculture education professor and curator of the Agricultural, Leadership and Community Education Department's FFA Historical Room.

"So, the founders say 'What if we had an organization where they learn leadership skills, win competitions and get awards for their work?' That's how it all got started." Soon, several states had their organizations, and the national FFA was founded.

The national 4-H movement traces back to the late 1800s. In 1908, the Virginia Cooperative Extension established the state's first corn club in Dinwiddie County. The next

year, clubs were created for rural girls to learn about food preservation

Sarah Gregory of Chesterfield has been involved with 4-H for over 60 years.

and gardening. "4-H uses experiential learning to help young people be better citizens and better individuals in the working world," says Chad Proudfoot, Virginia 4-H organizational specialist at Virginia Tech.

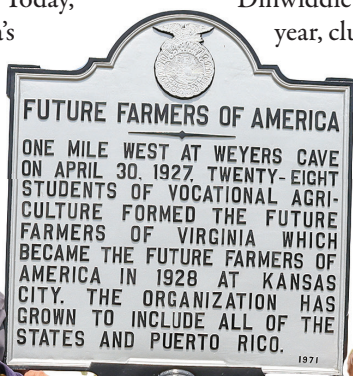
In the 1910s, Virginia and other segregated southern states began 4-H clubs for rural African Americans and minorities, until the clubs were desegregated in 1964.

Sarah Gregory of Chesterfield County has been involved in 4-H since before segregation. The organization offered education, community connections, and leadership opportunities for several generations of her family. Today Gregory volunteers and educates youth from all backgrounds. She leads multiple 4-H programs, and her 60-plus years of volunteering led to her induction into the National 4-H Hall of Fame in 2022.

In Rockingham County, Kern Houff has also turned FFA into a generational activity. He served as the vice president of the Montevideo FFA chapter, where he competed in parliamentary procedure and public speaking. Recognizing the value of communication, leadership and vocational skills you can't learn in books, Houff nudged his children, Jeremy and Sonja, to join.

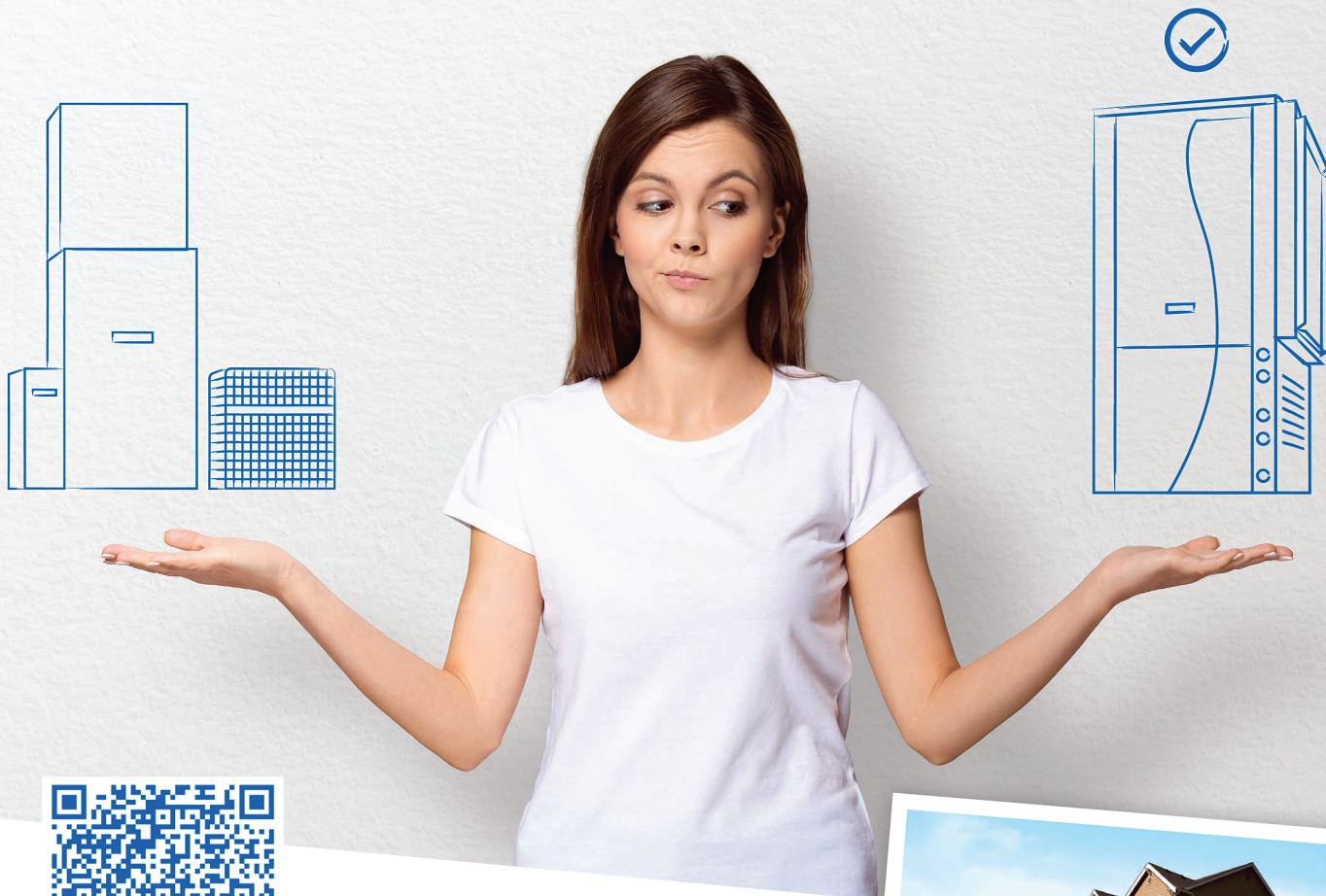
Both served as FFA officers, and their children have joined the organization, continuing the family FFA legacy. ●

Future Farmers of Virginia began in 1927, near Weyers Cave in Augusta County, Va.



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BECOMING A NATURE HERO



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An inside look at wildlife rescue and rehabilitation

by Amanda S. Creasey, Contributing Columnist

One of the greatest thrills of spending time outside is encountering wildlife. Whether it's a box turtle or bird, fox or frog, rabbit or raccoon, seeing native wildlife in its natural habitat reminds us that we share this world with many creatures.

But what should you do if you encounter one of these wild animals in distress? Do you know how to differentiate an ill or injured animal from a healthy one? Do you know what practical first steps you can safely take to increase the chances of survival for an animal that has collided with a window or been hit by a car?

Most of us want what's best for our wild neighbors, but we may not always know how to help.



BABY SEASON

The arrival of spring brings flower blossoms, warmer days and later sunsets. It also ushers in what the wildlife rescue world knows as “baby season.”

According to Connor Gillespie, director of outreach for the Wildlife Center of Virginia in Waynesboro, Va., baby season begins in early spring and continues through early fall. It's the busiest time of year for wildlife rescues

because it's when most of our native wildlife are having babies. While Wildlife Center of Virginia might admit only five animals per day during the winter, that number can exceed 50 daily intakes during baby season.

Jen Riley, DVM, serves as the hospital director at the

Blue Ridge Wildlife Center in Boyce, Va. According to Riley, one of the most common mistakes people make is assuming a baby animal is orphaned and inadvertently abducting it. In the case of most wildlife, the adults do not stay with the baby 24/7. She advises would-be helpers not to intervene unless there is a clear injury.

OBVIOUS INJURY

If an animal is injured, a person's first instinct is often to offer food or water, but that can often cause more harm than good. "People want to help, but there may be underlying issues that could make food or water harmful to the animal. Young animals can also aspirate if not fed properly," Gillespie says. In addition to the risk of aspiration, the first step usually taken at the Wildlife Center of Virginia is to anesthetize the animal for a thorough examination — and, just like humans, animals should not eat or drink before anesthesia. "Instead of providing food or water, safely contain the animal in a crate or box so it can be taken to a wildlife rehabber — the sooner, the better," Gillespie advises.



