


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

A new year for resolutions



by Rich Bauer
President & CEO

WITH THE START of 2015, the tradition will continue that we, as individuals, make resolutions for the new year. People across the country vow to lose weight, stop a bad habit and even rekindle broken relationships. Statistics show that only about 15 percent of those who make resolutions actually keep them. But I believe this is the perfect

year for not only individuals, but this great country, to begin making and keeping resolutions.

2014 was a very rough year for our country in the utility industry. With the infamous “polar vortex” bearing down on our area last winter, people faced extremely high heating costs during those months, only to see a cooler-than-normal summer. On top of that, the government is pushing to close down coal and nuclear power plants, which are this area’s main stable, affordable source of power. Because Pennsylvania is a coal-dependent state, many jobs in our area will also feel the effect of these shutdowns. The government is saying that gas is our future for energy, but until there are adequate pipelines to transport this fuel to where it is needed, much of Pennsylvania will still be left in the dark.

I have a few resolutions I would like to see this country not only make, but keep. My first resolution for this country is to work together and truly understand the issues before making changes. Far too often, it is the squeaky wheel (or the lobbyist with the most money) who gets laws passed. I would hope our elected officials take the time to truly understand the issues and to make informed, logical decisions based on facts, not on money.


This one may be too much to ask.

The second resolution that I would request is to let America do what it does best — be innovative and creative. This nation was formed by entrepreneurs from many different races, religions and ethnic backgrounds, who had an idea and pressed it forward toward reality in this country of opportunity. It seems that our government is stepping in and putting rules and regulations on everything that is done. It would be my hope that we look back at our history and learn from it.

The last resolution I am hoping for is that we remember where we came from and don’t compromise the values and traditions taught to us by our parents and grandparents. This resolution fits both the individuals as well as the country. It seems that every time you turn on the TV or pick up the newspaper, you see the corruption of someone or something. It would be nice to see our news stations report more on the good things in our area and quit focusing on the bad. We need to get back to our core, basic values.

A new year brings the ability to start a new path. Whether you are a Republican or Democrat, the one thing that ties us all together is that we are all Pennsylvanians and Americans. Starting the country in the right direction begins with individuals moving in that direction. Have faith in your beliefs and ideals and know there will be ups and downs.

Resolutions come and go, but I believe this year may be the most important year ever to make and keep your resolutions.

As always, please feel free to call, write or stop in anytime. During this holiday season, please remember to cherish your family and friends. Thank you and God Bless. 

Steeled for the future



AT LEFT: Tuscarora Rigging's crew can handle heavy construction work or make a variety of metal products. Owner Barry Slusser, center, shows off a bannister made by Butch Lemin, left, and son, Cody Slusser. Butch is a co-op member from Cass Township, Huntingdon County. Below: The lower level of Valley REC's former warehouse building has been renovated to create a storage area and workspace. Bottom of next page: Valley's former headquarters along Route 26, north of Huntingdon, was made up of the main office building, a ranch house, the white warehouse building and a garage (not shown). Photos by Doug Roles

BY DOUG ROLES
Director of Member Services

MOTORISTS driving by Valley REC's former headquarters property, along Route 26 north of Huntingdon, will notice new signs of life in the buildings vacated by the co-op. A steel erection and fabrication business now makes its home in the facility that used to house bucket trucks, electrical supplies and cooperative employees.

Tuscarora Rigging Inc. bought the property in March 2013 and moved in January 2014. Road frontage and a mix of warehouse, garage and office space make a good home for the company, which also does quarry and industrial maintenance work.

"This is nearly perfect for us," says Barry Slusser, Tuscarora's president and director of operations. "I like the layout and the amount of space. Everything's fenced in. I've gotten pretty cozy here."

The company had been headquartered in Mechanicsburg. That changed because Barry, a resident of Tell Township, Huntingdon County, wanted an office and headquarters closer to home.

Barry has already made several

improvements to the property, including installing new roofing. A lean-to roof at the rear of the former warehouse building was removed and will be replaced. The front of the warehouse building has been converted into the company's main office. Remodeling there included building a conference room and office spaces.

