



A new year and a new role

Challenges and opportunities in co-op's future



John Porter
PRESIDENT/CEO

As a new year begins at Holmes-Wayne Electric Cooperative, I am humbled to officially be stepping into my new role as your President/CEO. After 37 years at HWEC, I am excited for the chance to serve our members in an even greater capacity.

My journey with HWEC began when I was hired by Pat Riggle as an engineering intern in the fall of 1988. I was in college and participating in Ohio Northern's inaugural Cooperative Education Program. After I completed my internship and graduated, Pat offered me a full-time role as an electrical engineer — when most cooperatives were relying heavily on outside engineering consulting firms.

At that time, HWEC's electrical infrastructure was more than 50 years old and in less-than-optimal condition. The cooperative was experiencing rapid growth and as a result, most of its efforts were focused on adding new services rather than investing time and resources into rebuilding or repairing existing facilities. Backfeeding capabilities between substations were extremely limited, and no organized right-of-way maintenance program existed, leading to higher-than-normal outages and longer outage durations. Together, these conditions presented both significant challenges and unique opportunities for innovation — particularly for a young engineer entering the field.

I recall a couple of my first projects. The first was developing an engineering computer-modeling system that allowed us to perform load analysis on a digital model of our distribution system. The second involved converting our paper maps — previously updated only once every year or two by an outside company — into an electronic mapping system. This transition enabled us to update our maps several times per year and to manage the process in-house. In today's rapidly evolving technological world, it is remarkable to look back and see just how far we have come.

Throughout the years, I have been fortunate to witness firsthand the growth and transformation of HWEC and its staff. Under the leadership of Gail Patterson and Glenn Miller, we made critical advancements. Line rebuilding and right-of-way maintenance became a priority; critical substation rebuilding and upgrades were completed; and new substations were built to accommodate housing growth and economic development in our service

area. We achieved significant technological advancements, including the implementation of a Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition System for monitoring and control of our substation equipment, SmartHub for member interaction, GIS Mapping for infrastructure and vehicle location management, and AMI meters on commercial accounts to enable remote reading and reduce costs.

While we've made these advancements and improved reliability, our cost per kilowatt-hour has increased only modestly from the cooperative's early days. While no one welcomes a price increase, it is important to recognize the value these advancements bring. Just this year, HWEC achieved an impressive 99.97% reliability rate. For most members, the total time spent without power, due to outages, amounts to less than three hours annually, an impressive improvement from when I began my career here.

As I transition into my new role, I recognize the significant challenges faced by electric cooperatives today. Over the past two decades, we have seen baseload fossil fuel generation phased out to meet ever-changing environmental regulations. This, combined with recent increase in demand coming from data centers, evolving federal policies, and residential technology uses, will put pressure on future power costs. However, I am a firm believer that challenges can strengthen a cooperative and I am prepared to work alongside your seasoned board of directors, key legislators, members of our statewide organization, and the dedicated staff of Holmes-Wayne Electric Cooperative to ensure a sustainable and prosperous future for the cooperative and the communities where we live and serve.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks and sincere appreciation to Glenn Miller, whose leadership and dedication over the past 23 years have left a lasting impression on the cooperative. Glenn has been not only a colleague during these years, but a true friend and mentor to many.

Glenn, thank you for your outstanding leadership and strategic vision through the years. Your guidance transformed the team and set a high standard for excellence. I wish you a fulfilling and well-deserved retirement.



Troyer's Genuine Trail Bologna: A legacy of family, faith, and flavor



When you walk into the village of Trail, Ohio, you might not realize you're standing in the birthplace of a product that has carried a family legacy for more than a century. The story of Troyer's Genuine Trail Bologna begins with one man, one recipe, and one goal: to make something wholesome, simple, and built to last. That spirit still guides the business today.

Back in 1912, Michael Troyer founded what would become Troyer's Genuine Trail Bologna. He created a product that reflected the hardworking, practical lifestyle of early Ohio settlers. It was hearty, delicious, and easy to pack and take along on the trail. For many, that product became part of daily life, something you could count on whether you were out working in the fields or taking a long trip.