NO OBVIOUS INJURY

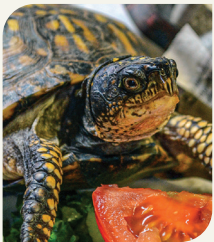
If no obvious injury can be discerned, an animal may still need help. Even if an animal appears unharmed, if it has been in a cat's mouth, been hit by a car or collided with a window, contain it and contact a licensed wildlife rehabilitator. "Most of what we see is trauma, with the overwhelming majority being vehicle collisions and cat attacks," says Jessica Andersen, rehab manager at Blue Ridge Wildlife Center.

SAFE CONTAINMENT

In the event of an obvious injury, cat interaction, vehicle or window collision, or upon the advice of a licensed wildlife rehabilitator, safely containing the animal is imperative. To reduce stress on the animal and risk to yourself, minimize contact by wearing gloves and placing a cardboard box over the animal to contain and shelter it. If necessary, you may need to gently restrain the animal using a towel or blanket, which can be placed in the box with the animal. Best practice includes using the smallest possible box in which the animal will fit, thus decreasing the animal's ability to thrash, potentially inflicting further injury on itself.

(continued on page 12)

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU FIND ...



TURTLES

Upon finding a turtle in the road or near the roadside, first check for signs of injuries or illness, such as blood, discharge from the nose or eyes, or swollen eyes. If no issues are apparent, never relocate a turtle to what you believe is a safer or better location. "Doing so is often a death sentence," Riley says. Instead, move it across the roadway in the direction it was headed, placing it at least three feet off the shoulder.

If injury or illness is apparent, contain the turtle in a box and call a licensed wildlife rehabilitator. Be sure to take note of the turtle's specific location, as turtles cannot be released back into the wild without this information. The same advice holds true for hatchlings, who need no parental care.



BIRDS

If a bird collides with a window or other object, it needs help, even if it seems fine.

Head trauma rarely manifests until between 12 and 24 hours after a collision, so even a bird that appears uninjured has likely sustained trauma that requires treatment.

If the bird is a raptor, such as an osprey, hawk or eagle, the sharp talons and beak can pose serious danger to would-be rescuers. In the case of an injured or ill raptor, calling an expert is the first step.

Songbirds pose fewer dangers, but keep in mind that they may not need a rescuer.

Unless a bird shows obvious signs of injury or illness, or you know it has collided with a window or been in a cat's mouth, it's best not to intervene. If you are unsure whether a bird needs help, call a licensed wildlife rehabilitator for advice.



OPOSSUMS

Mother opossums can carry up to 13 joeys in their pouches, and even if a mother opossum has died, her offspring (joeys)

may still be alive in her pouch and in need of help. If you find an opossum that appears dead, you can save lives by checking for a pouch and joeys. It is important, however, to make sure the opossum is deceased before checking for a pouch. To do so, gently poke the opossum with a stick or broom. If surviving joeys are in the pouch, leave them there and bring the mother's entire body to a wildlife rehabilitator or rescue in a box. A joey less than 7 inches long, or shorter than the length of a dollar bill, is too young to be on its own and needs the assistance of a wildlife rehabilitator.

Becoming a Nature Hero

(continued from page 11)

WILDLIFE INJURY

Prevention is always the best option, and many actions can be taken to avert wildlife emergencies in the first place. “Cats are one of the most common reasons for admission [to Blue Ridge Wildlife Center] and half of free-roaming Virginia cats are pets [that could be kept inside],” says Riley. Gillespie says, “We love cats, but any time they’re outside, they pose a risk for wildlife.” Another preventive measure includes avoiding rodenticides or other poisons.

Not only do these substances cause suffering and death to their intended targets, but animals that consume the poisoned creatures are also adversely affected. Similarly, avoid glue traps and other inhumane trapping methods, which almost always result in injury and may result in death. Many unintended victims fall prey to these inhumane trapping options. Lead bullets and sinkers also pose myriad health risks to wildlife and humans alike.

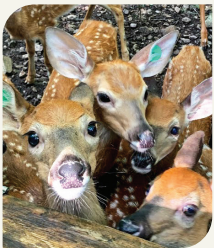


According to Riley, studies show lead alternatives to be just as effective and much safer for humans and wildlife that consume game meat. Perhaps one of the simplest preventive measures is picking up litter, which attracts animals to the roadside and leads to traffic incidents. When on the road, be prepared to stop for any animals in the roadway, particularly when animals are most likely to be on the move — at night, dawn or dusk. Another simple way to prevent harm to wildlife includes avoiding feeding wildlife, feeding pets indoors and storing pet food inside. When it comes to birds, be sure to clean bird feeders at least every two weeks to reduce the risk of spreading diseases and treat windows to prevent window strikes.

MYTHS AND MISCONCEPTIONS

Myths abound when it comes to baby animals, one being that a fawn with curled ears needs help. According to Riley and Andersen, curled ears on a fawn does not indicate the fawn is in distress. Another popular myth is the belief that handling a baby animal will discourage its parents from returning to care for it. “This is not true for any animal in Virginia,” says Riley. Nor is it true that a baby animal needs food and water right away. In fact, offering food and water risks killing a baby animal that might otherwise have survived.

Many people believe they are doing right by wildlife viewed



DEER

A fawn on its own is probably not orphaned, but according to Riley and Andersen, even an orphaned fawn will likely fare

better without human intervention. “Does will often adopt fawns. If you see a fawn with a dead mom or crying, it’s still best to let it be and see if it’s adopted. That is its best chance,” Riley says.

Signs a fawn may be in distress include: diarrhea on its rear end, flystrike, numerous ticks or lethargy, or the fawn cannot stand, is experiencing difficulty walking or is laying completely flat on its side with its legs stretched out. If attempts have been made to leave an orphaned fawn undisturbed and no adult has adopted it or you note any signs of distress, contact a rehabber for advice.

Adult deer rehabilitation is prohibited in Virginia for a variety of reasons.

White-tailed deer are a high-stress species and often suffer from Capture Myopathy. “When deer undergo extreme stress, often during capture or handling, that stress can lead to muscle damage, organ failure and, in some cases, death,” Gillespie explains. Riley adds, “If an adult deer runs off, there is no need to intervene. If it can’t get up, it’s best to call animal control or the non-emergency police line.”



SQUIRRELS

Even if a baby squirrel has fallen from a tree, or the tree in which it was nested is cut down, if it is not injured and it is during daylight hours, wait four-to-eight hours before taking action to allow the mother time to retrieve her baby. Mother squirrels make and maintain multiple nests. If one is destroyed, she will relocate her babies to one of the others. In the meantime, you can help both mother and

baby by placing the baby in an open-topped container, such as a shallow cardboard box, to keep it in the same place.

If a baby squirrel remains in the same place for over eight hours, if it’s after or near sundown, or if it’s cold outside, contact a licensed rehabilitator.

Keep in mind that adult squirrels with injuries or illnesses can be a bite risk, and you should not attempt to contain them without speaking to a licensed rehabilitator first. Should you be advised to contain the squirrel, wear thick leather gloves.



FROGS AND SNAKES

Only three types of venomous snakes make their home in Virginia. If you find a venomous snake with an injury or illness, do not attempt to contain it. If you cannot identify a snake as venomous or non-venomous, do not attempt to contain it. Instead, call an expert

as pests when they trap and relocate them. In fact, doing so is illegal, spreads disease, usually kills that individual animal and orphans any babies left behind.

Popular myth would diagnose a raccoon active during the day with rabies. In actuality, a raccoon out during the day, especially during baby season, is likely just a busy mom trying to find food for her young.