Additional cosmetic work included removing 1970s-era paneling and doing drywall and painting work. Barry and his crew installed a radiant propane heat system in the basement of the warehouse building and made other improvements there to turn the space into a garage and storage area.

"Everyone from Valley who has come here says, 'I can't believe this is the same place,'" Barry says.

He credits Todd Ross, Valley REC's operations manager, in particular for taking time to help him get to know the quirks of his new digs.

"He was out here a whole day,"

Barry says. "He was very helpful. Todd was really tickled that we're fixing up the place."

Valley REC had operated at the Route 26 location since the 1940s. The co-op left the property in 2007, after expanding into two properties along Fairgrounds Road, just south of Huntingdon.

Barry, who grew up in Blairs Mills, started his company in 2005 and saw Tuscarora Rigging get progressively busier over the next several years.

He has been an ironworker since 1988, following his graduation from Juniata High School, Juniata County.

"My uncle had a rebar shop," Barry recalls. "I started working for him right out of high school."



Tuscarora Rigging's crew makes new home at former Valley REC headquarters property



Barry says he “was ready for the next step” when he started Tuscarora Rigging. The company’s roster has 20 to 30 employees at any one time, and crews have completed projects across Pennsylvania and in Maryland, West Virginia, and Virginia. Tuscarora recently opened a shop in Baltimore, too.

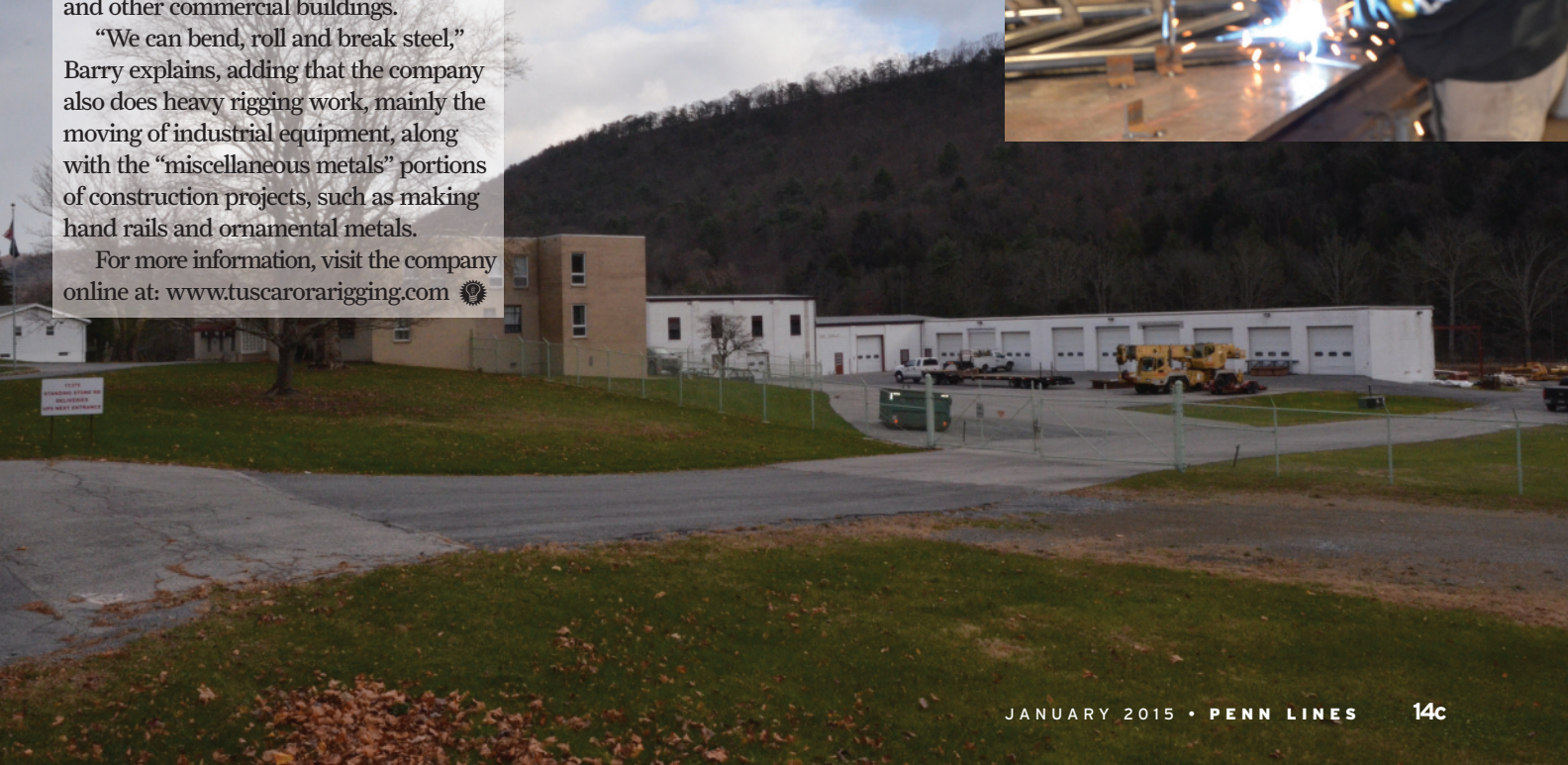
“We’ve been doing a lot of work down there,” says Barry, who takes a can-do approach to his business and looks for opportunities to put his equipment and crews to work.

