

Life as a Country Girl



Fourteen year-old Savannah Schafer lives in a rural community in the United States. A rural area is different from a city because there are fewer people. Her home is deep in a valley surrounded by mountains that are rocky and covered in trees. While many farms are located in rural areas because they require large plots of land to grow food or house livestock, in Savannah's community the mountains and rocky soil make it difficult to farm. This is one reason why few people live in her area.

What's it like to live in the mountains? "Because we have a lot of space we get to have horses and chickens," she says. Savannah's family harvests eggs from the chickens for breakfast. "We also lose electricity a lot," she says, "because the trees fall on power lines whenever there's a storm."

In Savannah's community, people keep battery-powered flashlights and oil lamps stored in case the lights go out. Some people also use a generator—a machine that generates electricity from gasoline—whenever there are emergencies. Savannah's family uses a wood stove during winter storms for cooking and warmth. In the winter, milk and other refrigerated items can be kept outside, but in the summer food often spoils. "I don't like when I have to clean out the refrigerator after we lose electricity, so mom usually does it."

Savannah's home also uses a well dug deep into the ground for water. Electricity is used to pump the water out of the well and into the pipes of the house. When you turn on the

faucet to do the dishes or take a shower, the water flows out just like it does in a city building. In cities, every building is hooked up to a water supply that runs in pipes underground, but in rural areas people live too far apart to use pipes.

According to reporter Hope Yen, only 16% of the population in the United States lived in a rural area in 2011. However, over 90% of the land in the United States was considered rural. While most Americans lived in cities, most of America's land was still considered rural.

Going to school in a rural area means having fewer classmates and traveling longer distances. To get to her high school Savannah must drive forty miles to the nearest city. This means Savannah must get up much earlier than her city classmates in order to be on time. The roads in her community aren't paved with asphalt either, so during storms they can become too muddy or snowy to pass. In cities a snowplow comes by quickly, but areas where fewer people live aren't the priority, so days can pass before a snowplow clears the road. Sometimes Savannah must miss school because storms make it impossible to drive.

Savannah isn't sure yet if she wants to live in the country or the city when she grows up. "I like being in nature, hearing the creek and the birds, and having a big yard. I also like being in the city, though, where I can go bowling or skating, or see my friends. It can get lonely in the country, although I do love being around our animals."