Finally, people often believe snakes are always aggressive and dangerous. "Any wild animal that is cornered or being harassed may bite, but snakes are no more aggressive than any other group of wild animals," says Riley. Gillespie concurs. "Most snake bites occur when people try to harm or move snakes; if you give snakes space and don't approach them, then they will eventually go on their way," he says.



Though people have been taught that a bird that has suffered a collision is just stunned and will recover and fly away, such trauma is often fatal within a day or two of the injury. Any bird that collides with a window, car or other object should be taken to a licensed wildlife rehabilitator.

HOW TO HELP

Be prepared for wildlife emergencies by supplying your car with flattened cardboard boxes in various sizes, thick leather gloves, nitrile or latex gloves, towels, and a cellphone and charger.

DO

- Call a wildlife rehabilitator before intervening
- Contain the animal in a ventilated cardboard box or pet carrier
- Wear gloves
- Keep the animal in a safe, warm, quiet, dark space away from other animals

DON'T

- Offer food or water, administer medications, or apply any ointments or topical solutions
- Constantly check on a contained animal
- Handle wildlife with bare hands
- Relocate wildlife

for advice and assistance. Many centers, including Blue Ridge Wildlife Center, treat venomous snakes. Only if you are absolutely certain a snake in distress is non-venomous is it safe to contain it and transport it to a licensed rehabilitator or wildlife rescue.

Be sure to scoop reptiles or amphibians up with gloved hands, as the natural oils on human hands may harm some species.



COTTONTAILS

According to Riley and Andersen, baby cottontails are often caught up and hurt by lawn mowers and weed trimmers, as

rabbit nests are difficult-to-spot, shallow depressions in the ground.

If you find a nest on your property, do not relocate it, as even a few feet of difference will make the nest impossible for the mother rabbit to see. "Young rabbits

usually leave the nest after a mere three weeks," Riley says, so even a nest in an inconvenient place will not be active very long. Keep cats and dogs away from any known nests in your yard.

Should concerns about baby rabbits arise, remember that quiet babies snuggled in a nest are likely cared for, though you may not see their mother, who is active only at dusk, dawn and overnight. Baby rabbits who have left the nest while their eyes are still closed or who are making noises are likely in distress, and such conditions warrant a call to a licensed rehabilitator for advice.

If you find a baby bunny out of the nest, call a rehabilitator to confirm it needs help, bearing in mind that even healthy young rabbits may "freeze and allow people to easily pick them up occasionally, resulting in many abductions," Andersen says.



HIGH-RISK SPECIES

Foxes, bats, bobcats, groundhogs, skunks, beavers and raccoons are

all high-risk rabies vector species, making it imperative to avoid physical contact. Making contact with a rabies vector species may result in the euthanasia of an animal that might otherwise have made a full recovery and been released back into the wild.

A humane trap can be used to contain an injured animal that is still mobile, but if an injury is preventing mobility, use a shovel to gently move the injured animal to a crate or box and transport it to a wildlife rehabilitator. ●

► For more, visit wildlifecenter.org or blueridgewildlifetr.org.

Amanda Creasey writes about the outdoors. Her column, Explore More, can be seen in Cooperative Living.



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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.

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ENERGY TIP OF THE MONTH

Little changes in the kitchen can make a big difference in energy use: unplug appliances like blenders or microwaves when not in use, and fill your kettle with only as much water as you need. Consider batch cooking. It saves on oven use and on heating the water for washing up.



Source: Scott Van Osdol

Lineworkers know how to get the job done.

Let's thank them for powering our lives.



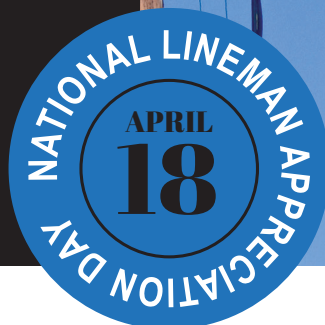
The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) designates the second Monday of April as a day to honor the commitment and duty of lineworkers everywhere. This year NRECA honors lineworkers on April 14. National Lineman Appreciation Day is April 18. Whether it's April 14 or 18, please thank lineworkers for their hard work every day to keep your lights on, and restore electric service when outages occur.

Show your support on social media with #ThankALineworker and tag us:

Facebook: @NOVEC

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Leadership succession at NOVEC

By NOVEC Staff

President and CEO David E. Schleicher is retiring from NOVEC on April 1. NOVEC's Board of Directors unanimously selected Kristen Senechal from Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA) in Austin, Texas, to succeed Schleicher on April 2. The board wishes Schleicher well in his retirement and welcomes Senechal to the Cooperative.

NOVEC THANKS SCHLEICHER FOR HIS LEADERSHIP



During David Schleicher's three-year tenure as President and CEO, NOVEC attained the lowest regulated residential rates and best reliability

metrics in Virginia. Retail sales grew to 12.2 billion kilowatt hours, a 66% increase, making it the nation's largest electric cooperative based on energy sales. Net margins increased 39% to \$46 million, and asset value grew 36% to \$1.5 billion. Schleicher realigned NOVEC's workforce to better respond to rapid data center growth, while ensuring reliability and affordability for its residential and small commercial customers.

"It's been a privilege to lead such a dynamic and committed team as we have at NOVEC, and I thank the board for that opportunity," Schleicher said. "We've set a high bar to provide quality service to all of our members every day, to be a great place for employees to work, and to be a valued member of our communities."

Schleicher retires with more than 45 years of electric utility experience. He joined NOVEC in

2017 and previously served as chief operating officer and vice president. He also held leadership positions at EnergyUnited EMC in North Carolina and PPL Electric Utilities in Pennsylvania. Schleicher earned a B.S. in electrical engineering from Drexel University and an MBA in operations management from the University of Scranton. He is a registered professional engineer.

Chairman of the Board Wade C. House said, "The board appreciates Dave's vision, expertise, and passion that successfully guided NOVEC through many issues facing the electric industry, while building upon our history of service reliability, financial soundness, and customer satisfaction."

NOVEC WELCOMES SENECHAL FROM LCRA

At Lower Colorado River Authority, Kristen Senechal most recently served as executive vice president of transmission, and chief operating officer for its Transmission Services Corporation. She was responsible for more than 850 employees across multiple



disciplines, including transmission design and protection, business performance, and project management. Prior to joining LCRA in 2017, she was employed by CenterPoint Energy in Houston, Texas.

Senechal is relocating to Northern Virginia and began working at NOVEC on March 17.

"Like Texas, NOVEC's service territory is experiencing a number of trends that impact both service and cost of electricity, including increased demand of electric vehicles, base load generation retirements, increasingly complex customer or member demands, and an influx of large loads that impact both cost and need for new infrastructure," she said.

Senechal has an MBA from the University of Houston's Bauer College of Business. She also holds a Ph.D. in molecular biology from the University of California, Los Angeles, and a B.S. in molecular biology from the University of Texas, Austin.

Board Chairman House said, "After an eight-month national search, the board selected Kristen because of her extensive knowledge and more than 15 years of experience in the electric utility industry. The board also is impressed with her leadership style of prioritizing people first."

NOVEC Visits the General Assembly

NOVEC representatives traveled to Richmond Jan. 28 to speak with Virginia legislators about issues that affect the energy industry. NOVEC's team visited 41 legislative offices to connect with legislators and their staffs.



Arnold Singleton, vice president of engineering (left), and Howard Spinner, manager of regulatory affairs and rates (right), met with Sen. Tammy Mulchi, who represents Virginia's 9th District.



Sheila Bradley, community and government liaison (left) and Tom Pierpoint, vice president of operations (right), met with Del. Tommy Wright, who represents Virginia's 50th District.



NOVEC representatives: (back row L-R) Howard Spinner, Dave Schleicher, Arnold Singleton, Gil Jaramillo, Tom Pierpoint, (front row L-R) Nicole Carter, Lisa Hooker, and Sheila Bradley.

SAFETY CHECK

Safety Starts with You

Safety is one of NOVEC's core values, and it's at the forefront of all we do.