Michael's small shop in Trail quickly became known for its quality. People in the area came to rely on the Troyer name for flavor and consistency. When Michael passed away in 1950, his son Lloyd took over and carried the family tradition forward. The business grew, and even when times were difficult, like after a devastating fire in 1934, the family rebuilt and continued. That perseverance has always been part of who they are.

Today, the company is still proudly family owned and operated. The fourth generation, led by Kevin and Ken Troyer, continues to guide the business with the same values that started it all. "I started working here during high school," Kevin shares. "I was probably 14, helping after school and in the summer. Back then, we did everything ourselves. We even watered the cattle and handled the slaughtering." Those early experiences gave him a deep understanding of the hard work that built Troyer's into what it is today.

As time went on, the Troyer family made changes that helped them grow without losing sight of what mattered most. In 2012, they transitioned to a federally inspected facility, which allowed them to sell their products throughout the state of Ohio and beyond. They modernized their equipment, added

new packaging processes, and began working with trusted meat manufacturers. Even with these updates, the Troyer family stayed true to their roots.



Although the business has expanded, Troyer's Genuine Trail Bologna remains grounded in community and family values. They partner with shipping companies that help them reach customers across the country, but the heart of their operation remains right here in Holmes County, on Holmes-Wayne Electric lines. Each email or phone call from a customer who misses "a taste of home" reminds Kevin why the work matters so much. Kevin takes great pride in keeping prices fair for customers. "I work with about five different meat packers," he says. "I'll compare prices and negotiate with each of them to make sure we're getting the best possible deal. That helps us avoid raising prices for our customers."

With rising costs across the food industry, this approach has become even more important. "Prices are the highest I've seen in years," Kevin says. "We did have to make a small price increase last September, but I recently found a new supplier who has been great to work with. That helps keep our costs steady."

This dedication to fairness reflects more than just business sense. It reflects deep respect for the people who have supported Troyer's for generations. "It's not just about profit," Kevin says. "It's about making sure families can still enjoy a product that's been part of this community for more than a hundred years."

For Kevin, the best part of running the business is the people, both those who work alongside him and those who enjoy their products. "I'm blessed with great employees," he says. "They care about what they do, and they take pride in doing it well. We all get along, and everyone does their part. I couldn't ask for a better team."

Kevin also enjoys hearing from customers. "When someone tells me how much they love our product, that speaks volumes. When someone moves out of state and still finds a way to get our bologna shipped to them, that makes it all worth it. Those stories are what mean the most."

Fortunately, staffing has not been a major issue for the company. "We've been blessed," Kevin says. "A lot of businesses around here are struggling to find good workers, but our team has been steady and reliable."

When asked what he would like to say to the community and his customers, Kevin's answer came without hesitation. "First and foremost, thank you," he says. "We've been in business since 1912. Some of our customers have been with us for 30 or 40 years. Without them, we couldn't do what we do. I also want to thank the stores and wholesalers that carry our products. We've built strong relationships with them, and we truly appreciate their support."

Those relationships with customers, employees, and retail partners are the heart of Troyer's Genuine Trail Bologna. They are the reasons the company continues to thrive more than a century after it began. For the Troyer family, the story of their business is about more than meat and machinery. It's about heritage, faith, and a sense of pride in their community. What started as a small family operation nestled in the hills of Holmes County has become a symbol of quality that reaches across the country.

Kevin sums it up best: "When people say our bologna reminds them of home, that's the best compliment we could get." It's a story that continues to inspire, proving that the best things in life — like family, community, and good food — are always worth preserving.

Holmes-Wayne celebrates service anniversaries

HWEC is proud to honor eight incredible employees and board members whose dedication makes a difference every day. From five years to 20 years of service, each milestone represents hard work, commitment, and a passion for serving YOU — our members.

Join us in congratulating our team members on their service anniversaries. Thank you for all you do!





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Happy New Year!

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Our office will be
closed Jan. 1 to
observe the holiday.



**Holmes-Wayne
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