

**Valley
Rural Electric
Cooperative, Inc.**

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

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FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO

Help us weatherize rural America



by **Wayne Miller**
President & CEO

IN THESE TIMES, it seems like every family could use some extra money. Weatherization — making your home more energy efficient with upgrades like installing proper insulation or sealing air leaks — can save your energy budget an average of \$358 a year.

Now is the time to make your home as efficient as possible, because Uncle Sam

may be able to help out with the cost.

Valley Rural Electric is joining electric co-ops across the nation in finding ways to connect you, our members, with energy-efficiency help from the federal stimulus bill.

Weatherizing your home has never been more critical. Congress is considering climate change legislation that will undoubtedly raise electric bills. The effect this will have on your wallet depends in part on how much energy you use.

Increasing energy efficiency at home can help lower your energy use and, most importantly, your electric bills. There are three great ways you can get help through the stimulus bill.

First and foremost, low-income members can apply for help from the federal Weatherization Assistance Program. The stimulus bill allows an average of \$6,500 to be spent on each home for weatherization purposes. Households with annual incomes at or below 200 percent of the national poverty level are eligible. For a family of four, that's \$44,100.

The statewide weatherization program office can be reached by calling

717/346-7358. For a list of local contacts by county, email memberservices@valleyrec.com or call 800/432-0680 and request the member services department.

If you don't qualify for weatherization assistance, you can receive a tax credit for 30 percent of the cost (up to \$1,500) for qualified energy-efficiency projects; work must be done on existing homes in 2009 and/or 2010. From replacing windows and doors and adding insulation to installing an energy-efficient heating and cooling system, there are many ways you can use the tax credit to offset some of the costs for efficiency upgrades.

Finally, a renewable energy tax credit exists for members investing in geothermal heat pumps and other "green" technologies. The credit covers 30 percent of the cost for approved projects completed on any type of home between 2009 and 2016.

Energy Star's website, www.energystar.gov (keyword: "Tax credits"), provides a great overview of what qualifies for tax credits and includes guidance on how to apply for them.

As you know, one of the benefits of being part of a cooperative is our unique member-centered focus. We're driven not by profits but by our members' bottom line. We work to keep your electric bills as low as possible while providing the reliable, excellent service you've come to expect. The federal stimulus bill gives all of us a new set of tools to help fulfill this mission.


Take advantage of the savings the stimulus bill has to offer, and encourage our local officials to do the same. Together, we can keep electric bills affordable. 



PHOTO BY STEPHANIE OKUNIEWSKI

Youth Tour students gain knowledge, new friends during trip to Washington, D.C.

BY SUSAN R. PENNING
Director of Member Services

VALLEY RURAL ELECTRIC Cooperative sponsored eight high school students on the 2009 Rural Electric Youth Tour to the nation's capital. The teens, from six different schools in three counties, departed June 14 and returned June 19.

They joined nearly 1,500 other juniors and seniors from electric cooperatives all over the country — 82 from co-ops in Pennsylvania — who participated in the event.

The all-expenses-paid trip was packed with activities, including meetings with federal legislators and rural electric leaders, visits to historic monuments throughout Washington, and tours of the Smithsonian museums, Holocaust Museum, National Zoo and Arlington Cemetery. The agenda also included a cruise on the Potomac River, a parade at

the Iwo Jima Memorial and a theater production at the Kennedy Center.

In addition to sightseeing, Youth Tour participants learned about the cooperative way of doing business and the principles that govern rural electric co-ops. They returned from the trip with new friends, great memories and a better understanding of their communities and their nation.

"Youth Tour provided an excellent opportunity to meet kids from all over the country, learn more about my co-op and see the nation's capital like I had never seen it before. The best part, however, was building new friendships with other kids in Pennsylvania and New Jersey," says Andrea Brackbill of Juniata County.

"Youth Tour was a once-in-a-lifetime experience!" exclaims Lindsay Berkstresser of Fulton County. "The week-long tour of Washington, D.C., was

incredible and, from the trip, I made life-long friendships. I would like to thank Valley REC for its support in making Youth Tour 2009 one of the best weeks of my life!"

Recommended by guidance counselors at their respective schools, the students were selected for the trip on the basis of academic achievement, leadership in extracurricular activities and community service.

Two of the Valley REC-sponsored students are from Huntingdon Area High School. They are Jared Ardrey, son of Todd and Susan Ardrey of Hesston, in Huntingdon County, and Emily Shope, daughter of Steven and Traci Shope of Huntingdon.

Jared has been an active member of the Hesston Community Chapel Youth Group for seven years. In addition, he competed in the 2008 and 2009 Pennsylvania Computer Fairs. He was selected

LEFT: Valley's 2009 Rural Electric Youth Tour group pauses for a photo at the Kennedy Center. The students are (top row, from left) Mark Musser and Jared Ardrey; (middle row) John Hawn, Tyler Atherton and Jordan Baker; and (bottom row) Lindsay Berkstresser, Emily Shope and Andrea Brackbill.

for the fairs after he advanced through local and regional competitions, demonstrating advanced skill and knowledge in the field of computer technology.

Emily is the vice president of the local chapter of Health Occupations Students of America and has served as class vice president. She plays varsity field hockey, is a varsity cheerleader and volunteers at a local hospital. She has also participated in dance team and prom committee.

Two of the Youth Tour students are from Juniata Valley High School. They are John Hawn, son of John and Melanie Hawn of Petersburg, in Huntingdon County, and Mark Musser, son of Gene and Anissa Musser, also of Petersburg.

John serves as the president of the Huntingdon County Youth 4-H Club. He participates in marching band, chorus, select chorus and track and field. He is a pianist and member of the National Honor Society. In addition, he helps coordinate video and sound productions for local churches, civic organizations and sporting events.