As you start your spring cleaning this month, check for frayed or worn electric cords. If a charging cord is warm to the touch, it's time to replace it.

When it comes to outside lighting, placement is key. Focus on illuminating pathways, stairs, and entrances, and avoid placing lights close to flammable materials.



During January's quarterly board meeting of the Virginia, Maryland & Delaware Association of Electric Cooperatives (VMDAEC) in Richmond, Greg Rogers, chair of VMDAEC's Safety and Training Services Committee and president and CEO of Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative (right), presented NOVEC President and CEO Dave Schleicher with the 2024 Certificate of Safety Achievement. The award was presented through the Rural Electric Safety Achievement Program of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA). The national recognition honors NOVEC's commitment to employee and public safety, regulatory compliance, and loss control.

Not a homeowner? Not a problem.

You can still save money on energy bills

By Robin Earl

Since many factors affecting residential energy use — the home's structure, appliances, heating and cooling, and levels of insulation — are controlled by the property owner, those who rent may face a few more challenges when it comes to reducing their energy consumption. Whether you're in a long-term residence or a college rental for the school year, here are some energy-saving tips.

What to consider before moving into a rental home

- If you will be responsible for your own utility bill, ask to see a monthly bill history so you know what to expect, especially during peak heating and cooling seasons.
- It never hurts to ask whether the landlord or property manager would be willing to make certain upgrades before you move in. Upgrades like installing a programmable thermostat and replacing kitchen appliances with more energy-efficient models will save you money on energy costs. Sealing air leaks and arranging a heating and air conditioning checkup are low-cost options.

Lighting

- Turn off lights when you leave a room. For a bigger impact, switch from incandescent lightbulbs to LEDs. On average, a resident saves \$225 a year after switching to all LED bulbs.
- If you have outdoor lighting that is left on for significant periods of time, using LEDs or CFLs (compact florescent lighting) in these fixtures can save a lot of energy. LEDs and CFLs are available as flood lights, and have been tested to withstand the rain and snow so they can be used in exposed fixtures.

Small savings add up

- Plugged-in electronics or small appliances still use energy when they're not in use. This "phantom power" can add an average of \$100 to yearly energy costs, so unplug devices you are not using. Use smart power strips as the central turn-off point for all your

electronics to turn multiple devices off with the press of one button.

- If you have an in-unit washer and dryer, wash your clothes in cold water, run full loads, and air dry when possible.
- Take shorter showers. The average household spends \$400 to \$600 a year on water heating.
- Make sure furniture is not blocking air vents. Blocked vents force your heating and cooling system to work harder to keep the room at a comfortable temperature.



- If you notice a draft under a door or around an air conditioning window unit, consider a door draft stopper or a window-mounted air conditioner cover to help with insulation.
- If your rental has a programmable thermostat, adjust it to the lowest comfortable temperature in the winter and highest comfortable temperature in the summer. Even changes of a few degrees can save energy. Set the thermostat to automatically raise or lower the temperature when you are sleeping or away from home. This one change could save up to \$150 a year. If your unit doesn't have a programmable thermostat, manually adjust the temperature whenever you leave home — especially when you're traveling.

Sources: Virginia Energy Sense and Energy.gov

NOVEC HELPS supported more than 100 local organizations in 2024

DONATIONS TOTALED OVER \$79,000

From feeding hungry families to supporting veterans coping with medical challenges, NOVEC HELPS is in your community, embodying the seventh Cooperative Principle, Concern for Community.

NOVEC HELPS (Hands Engaged in Local Public Service) is a 501(c)(3) organization of NOVEC employees who volunteer their time to help others through donations and community service projects. The 15-member NOVEC HELPS board of directors votes on programs and events to support financially or with feet on the ground. NOVEC HELPS is celebrating its 17th year in 2025.

Each year, NOVEC HELPS participates in a hands-on Day of Caring. On Oct. 23, 2024, NOVEC employees partnered with NOVEC HELPS to lend a hand — a lot of hands — at the Willing Warriors Retreat in Haymarket. More than 30 employees worked in two shifts taking care of yard work, cleaning, and house projects.

The Willing Warrior Retreat serves service members who are receiving medical treatment at local veterans hospitals. The program allows veterans and their families to relax outside of a hospital environment and to get away from the routine of procedures, therapies, surgeries, and doctor appointments.

WHAT ORGANIZATIONS DOES NOVEC HELPS SUPPORT?

From total contributions of \$82,308.59, NOVEC HELPS donated \$79,030 to 110 community-based organizations in 2024, including the ones listed below.

Veterans: VETPAR Inc., the Heal Foundation, Willing Warriors, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and Wreaths Across America

Youth services: The ARC of Loudoun, Boys and Girls Club of Fauquier, The Dream Project, Snyder Bucks Sports Academy, St. Labre Indian School, T. Benton Gayle Middle School, and Freedom High School Band Boosters

Holiday food and toys: House of Mercy, SPARC, Fauquier FISH, Here 2 Serve, NOVA Family Services, and Dulles South Food Pantry

Social welfare (housing and nutrition support): UNICEF, Virginia Women and Family Support Center, Habitat for Humanity, A Farm Less Ordinary, Shelter House Inc., Food for the Poor, OHANA Services, and Good Shepherd of Northern Virginia

Disease research and healthcare: Children's National Hospital Foundation, St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, MedStar Washington Hospital Burn Center, and Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

Community: Reston Historical Trust, ASPCA, Friends of Loudoun Mental Health, Afro-American Historical Association of Fauquier County, and the Arbor Day Foundation



Ginger Hamlin is one of more than 30 employees who helped out at the 2024 NOVEC HELPS Day of Caring at the Willing Warriors Retreat in Haymarket.

HOW DID NOVEC HELPS RAISE MONEY IN 2024?

\$50,524.59 from its annual spring golf tournament

\$24,350 from a garage sale held by NOVEC's Fleet Services department

\$5,409 from NOVEC employee payroll deductions

\$1,661 from the sale of scrap metals

\$364 from recycled cellphones



Girl Power Attracts the Energy-Curious

Annual event is one way NOVEC attracts potential employees

By Robin Earl

For nearly 80 young women, the fourth annual Girl Power event last fall was a hands-on introduction to the world of electric co-ops and the job opportunities they offer. Seventeen-year-old Manassas homeschooler Theresa Peña raised her hand at every one of the educational stations. Whether learning about working in a bucket truck or how to fly a drone, Theresa wanted to know more: Does the bucket in the truck have remote control? What's a transformer? How does fiber-optics work to provide internet service? How far away from the base can a drone fly?

All these questions — and more — were answered during nine half-hour sessions at the Virginia, Maryland & Delaware Association of Electric Cooperatives (VMDAEC) Training Center in Palmyra, Virginia. Participants found the lessons especially accessible, because most of the stations were led by women. VMDAEC's Jim Robertson said he was gratified that “so many more women volunteered to teach this year.”

Theresa is interested in the visual arts and education, so communications or worker-training positions could be viable co-op jobs for her. The young women were also introduced to other options:

- Engineering or technical roles, including lineworkers
- Administrative and support workers
- Innovation and technology positions, specializing in information technology or cybersecurity

Attendees asked about the work culture at co-ops, what education or training they would need, and how much lineworkers make. Cindy Haddock, owner of a North Carolina power line construction company, gave a Girl Power pep talk at lunchtime. She said that while some co-op jobs are overwhelmingly filled by men, women are making inroads. “You’ve got to grab the world by the hand and hold on tight. It’s not always an easy ride. Fear is not the end; it’s the beginning of the ride of your life,” Haddock said.



Theresa Peña admits that climbing an electrical pole is tougher than it looks.

