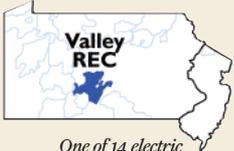


Valley Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

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FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO

Taking grassroots advocacy to the next level



by **Wayne Miller**
President & CEO

EACH MAY, I attend the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C. While there, I join colleagues and board members from electric co-ops throughout the country to help transform membership resolutions into action on Capitol Hill.

In other words, we visit with the members of Congress who represent our respective territories to discuss the issues affecting our co-op members.

As long as I've been involved with electric co-ops (and I hate to admit how long that is), we have consistently "moved the political needle" through these activities.

This year, I want to keep the conference's momentum rolling by getting you, the membership, more involved in the matters that will impact future energy policy and your electric service.

If you haven't already, I encourage you to take part in the Our Energy, Our Future® campaign. Visit www.ourenegy.coop and consider sending an email telling Congress to prevent the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency from using the Clean Air Act as a tool for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The Clean Air Act was never intended or designed to deal with climate change. It's the role of our U.S. senators and representatives to legislate greenhouse gas policy that is fair for all Americans and keeps electric bills affordable.

I would also encourage you to participate in Co-op Owners for Political Action, a group that allows you to take an active role in the Action Committee for Rural Electrification (ACRE) and to support the campaigns of congressional and state legislative candidates who are on board with electric co-op issues. Contact the co-op at 800/432-0680 for more information.

When President Franklin Roosevelt created the federal Rural Electrification Administration 75 years ago, he set into motion perhaps the greatest technological achievement of the 20th century – bringing safe, reliable and affordable electric service to all corners of the United States.

This year, let's honor that accomplishment by continuing what Roosevelt called "the brave march forward" and recharge our grassroots political advocacy efforts. After all, it's up to us to determine the kind of electric service our children and grandchildren will inherit. 



ABOVE: Jackie Allenbaugh, daughter of Valley members Bob and Marge Allenbaugh of Mount Union, dares to look down.

RIGHT: Two visitors from Washington, D.C., ride down the zip lines together, taking pictures along the way. This couple was in the Raystown area on business and pleasure, putting together a magazine piece on vacation destinations.

ELEVATED ADVENTURE

BY SUSAN R. PENNING
Director of Member Services

New lakeside attraction offers affordable family fun

WE FOLLOWED the bright orange signs up a winding stone drive to the top of a knoll overlooking portions of Little Valley and Trough Creek State Park. This pristine, densely wooded area of Huntingdon County offers panoramic views of the Alleghenies and Lake Raystown.

After we parked the truck, our group made its way to a white concession trailer to pick up tickets for Raystown's newest outdoor adventure attraction, Raystown Zip Lines.

At the ticket stand, I was greeted by Valley REC member Rusty Gates, the jovial, white-haired visionary responsible for turning Raystown Zip Lines into a reality. We exchanged introductions; then he smiled and handed us some forms to fill out.

"The zip lines are weight-sensitive, so please be as accurate as possible when you write down how much you weigh," he cautioned.

"Got it," I thought. "This is not one of those times when I can lie in that category."

We secured our 4-hour passes and made our way to the gear area. There, we were greeted by more friendly staff

who helped us suit up and explained all necessary safety precautions. We were reminded to double check all equipment and make sure everything was secured properly.

I listened closely. I enjoyed the gorgeous view, but I certainly didn't want this spot to be my final resting place.

"How do we get up there?" I asked Rusty, pointing to the zip lines I could see through the trees in the distance.

"Well, you can walk ... or you can ride up in one of our zip mobiles." He laughed as a dark Suburban pulled up with Raystown Zip Lines plastered on the side.

We piled in the zip mobile, joined by a couple who had traveled from the Washington, D.C., area to gather information for a magazine piece on vacation destinations for federal workers.

Dust boiled behind us as we headed up the steep, rocky path.

"Four-wheel drive must be a requirement here," I mumbled to myself.

We reached the take-off point and, one by one, we thrill seekers latched onto the zip line and prepared for a much quicker ride down the mountain than the one we took up.

"Make sure you get some pictures," I told my husband when my turn came up.



“Walk forward until you can no longer feel the ground beneath your feet,” the instructor explained.

I did as I was told and, soon, the line whisked me away.

Whirr. The equipment sang as I picked up speed, flying through the trees as the distance grew between me and the ground.

I let out a “Wahoo!” and threw my hands in the air. “This is so much cooler than a roller coaster ride,” I mused.

Then, in mere seconds, I was on the other side, greeted by another set of smiling young staff members.

“Did you enjoy the ride?” one of them asked.

“Definitely,” I answered as I made my way down the hill and prepared to catch the zip mobile for another trip.

Point of take off

Rusty, a practicing lawyer in Huntingdon County for more than 40 years, is no stranger to financial risk. He invested in 200 acres of land near the lake, much of which is tied up in residential development projects. The Spruce Creek native also owns a fishing business.

“As most folks are aware, the real estate market is pretty flat right now,” he sighs.

Rusty came up with the idea last summer to use some of his property as an amusement hot spot.

“I saw the concept of zip lines on the weather channel,” he recalls. “Lake Raystown is a wonderful place. But many of the activities, such as boating

GEARING UP: Raystown Zip Lines employee Heather Miller adjusts equipment for a rider.

and jet-skiing, are beyond the budget of the average family. I saw zip lines as a way to provide a unique, yet affordable recreational opportunity.

Rusty hired two consultants to see his project through to fruition. The first was Michael Reddish, a zip line builder from Arizona who authored a book on challenge course construction. Michael worked on the design for Raystown Zip Lines and researched the equipment necessary to build it. The other consultant, zip line expert Tony Draus of Bloomsburg, Pa., completed the construction and provided appropriate training for the staff (which he continues to do).