The bulk of Tuscarora’s business is construction and steel erection for other companies that build schools, hospitals and other commercial buildings.

“We can bend, roll and break steel,” Barry explains, adding that the company also does heavy rigging work, mainly the moving of industrial equipment, along with the “miscellaneous metals” portions of construction projects, such as making hand rails and ornamental metals.

For more information, visit the company online at: www.tuscarorarigging.com

NEW HOME: Tuscarora Rigging is using Valley’s former warehouse building as its office. The former meter room (above, left) is now a kitchen while the loading dock (above, center) will serve as the main entrance. The wire meter, next to the chair, pays homage to the building’s previous life. The building also features a conference room (above, right). Below, center: Barry Slusser and office manager Susan Hockenberry start the morning with a laugh. Below right: Cody Slusser welds a handrail together. Photos by Doug Roles



Meet your employees

BY DOUG ROLES
Director of Member Services

HIGHLIGHTED in this column is a recent addition to the Valley REC team, Lisa Carper. Lisa joined the cooperative workforce in March. She is employed as an operations assistant at the corporate office on Fairgrounds Road, near Huntingdon.

A native of Alexandria, Huntingdon County, Lisa is a 1982 graduate of Juniata Valley High School. She earned an associate degree in computer science from Penn State Altoona and has worked in a variety of settings.

Following her schooling, she was employed by North American Communications, a direct mail company in Duncansville, Blair County, where she worked in computer programming, and in supervision and customer service. After working there for 20 years, she took a job in graphic design with a water bottling company, Mineral Springs, in Petersburg, Huntingdon County. She also worked in New York state for four years, for a company that fixed basement moisture issues, as well as in-patient registration for a hospital. She then returned to Pennsylvania to be closer to family.

As she got reacquainted with friends, she also rejoined the workforce here.



NEW EMPLOYEE: Lisa Carper works as an operations assistant.

Her new responsibilities include handling paperwork related to the interconnection of alternative energy generation systems, such as solar panels. She also works with the co-op's operations manager on safety issues, and schedules first aid and other safety trainings.

"I'm involved in various safety-related tasks and I file rights-of-way paperwork with county courthouses," Lisa explains.

Lisa says she finds her work in the cooperative world very interesting. Two aspects of Valley's business, being an electric utility and a cooperative, were new to her.

"I love my job here," Lisa says. "There isn't anything I don't like about it. I still feel like I just started and have so much to learn."

Lisa enjoys hunting and spending time outdoors. She especially likes to be with two young family members.

"I play with my two grandbabies, Reese and Luke," she says. "And there's another one on the way in June."

Lisa has two grown children, Ashley, of Petersburg, and Sean, who lives in Alexandria.

Lisa's co-workers are happy to welcome her to the Valley REC team. She's one of the people you can count on. ☀

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