One of the most popular classes of the day simulated working from a bucket truck; the girls used virtual reality goggles to approximate a bird's eye view. In another session, camera-equipped drones buzzed like a horde of angry cicadas as the girls flew them out to the tree line and back. The time- and energy-saving technology can transmit high-resolution images quickly and easily, without the use of a bucket truck. “You can read the serial number at the top of an electric pole and see any small cracks in the wood,” the instructor said.

Girls got the chance to use lineworkers' tools while they worked at "smurf-poles." (They are only about 6 feet tall, so trainees can learn how to repair and replace cables or crossbars while firmly on the ground). Theresa is comfortable with drills and hammers, thanks to a church mission trip last summer where she made house repairs for people in need. At one of the smurf poles, Theresa put on bulky lineworkers' gloves to try and thread a nut onto a bolt, and everyone — including Theresa — laughed as she dropped it for the eighth time.

Standing in a forest of electrical poles set up for pole-climbing practice, instructor Chris Henry of Northern Neck Electric Cooperative said, "One girl said she was afraid of heights. I turned to look back to see how she was doing, and she was 15 to 20 feet in the air. A lot of the girls finish their turn and come back for a second try."

"It's harder than it looks," admitted Theresa. Smiling all the way, she climbed up her pole about 10 feet before deciding she'd had enough fun for one day.



A Girl Power instructor looks like a mad scientist as he demonstrates a welding technique that lineworkers regularly have to perform in the field.

**PLANNING IS UNDERWAY
FOR GIRL POWER 2025.**



Theresa Peña checks on the progress of a drone she is flying using a remote controller.



Alana Ellis of Chesterfield County uses virtual reality goggles to learn how to control a bucket truck.

NOVEC OFFERS APPRENTICE PROGRAMS

NOVEC offers six apprenticeship programs that are recognized by the Commonwealth of Virginia: electric utility designer, line technician, quality assurance inspector, substation electrician, system operator, and meter technician.

A registered apprentice completes a minimum of 2,000 hours of supervised on-the-job training and a minimum of 144 hours of combined related classroom education and individual study/preparation for each year of apprenticeship. Once an apprentice completes the program, they receive nationally recognized journeyman certification.

NOVEC's apprenticeship programs are joint ventures between NOVEC and Local #1737 of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.

Check out NOVEC's careers page by visiting novec.com/careers or by scanning the QR code with your phone's built-in camera. Human Resources specialists can answer questions about open positions and possible apprenticeships.



Be Ready for Storm Season

By Robin Earl

Spring brings us flowers, baseball, and longer days to enjoy increasingly warmer weather. Unfortunately, spring and summer can also create the perfect conditions for severe storms. Be sure your family is prepared to weather any storms and outages. See the tips below from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and visit ready.gov for additional resources.

- Stock your pantry with a three-day supply of nonperishable food, including canned goods and water. It's a good idea to have extra diapers and other essentials, too, in case stores are affected.
- Confirm that you have adequate sanitation and hygiene supplies including towelettes, soap, and hand sanitizer.
- Stock your first-aid kit with pain relievers, bandages, and other medical necessities, and make sure your prescriptions are current.
- Set aside basic household items you will need, including flashlights, batteries, a manual can opener, and a portable, battery-powered radio or TV.
- Organize emergency supplies so they are easily accessible in one location.
- If a power outage hits, turn off major appliances, televisions, computers, and other electronics. This will help prevent damage from potential power surges and will also help prevent overloading circuits during restoration. It's a good idea, though, to leave one light on so you will know when power is restored.
- If you plan to use a portable generator, make sure it's rated to handle the amount of power you will need. Always review the manufacturer's instructions so you know how to operate it safely.

Listen to local news or check the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association's website (noaa.gov) for storm and emergency information, and check novec.com and NOVEC's Facebook page for restoration updates. The Co-op's outage map is updated frequently, and includes outage restoration estimations.

Severe storms can occasionally bring down power lines. If you see a downed line, always assume it's energized and stay clear. Do not try to cut trees to free them from power lines. This can be dangerous, so leave it to the professionals. If flooding occurs, never walk through areas where power lines could be submerged.

If you experience an outage, call 703-335-0500, log in to SmartHub, or text "#OUT" to 85700. Do not post it on NOVEC's social media sites.



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The contest is open to all K-5 students. **The deadline for submission is Friday, May 9.**

The entry judged best in show from all categories will receive a \$100 Amazon gift card!

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Cultivating a Pollinator Paradise

Picking plants for a thriving garden

by Beth Burrell, Contributing Columnist

With over 40 years of gardening experience, I pursue perennials that attract the best pollinators — native bees, butterflies, birds, honeybees and moths. Many flowers provide enticing nectar and pollen, acting as magnets for beneficial insects. My favorite perennials not only showcase stunning blooms but also attract various helpful pollinators, are excellent for cutting, and thrive in both full sun and partial shade.

I plan my plantings season by season to ensure a vibrant display of color and variety from spring to late fall. While I incorporate some native plants in my garden, I enjoy blending them with native cultivars and non-native species, prioritizing their performance and the beneficial insects they attract.

A key planting for April is the Cottage Pink (*Dianthus gratianopolitanus* 'Firewitch'), which showcases bright magenta flowers atop clumps of grassy gray foliage, shining from April through early June and attracting emerging swallowtail



An orange coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea* 'Big Kahuna') being visited by a metallic sweat bee.

butterflies, as well as visits from native bees, hoverflies and hummingbirds. Moreover, Cottage Pinks produce a delightful fragrance, and their evergreen foliage looks outstanding year-round.

Bees, butterflies and hummingbirds accumulate frequent flyer miles during their many visits to Meadow Sage (*Salvia nemorosa* 'Blue Hill'). This heat- and humidity-tolerant perennial bursts into bloom in May with abundant spikes of true-blue tubular flowers that continue to flower into September.

Shasta daisies, featuring large, flat white flowers, are perfect landing pads for pollinators. (*Leucanthemum superbum* 'Becky') boasts 3-foot stems, while the shorter (*Leucanthemum* 'Snow Lady') reaches just 20 inches. These vibrant blooms create a buffet for butterflies, attracting species like the painted lady and eastern tiger swallowtail.



Large white flowers of Shasta daisies are easy landing pads for native mining bees.

I introduce annuals like lantana and zinnia as summer progresses, which thrive from summer into fall. My favorite visitor is the enchanting hummingbird moth, which dances through my garden and can remarkably visit thousands of flowers daily to meet its high-energy needs.

From June into August, coneflowers and black-eyed Susans take center stage, competing for the attention of beneficial insects and birds with their flowers and seeds. The orange coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea* 'Big Kahuna') stands out with its dark rust center and vibrant orange mango petals, while black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia fulgida* 'American Gold Rush') keeps the excitement alive.

Both are abundant in nectar and pollen, attracting bumblebees, parasitic wasps, honeybees, and various butterflies and hummingbirds. As their flowers mature, they yield plenty of seeds for goldfinches, sparrows and chickadees to enjoy. By planting these carefully chosen perennials and annuals, we nurture a vibrant ecosystem that supports local biodiversity and ensures essential pollinators keep buzzing. ●

Beth Burrell holds degrees in landscape design and ornamental horticulture. Her family gardens have been featured on the TV show Home Grown.



Fall flowering Joe Pye weed (*Eupatorium perfoliatum*) may have up to 20 different insects gathering its nectar at the same time.

GARDEN TIPS:

- Cutting back the spent flowers of many perennials improves appearance, stimulates rebloom, and keeps your plants looking their best.
- Don't dead-head the flowers of coneflowers and black-eyed Susans as they will continue to produce seeds for birds.

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King William County Courthouse Celebrates 300 Years

story and photos by Gene Campbell, Contributing Writer



The oldest continuously used courthouse in the U.S. is in the heart of King William County, Va., surrounded by a picturesque rural landscape and deep echoes of history.

The brick courthouse, constructed around 1725, symbolizes tradition and heritage. It defies time by blending the past and present while transcending the limits of years. The rich history of the King William County Courthouse is a testament to the enduring legacy of America's colonial heritage. It is listed on the U.S. National Register

of Historic Places.