“The location for the lines was decided in January,” says Jeff Metzler, Raystown Zip Lines marketing director. “The project started moving forward in February. We broke ground in April and the zip lines were open for business in May.”

The zip lines are now in operation seven days a week through the summer. And they are handicapped accessible.

Additional attractions include giant swings and scenic adventure rides to look-out spots with designated picnic areas. Hay rides and treasure hunts for kids have been added to the list of activities as well.

Rusty says future expansion will include a climbing wall, obstacle course,

bouncing castle and, possibly, a paintball range.

“My goal is to make this a family adventure — a place where any age can find something to do,” he stresses.

When it opened, Raystown Zip Lines employed about 15 people. Now that number has grown to around 40 for the summer season.

“It is so gratifying at age 66 to make this life-changing step and to have it work out so well,” Rusty says. “The best part is the staff. They go through 40 hours of rigorous training to become certified, including learning rescue techniques. They have been so enthusiastic. My wife, Peggy, has also been a huge support in this and an inspiration to me.”

The zip lines are open every day from noon to midnight. Passes range in price from about \$5-25. For more information, visit raystownziplines.com. 🌞



Q & A

Ask the energy expert

What is the most important thing I can do to improve the energy efficiency of my older home?

Sealing and insulating the “envelope” or “shell” of your home — its outer walls, ceiling, windows, doors and floors — is often the most cost-effective way to improve energy efficiency and comfort.

Did you know that you can save up to 20 percent on heating and cooling costs by sealing and insulating? The best way to accomplish this is by taking the following measures:

Choose Energy Star-qualified replacement windows and efficient, thermal doors.

Seal air leaks throughout the home to stop drafts. Many air leaks and drafts are easy to find because they are easy to feel — like those around windows and doors. But holes hidden in attics, basements and crawl spaces are usually bigger problems. Sealing these leaks with caulk, spray foam or weather stripping will have a great impact on reducing utility bills.

Add proper insulation. Insulation performance is measured by R-value — its ability to resist air flow. Higher R-values mean more insulating power. Insulation works best when air is not moving through or around it. So it is very important to seal air leaks before installing insulation. To get the biggest savings, the easiest place to add insulation is usually in the attic. Look across your uncovered attic floor. If your insulation is level with or below the attic floor joists, you probably need to add more. The recommended level for most attics is R-38 (or about 12–15 inches).

If you lack the funds to make improvements to your home, Valley offers low-interest loans for qualified projects. If you meet certain income guidelines, you may find assistance through your county’s weatherization agency. Also remember that the federal government is offering a tax credit of 30 percent or up to \$1,500 for energy-efficient home upgrades. For details, visit www.energystar.gov.



Travis Kuhstos, Valley Rural Electric Co-op’s energy specialist, answers consumers’ questions about their energy use and offers advice on how to save. If you would like to submit a question to the energy specialist, email memberservices@valleyrec.com or call 800/432-0680. Answers may be published in an upcoming edition of *Penn Lines*.

Co-op operations manager retires after 42 years of service

BY SUSAN R. PENNING

Director of Member Services

“WELL ... I’ve shoveled a lot of snow.” That’s how Jeff Garner describes most of the time he’s spent as a newly retired Valley employee.

Jeff bid farewell late last fall after a 42-year career at the co-op. Now that winter is over, he says he’s able to fully enjoy his new-found free time.

“I’ve been walking each morning at 6:30 a.m. — about 3.7 miles.” His path takes him around Martinsburg, Blair County, the town where he was born and now lives with his wife, Beth.

With his new, flexible schedule, Jeff is able to visit his parents, Don and Helen Garner, four times a week at Homewood Retirement Village.

He also serves on the Martinsburg Sewer & Water Authority and on the property committee at his church. And he heads up the local VFW committee that distributes graveside flags each Memorial Day.

As far as hobbies, Jeff’s been organizing some valuable coins that his father saved. He’s also been honing his photography skills.

“I like to take pictures of people and nature,” he notes.

Jeff often takes his camera on rails-to-trails bicycle rides.

The avid outdoorsman has some bigger ideas for his future, too.

“I’d like to visit the west coast and Rocky Mountains,” he says. “There’s a lot of the United States I want to explore.”

Not unlike the roads he plans to travel, Jeff’s life has taken some interesting turns along the way.

A 1965 Tussey Mountain High School graduate, Jeff attended Hagerstown Junior College in pursuit of a physical education degree. He worked at a paper mill to pay the bills. In 1967, he switched gears and joined the Army Reserve, serving for six years in a Huntingdon



“ME” TIME: Recent Valley retiree Jeff Garner, an avid outdoorsman, readies his rifle for hunting season.

County-based engineering company. During that time, he also married his high school sweetheart, Beth. The couple was later blessed with two daughters and three grandchildren.

Jeff began his co-op career in August 1967 as a laborer in the Huntingdon district. He trimmed rights-of-way, assisted line crews and started learning the lineman’s ropes.

In 1970, the Martinsburg district expanded and Jeff filled a position there. For the next 38 years, he worked through the ranks of apprentice and journeyman lineman, crew chief, district supervisor and district manager.

In February 2008, he accepted the position of operations manager at the co-op’s corporate office in Huntingdon. There, he finished a long, successful career.

Jeff enjoys this new chapter in his life, but he says he misses the co-op connections.

“I loved the people — members and employees. It was such a fantastic experience,” he says with a smile.

Jeff’s thoughtfulness and optimism will be missed throughout the co-op. For his decades of dedicated service, the staff and board wish him good health and happiness in retirement. 🌿