Mark is very active in Future Farmers of America (FFA) and 4-H. When he's not helping out at his family's farm, he enjoys playing basketball, football and baseball, and competing in track and field events.

One Valley REC-sponsored student is from Mount Union Area High School. Tyler Atherton is the son of Adam and Bessie Atherton of Shirleysburg, in Huntingdon County.



RUBBING ELBOWS: Valley students pose with life-like wax figures of President Barack Obama and the first lady at Madame Tussauds Wax Museum.

PHOTO BY LUANNE ECKENRODE



A gifted and directed studies student, Tyler has participated in Key Club, International Club and Art Club. He is a member of the Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) and has served as a teacher's assistant for second-graders and life skills students. In addition to working at Subway in Orbisonia, he volunteers for many organizations, including the American Cancer Society and Salvation Army. Plus he helped to organize the high school's Adopt-a-Family Christmas program.

One Youth Tour student hails from Williamsburg High School. Jordan Baker is the son of Ron and Melissa Baker of Williamsburg, in Blair County.

A member of the National Honor Society, Jordan has played in marching and concert bands, and has participated in basketball, track and field, baseball and football. He is also active in FFA, 4-H and his church youth group. In addition, he serves on the yearbook staff.

Lindsay Berkstresser is the one student selected for Youth Tour from Forbes Road High School. Lindsay is the daughter of Dwayne and Betsy Northcraft of Three Springs.

An International and National Honor Society student, Lindsay has already completed more than 60 credit hours of coursework through Allegany College of Maryland's Early College Program. She is a member of FBLA, plays in concert and marching bands and participates in cheerleading, field hockey and tennis. Her literary work has been published in *Expressions* magazine. Plus she volunteers at local senior citizen centers and at the Brandenburg Center for disabled adults.


TAKING IN THE SIGHTS: Youth Tour participants enjoy many activities while on their trip. Some highlights include visits to historic monuments, museum tours and a boat cruise on the Potomac River.

One Valley-REC sponsored student is from Juniata High School. Andrea Brackbill is the daughter of Garth and Norma Brackbill of Port Royal.

Andrea serves as the National Honor Society vice president and is on yearbook staff and the play committee. She is also a member of Key Club and has received the Student of the Month Award. In addition, she volunteers for Big Brothers Big Sisters and was chosen to represent Valley Rural Electric Cooperative in Pennsylvania's Youth Leadership Council competition during Youth Tour.

Valley Rural Electric Cooperative is proud to sponsor these promising young people on a trip that has allowed them to see the world beyond their rural backyards.

"The Youth Tour was more than I ever expected it to be," says Tyler Atherton. "We met so many amazing people from all over our state, and all over the nation as well. Everyone told us that this was going to be a life-changing experience and now I know that it truly is."

To be eligible to participate in Youth Tour, students must be juniors or seniors in high school and must be sons or daughters of co-op members or employees. For more information about the Rural Electric Youth Tour, contact the member services department at Valley REC at 800/432-0680 or email memberservices@valleyrec.com. 

Installation begins on Advanced Metering Infrastructure

THIS MONTH, Valley Rural Electric Cooperative personnel, with the help of a local contracting firm, will begin installing new metering technology throughout the co-op's service territory. Work will begin in the Center Union substation area of Huntingdon County. The project is expected to take up to three years to complete.

Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) allows for two-way communication between the meter and the co-op office. The system will allow the meter to be read as often as necessary and will also provide information regarding the quality of service each account is receiving.

The new metering system will offer more consistent monthly billings since meters will be read at the same time each month. When fully implemented, members will no longer have to record their monthly readings and report them to the co-op by a fixed date. While many

long-term members have mentioned that they don't mind reading their meters, for others it is a significant inconvenience.

AMI will also help the co-op to more closely monitor the quality of service each account is receiving. Periodically, the meter will be asked to report on the number of blinks or voltage dips it has recorded so that co-op personnel can work on solving the problems causing these issues. This will allow line personnel to focus on those areas of the distribution system needing attention.

In addition, during large storms, co-op employees can virtually check each meter to see if it has power, allowing them to ensure that when a neighbor's power comes back on, other members in the area have also had power restored.

What AMI *won't* do is automatically report an outage. Members will still need to call and let co-op staff know

they are out of power. When asked, the equipment can indicate if power is available, but it cannot initiate an outage call on its own. Consumers should always call, day or night, to make sure the co-op is aware of service interruptions.

The system will require not only a new meter at each location, but also new equipment in each substation to communicate with the meters and back to the office.

Until members receive notification otherwise, it is important that they continue to read their meters. The co-op has a specific plan for when and where devices will be installed. Installing new meters is only one part of the process, and the system will not work until all communication paths are in place.

More details will be made available in the very near future regarding the progress of this endeavor. Members who are to be placed on the schedule to have equipment installed at their properties will be notified in advance and kept well informed of project specifics.

Consumers with questions or concerns regarding AMI should call the member services department at 800/432-0680. Updates will be printed in co-op publications and posted on Valley's public website at www.valleyrec.com. ☀

STAY SAFE during HEAT WAVES

Extreme heat and high humidity can be very harmful to your health. Older adults, children and those with chronic illnesses are more susceptible to heat-related injuries; however, summer's hot temperatures can affect anyone. Help reduce your chances of suffering from heat-related illnesses by following these tips:

- ▶ **Wear light-colored, loose-fitting clothes** that allow body heat to escape.
- ▶ **Never leave anyone**, including pets, in a closed, parked vehicle.
- ▶ **Drink plenty of water.**
- ▶ **Close blinds**, draperies and shades during the day to keep heat out and save in cooling costs.
- ▶ **Try to stay indoors** in an air-conditioned area.