On Saturday, April 12, this historic landmark will mark its 300th anniversary. The event will feature tours of the courthouse grounds and museum, historical reenactments, singing and dancing, local vendors, and speeches by officials and community leaders. Attendees will be able to learn more about the courthouse's history and its role in shaping the community over the years. "King William County encourages you to come and take part in this grand celebration," says Debi Moren, president

of the King William County Historical Museum.

King William County was established on April 11, 1702, from King and Queen County and named in honor of King William III of England. The county's first presiding justice, The Honorable Henry Fox (along with Capt. Richard Littlepage), conveyed a two-acre courthouse site to the county from a larger tract of land they jointly owned in central King William County. In its early days, a building was necessary to record land acquisitions, hold court



and conduct county business.

Since the two acres already included a dwelling, this structure became the first courthouse. After 20 years of use, the house fell into irreparable condition due to relentless use by settlers.

Consequently, in 1722, the justices of King William County, the governing body, petitioned and received approval from the House of Burgesses — which served as the lower house of the Virginia General Assembly from 1619 to 1776 — to construct a new courthouse. No records are available to establish the courthouse's exact construction date. Still, it is believed that construction likely began shortly after the House of Burgesses granted its approval in 1722.

A tablet near the courthouse entrance is still visible today, indicating the construction date as 1725. To further support the 1725 date, the nearby Hanover County Courthouse, built in 1735, is said to have been designed after the King William County Courthouse.

THE TEST OF TIME

It is widely believed that the King William County Courthouse is one of the finest examples of colonial brickwork still in use today. Constructed from brick arranged in a Flemish bond pattern, it is named after the Flemish bricklayers who were brought over from England. The original Capitol building in Williamsburg is believed to have inspired the design. This one-story brick structure has a T-shaped layout and a slate-covered hipped roof, featuring five rounded brick arches that support an open portico roof. The floor of the portico is paved with large flagstones.

The front entry functions as the only door in the building's exterior walls. Upon entering through the front door into the courtroom, small rooms designated for the justices and juries are visible on either side. The courtroom was heated by fires, with one fireplace situated behind the judge's bench and one in each of the small adjoining rooms.

The long windows flanking the courtroom allow for ample light. Many courthouses in Virginia once featured low brick walls around the complex to keep wandering livestock and cattle at bay. In 1840, such a wall was added to the King William County Courthouse complex and is considered the only one left fully intact.

The early courthouse played many roles in the community. In addition to being the center of government for the county, the courthouse served as a polling place for elections. Unlike today, there was no secret ballot; each voter had to stand before the sheriff and those present to declare his choice of candidates. Candidates often set out large bowls of punch to sway the undecided, a practice known as “swilling the planters with bumbo.”

Hotly contested elections often led to fistfights.

Another common activity at or near the courthouse was horse racing. Among the more unusual entertainment options offered at the courthouse were classes in dancing (minuet) and fencing, especially during the American Revolution, when many French, German and Polish officers arrived in the colonies.

A FREQUENT VISITOR

A crucial part of every courthouse setting was a tavern or inn, privately operated to accommodate travelers, justices, lawyers and anyone else with overnight business. King William's early courthouse tavern was located to the east of the courthouse. It included a two-story building with four bedrooms on each floor and a porch that extended across the front. George Washington was a regular patron for meals at the tavern during his trips between Mount Vernon and Williamsburg to attend the House of Burgesses. He also frequently

stopped at the tavern while courting his future wife, Martha, who lived nearby in New Kent County.

Today, the ongoing archaeological excavation of the tavern site by the Fairfield Foundation, commissioned by the King William County Historical Society, has uncovered numerous artifacts from centuries past. Among these discoveries are a nearly complete English delft plate from the 1740s and an 1850 gold coin. Presiding Circuit Court Judge B. Elliott Bondurant supervises activities at the courthouse.

As the oldest continuously used courthouse in the U.S., the King William County Courthouse is a testament to America's colonial legacy. Its distinctive architecture and rich history make it a unique and significant landmark in American history. Whether you're a



history enthusiast, a resident or a visitor, the courthouse provides a fascinating glimpse into the past and an opportunity to connect with the people and events that shaped our nation. “Virginia is known as the birthplace of our nation, and the King William County Courthouse is the oldest courthouse in continuous use in the U.S.,” says Moren. “That fact has even appeared as a question on [the TV show] Jeopardy.” ●

Gene Campbell, a director for Rappahannock Electric Cooperative since 2018, is a volunteer writer and photographer for the Country Courier newspaper.

TEX•MEX

Try these bold and spicy recipes at your next big fiesta!

Southwest Ranch Taco Salad

recipe courtesy of Family Features

Ingredients:

½ head romaine lettuce
1 pt. cherry tomatoes
2 small avocados
1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
1 lb. ground beef (80/20 ground chuck)
2 teaspoons taco seasoning
¼ cup water

Directions:

Coarsely chop lettuce, halve cherry tomatoes, and pit, peel and slice avocados. Set aside. In large frying pan over medium-high heat, heat olive oil. Brown ground beef, stirring occasionally, 4-5 minutes. Add taco seasoning and water; cook according to package directions, 5-8 minutes, or until meat is thoroughly cooked. Drain and rinse black beans. Set aside. Divide lettuce among serving bowls or plates. Top with ground beef, tomatoes, avocados, black beans, corn, cheese and 2 tablespoons cilantro. Tuck in tortilla chips. Drizzle with Southwest Ranch dressing and sprinkle with additional cilantro, if desired.



1 can (15.5 oz.) black beans
1 ½ cups canned corn
1 cup shredded sharp cheddar cheese
2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro, plus additional for serving (optional), divided
1 cup Southwest Ranch dressing
6 oz. tortilla chips

Mexican Lasagna

recipe courtesy of Family Features/Culinary.net

Ingredients:

1 lb. ground beef
1 can (15 oz.) black beans
1 can (4 oz.) chiles
2 cans (14 oz. each) fire-roasted diced tomatoes, divided
1 can (15 oz.) whole kernel corn
1 tablespoon garlic powder
1 tablespoon onion powder
1 tablespoon taco seasoning
6 cups shredded cheese
18 taco-sized tortillas of choice
fresh cilantro, for garnish
sour cream, for serving

Directions:

Heat oven to 350 degrees. In large skillet, brown ground beef; drain grease. Add black beans, chiles with juices, 1 can tomatoes with juices, drained corn, garlic powder, onion powder and taco seasoning. Open remaining can of tomatoes; take out half and set aside. Add remaining half with juices to beef mixture. Mix well and turn off heat. In 9-by-13-inch pan, line bottom with six tortillas, slightly overlapping. Cover with 1/3 of beef mixture and top with 2 cups shredded cheese. Repeat with remaining ingredients then top with reserved tomatoes. Cover pan with foil and bake 30-40 minutes. Garnish with cilantro and serve with sour cream. Serves 4-6.

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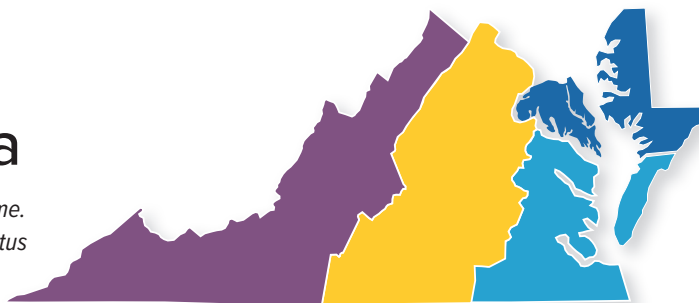
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Events Around the Area

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

APRIL

18-19 WINCHESTER. Lord Fairfax Orchid Society Show and Sale. Museum of the Shenandoah Valley. 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Themsv.org.

19 MIDDLETOWN. Easter Egg Hunt. Middletown Park. 11 a.m. 540-869-2226. Middletownva.gov.

22 MIDDLETOWN. Earth Day Tree Planting. Mainstreet. 540-869-2226. Middletownva.gov.

25 FRONT ROYAL. Blue Ridge Singers Spring Concert Series: Anchored in Song. Front Royal Presbyterian Church. 7:30 p.m. 540-635-6947. Blueridgesingers.org.

27 WINCHESTER. Blue Ridge Singers Spring Concert Series: Anchored in Song. First Baptist Church of Winchester. 3 p.m. 540-635-6947. Blueridgesingers.org.

MAY

4 UPPERVILLE. Blue Ridge Singers Spring Concert Series: Anchored in Song. Trinity Episcopal Church. 3 p.m. 540-635-6947. Blueridgesingers.org.

PIEDMONT

APRIL

26 FREDERICKSBURG. 13th Annual Heart for Missions Youth Car & Truck Show. Bethel Baptist Church. 9 a.m. Hfm youthcarshow@gmail.com.

26 GOOCHLAND. Goochland-Powhatan Master Gardener Assoc. Spring Garden Fest. Reynolds Community College. 8 a.m.-3 p.m. Gpmga.org.

29 MANASSAS. Blue Ridge Singers Spring Concert Series: Anchored in Song. All Saints Catholic Church. 7:30 p.m. 540-635-6947. Blueridgesingers.org.

MAY

3 MINERAL. Annual Spring Yard Sale. St. Jude Catholic Church. 8 a.m.-2 p.m. Louisacatholics.org.

3 BEAVERDAM. The Gunpowder Incident. The Gunpowder Incident. 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Patrick Henry's Scotchtown Museum.

TIDEWATER

APRIL

18-19 CHINCOTEAGUE. 44th Annual Chincoteague Island Easter Decoy & Art Festival. Chincoteague Combined School. Times vary. Chincoteaguechamber.com.

26 CAPE CHARLES. Cape Charles Annual Love Run. 21 Bay Ave. 9 a.m.-12 p.m. Runsignup.com.

MAY

1 MELFA. E.S. Literacy Council Spell-Rite "Bee for Literacy." Eastern Shore Community College. 5-9 p.m. 757-789-1761. Shoreliteracy.org.

3 NASSAWADOX. Antique Tractor Show. 10150 Mill St. 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Peninsulatractor.org.

3 CAPE CHARLES. Historic Garden Tour on the Eastern Shore. 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Gcvirginia.org.

10 COURTLAND. Heritage Day. Heritage Ln. 9 a.m.-4 p.m. 757-654-6785.

MARYLAND

APRIL

19 EASTON. Annual Easter Egg Hunt. Talbot County Courthouse Grounds. 10 a.m. Discovereaston.com.

23-27 CHESTERTOWN. Paint the Town. Fountain Park. Ctownra.org.

MAY

3 SNOW HILL. Artisan Day. 3816 Old Furnace Rd. 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Furnacetown.org.

10 SNOW HILL. Furnace Fairies & Gnomes Celebration. 3816 Old Furnace Rd. 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Furnacetown.org.



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Springtime in the Mountains

Wildlife, flowers and holes in my carport

by Margo Oxendine, Contributing Columnist



I was sitting here at my desk, staring into space, when — whoosh! — something zipped past outside. Then, again. And again.

What could it be? Well, after a long, hard, cold winter, it turned out to be a bird. The birds are back! Can spring finally be here?

Now that I've noticed, birds now seem to be everywhere. And that's wonderfully fine with me. When I took a little stroll outside, in the patches where the winter snow had finally melted, I saw a glorious sight, a true harbinger of spring: a tiny yellow daffodil shoot peeking through from the recently frozen ground, next to a purple crocus.

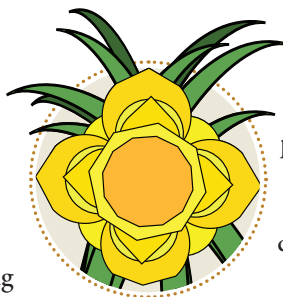
Of course, I know the outcome. It won't last. I can't count the number of photos I've taken of daffodils in the snow. I enjoy them while I can. I think the latest date I've ever seen it snow around here was April 19. That just ain't right!

I've started looking for early signs of spring during my walks, which I can take

again without scurrying back to the car because it is just too bone-chilling cold. Some of the grass seems to be turning green. And the birds are everywhere up on the wooded lane. Well, maybe not everywhere, but at least they are in evidence. However, the first robin has yet to appear around these rural mountain parts.

You know me: I'm starting to keep my eyes peeled into the woods for bears. They're probably still hibernating. Bears are no fools! But it won't be too long before they come out and take a cruise around. The thing is, this time of year, the mamas will be escorting the world's cutest babies. I wouldn't mind a quick peek at them, but if I see any, I will calmly and quietly turn around and skedaddle.

I can see evidence of large and small deer, raccoons, perhaps a bobcat or some well-fed escapee housecat, and bunnies hopping out to make an appearance. I love to examine animal tracks. This winter, my own yard seemed as if, during the night, there had been some sort of great wildlife



party. Tracks were everywhere. I wish I could stay up and peer out the window in the late-night dark to watch them.

One of my favorite wildlife encounters usually occurs in late April or early May, when the does introduce their babies — often twin fawns — to the yard. I watch them frolic and gambol about, and they always head down the driveway. "Hey!" I want to yell, "The highway is down there. Run for your lives!"

Not long ago, I almost hit a smallish bear who leaped out of the brush and scampered across the driveway right in front of me. It was a thrill I did not need.

Just now, I was sitting here writing this and watching out the windows. What captured my eye was a big, red-headed woodpecker. I love woodpeckers, even if they destroy my carport hole by hole. They are not easily deterred. And I try not to mind.

The woodpecker cinched it for me: Yes, folks, spring is finally here! It won't be that long before I can start complaining about the summer heat. ●

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.



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Magnolias

Spectacular trees all year long

by Steve Carroll, Contributing Columnist

Magnolias are justly admired for their striking, fragrant spring flowers. While red maple, serviceberry and other trees bloom earlier, a magnolia on your property likely takes center stage once its large blossoms unfold. Members of the genus *Magnolia* can be found in North, Central and South America, as well as in Southeast Asia; five species are native to our region, with others either naturalized or planted as ornamentals.

Botanists consider magnolias to be primitive. They are among our most ancient flowering plants, dating back about 100 million years. In addition to fossils, other evidence of their antiquity comes from floral traits, such as the spiral arrangement of their reproductive structures and the presence of many petal-like structures — more appropriately called tepals since they lack distinct differences between outer sepals and inner petals found in so many other flowers.

Flowers of our native magnolias may be white, creamy white, pale yellow or yellow-green, while flowers of many hybrids and cultivars come in shades of pink, purple, and red. And magnolia flowers are large — up to twelve inches in diameter for Bigleaf magnolia (*M. macrophylla*). The flowers of our native species may be odorless, as in Cucumber tree (*M. acuminata*), unpleasantly aromatic (Umbrellatree, *M. tripetala*), or pleasantly fragrant as in Bigleaf magnolia (*M. macrophylla*), Sweetbay (*M. virginiana*) and Mountain magnolia (*M. fraseri*). Of course, what is considered pleasant is in the nose of the beholder.

And then there are the leaves. The

Magnolias date back about 100 million years.



Magnolia flowers are characterized by spirally arranged multiple parts.

leaves of Cucumber tree, Mountain magnolia and Southern magnolia can exceed 10 inches in length; those of Umbrellatree can reach up to 20 inches long; and Bigleaf magnolia leaves may be 30 inches or more. The leaves of Southern magnolia, and sometimes Sweetbay, are evergreen, creating a striking contrast against winter's snow.

You may appreciate magnolias primarily for their flowers or leaves, but be sure not to overlook their fruits and seeds. The 2- to 5-inch long cone-shaped fruits mature in late summer. When ripe, they open to display striking, orange-to-red seeds hanging on sticky threads. A variety of birds and small mammals eat these seeds and threads.

Although closely related, our five native magnolias each prefer different habitats and are generally found more frequently farther south. Cucumber tree thrives in various

locations across the western mountains and valleys; Fraser magnolia favors rich coves and mountain slopes in southwest Virginia; Umbrellatree is scattered throughout the mountains of western Virginia and farther south, while being less common to the east; Sweetbay flourishes along swamp edges and in low, wet areas, particularly along the coast; and Bigleaf magnolia can be found in extreme southwest Virginia. Southern magnolia, native to the southeastern U.S., is widely planted throughout our area and has escaped cultivation, becoming naturalized.

Magnolia wood is soft and weak and has only occasionally been used to manufacture items such as boxes and crates. Magnolia leaves are important hosts for a variety of butterflies and moths, while deer browse the leaves and twigs. However, by far, the most important economic use for this group is in the nursery and landscaping trade. Lucky is the homeowner who has a mature magnolia, a tree that can and should be appreciated no matter the season. ●

The distinctive seedpod of a magnolia.



PHOTO COURTESY DRUSS2007/DWR VIA FLICKR

Steve Carroll is a botanist and ecologist who writes about trees, gardening and the world of plants. He is the co-author of "Ecology for Gardeners," published by Timber Press.

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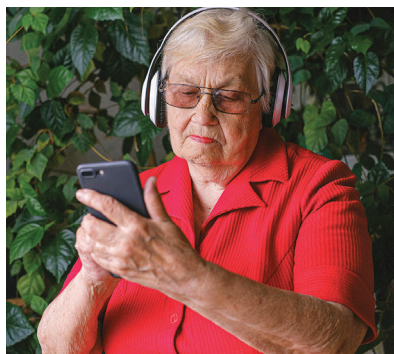
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PHOTOS COURTESY STATEPOINT

Modern Smartphones

Is yours up to the challenge of daily life?

story courtesy of StatePoint

As smartphones have transformed from simple communication devices to essential tools for navigation, entertainment, productivity and much more, so have their vulnerabilities — and the consequences of damage have become more severe. Now central to how we work, connect and play, a broken smartphone can significantly disrupt daily life.

For over 12 years, Allstate Protection Plans has conducted its well-known Breakability Test, in which its robots drop, bend, dunk and fold the latest smartphones to assess their durability. These tests have uncovered evolving risks, providing valuable insights into each new phone generation's vulnerabilities.

LIQUID DAMAGE

Without waterproofing technology, even a minor spill or accidental dunk in water could wreak havoc on a phone's internal components. In a 2012 survey, liquid damage accounted for 18% of smartphone damage. In 2014, the iPhone 6 struggled being dunked for 10 seconds in less than a foot of water. However, five years later, in 2019, the iPhone 11 remained functional after being submerged by Allstate Protection Plans' DunkBot for 30 minutes in five feet of water.

Thanks to advancements like IP68 ratings and waterproof casings, modern smartphones, such as the latest Apple iPhone and Samsung Galaxy, can be exposed to water for extended periods without harm.

THE FOLDABLE PHONE

While foldable phones first entered the market as early as 2008 with Nokia's "Morph" concept, it wasn't until 2019 that foldable devices made a proper resurgence. Despite initial skepticism, foldable phones are proving to be surprisingly durable. Devices like the Samsung Galaxy Fold can endure up to 200,000 folds, or roughly three years of regular use,



with only minor issues like pixel damage or hinge wear.

This represents a significant engineering leap, pushing the boundaries of what a smartphone can be.

THE HARDWARE EVOLUTION

Manufacturers now employ toughened materials like Gorilla Glass, aluminum and ceramic to withstand drops and scratches. Yet, despite these advances, modern smartphones are far from unbreakable. In recent drop tests, even flagship devices, like the Samsung S24 Ultra with its titanium frame and Corning Gorilla Armor, shattered after 6-foot falls. Similarly, the iPhone 16, despite its aluminum sides and ceramic shield, sustained cracked screens and scuffed corners when dropped.

LARGER PHONES, LARGER PROBLEMS

Early smartphones typically featured screens around 4 inches. In response to consumer demand, today's models, such as Samsung's Galaxy line, boast displays as large as 6.8 inches. While bigger screens offer enhanced viewing experiences, holding and using larger phones with one hand has increased accidental drops. A survey by Allstate Protection Plans found that 78% of users have dropped their devices while using them with one hand. The question remains whether the trade-off between screen size and ease of use is worth the risk.

TOUGHER, BUT STILL VULNERABLE

Smartphone durability has made impressive strides, yet no manufacturer has designed a device impervious to the Allstate Protection Plans' DropBot — or the unforgiving impact of a sidewalk. Given their vital role in our lives and the high repair costs for the latest models, protecting these valuable devices is essential. Cases and screen protectors are must-haves, and a protection plan can be a real money-saver when accidents inevitably happen. ●

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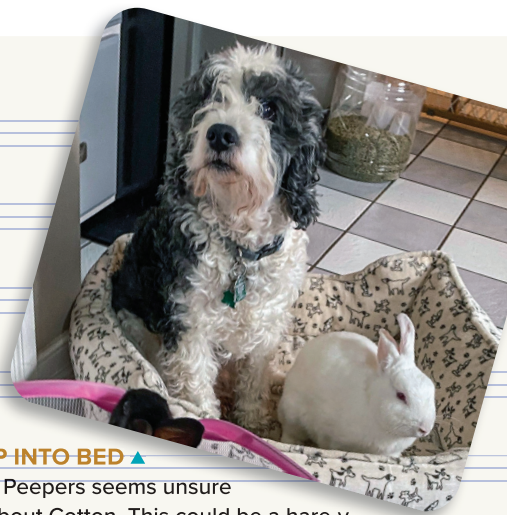
If your photo is published in this column, we will send you a \$20 Amazon gift card credit via email. Send your high-resolution images to saycheese@co-oliving.com. Please include your first and last name, along with a description of the photo.

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.



◀ A GOOD HARE DAY

Ear-resistably cute bunnies make everything better. PHOTO SUBMITTED BY LISA WRIGHT



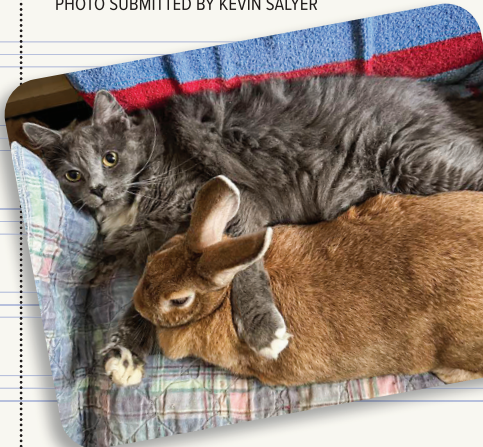
HOP INTO BED ▲

Mr. Peepers seems unsure about Cotton. This could be a hare-y situation. PHOTO SUBMITTED BY DAVID AGNEW

CUDDLE BUNNY ▼

Jasper is feline cozy with his big-eared bunny buddy, ButterScotch.

PHOTO SUBMITTED BY KEVIN SALYER



▲ YAPPY EASTER!

Did someone say treats? Zeus is all ears.

PHOTO SUBMITTED BY VINEETA ME

◀ SOMEBUNNY TO LOVE

Summer and Flower, the bunny, were fast friends. PHOTO SUBMITTED BY TAMMY EDWARDS

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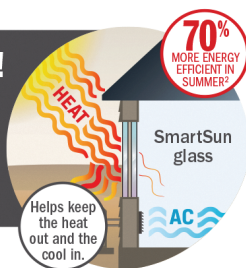
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