

Valley Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

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One of 14 electric cooperatives
serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

Valley Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

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From the President & CEO



The 'Most Wonderful Time of the Year' for Youth Tour

By Rich Bauer

WHILE most of us are planning for the holidays and scheduling family visits and meals, your cooperative is already planning for Youth Tour 2018. The Youth Tour is an exciting, action-packed trip for current high school juniors going into their senior year to attend an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, D.C., to tour the city, as well as meet and discuss topics with our U.S. representatives and senators.

This trip is very educational as students have access to many landmarks and historical sites throughout the district. This weeklong adventure isn't just for students in Valley REC's area; it is nationwide. Last year, Pennsylvania and New Jersey cooperatives sent over 100 students who met up with 1,800 other upcoming seniors from rural areas across this great nation in our capital.

Next year's Youth Tour is scheduled for June 11-15 and, hopefully, you have a child or grandchild who may be interested in attending. All public schools who serve families in our service territory have received Youth Tour applications, which are available from the guidance counselor or high school office. You may also download an application from our website at: www.valleyrec.com/content/youth-tour. All applications are due back to the cooperative by Jan. 4, 2018. The selection committee will review the applications and conduct interviews. Applicants will be notified by mid- to late-Febru-

ary of the selections.

If you would like to learn more about the Youth Tour and get some firsthand experience of what occurs on the trip, you can watch last year's video at: <http://valleyrec.com/content/youth-tour>.

We are excited about changes we have made for Youth Tour and hope that our youth will take the time to learn about this trip. The only qualifications are that you must be heading into your senior year of high school and be willing to fill out an application. That's it! These young adults are the future leaders of tomorrow and Valley REC would like to give them the opportunity to see how the government works while also having a good time in our nation's capital.

This chance of a lifetime is entirely paid for by the escheats program at the cooperative. This is money that is returned to the cooperative as the result of unclaimed capital credits. Over a decade ago, Valley REC had to return this money to the state for its use, but thanks to state legislation, we are able to keep it as long as we use it for programs like this. Helping the community and our youth is and always will be a key goal for the cooperative.

I hope you all have a wonderful Christmas and enjoy the time you get to spend with family and friends. As always, if you have any questions, comments or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact me. Take care, Merry Christmas and God Bless. 

A decade in the making

Dream home a reality for couple after years of planning and effort

By Doug Roles

Vice President, Member Services

AS WINTER settles into Valley REC territory, one local couple is staying cozy in the dream home they spent a decade planning and building near Raystown Lake. Tom and Debra Parks of James Creek are whiling away the colder months by taking in the beauty of the scenery from a now-completed three-bedroom, 3,200-square-foot log home they look forward to sharing with friends and family.

There are a lot of interesting properties on Valley REC lines, and just as many stories to go with them. The Parks' story begins in 1990 when the New Jersey natives bought a boat.

Deb worked as a typesetter for a company that prints college textbooks. Tom was working as a firefighter for Cherry Hill Fire Department. Despite their metropolitan setting, the Parks always considered themselves "outdoor people," even keeping horses on their 1-acre property in Jersey.

He liked boats. She liked the beach. They thought having a boat would get them to the shore more often. So, they bought a 27-foot Baja speedboat and began frequenting the Jersey Shore and Chesapeake Bay. But they soon wanted to find a more remote waterway.

"Jersey Shore boating is like driving



DREAMS TO REALITY: A vision for what they want in their dream retirement home carried Tom and Debra Parks through seven years of work on their log house overlooking Raystown Lake. The Parks have some minor exterior work to complete, when the weather permits, but are looking forward to sharing their home with family and friends in the years ahead.

a boat on the turnpike," Tom says. "We got a map and saw this body of water in central Pennsylvania."

Boat in tow, they hit the road to Huntingdon County. They explored the area and stayed at Lake Raystown Resort and Lodge.

"We fell in love with the place," Debra says. "We were coming up here every summer. The lake was the magnet for us."

About this time, the couple was starting to ask themselves what they were going to do in retirement. They

were tired of gridlock. They didn't want to move south to the 100-degree heat of Florida. And they didn't want to miss out on the change of seasons. Then they found a 10-acre property off of Upper Ridge Road that offered a bird's-eye view of Raystown Lake.

They first looked at the parcel in the summer of 2007, but couldn't see the lake because of foliage. So, they came back in December with a stepladder to find out what kind of view a first-floor window would offer.

"I'm picturing looking at the lake from my bedroom window; that's when we decided to buy the property," Tom recalls.

They purchased the wooded property in 2008 and spent the next two years clearing ground, by hand at first until Tom bought a backhoe.

After the couple purchased the land, they purchased an old camper. For seven years, they lived in a James Creek campground while in Huntingdon County, working on their dream house.

"That was our base," Tom says. "We



didn't miss too many weekends, even in the winter."

The Parks moved into their home in August 2016, the year Tom retired, and continued to work on exterior and interior projects. Tom, a mechanic by trade, is the type of guy that neighbors bring their cars to for repairs. He's a tinkerer. In his 35 years with the fire department, he worked on fire apparatus and became Cherry Hill's first full-time fleet officer in 1995. In that capacity, he designed a 5,000-square-foot building for fire equipment maintenance.

"I don't think there's anything he can't fix," Debra says.

"The only difference between this house project and fire trucks is that the house doesn't have wheels," Tom quips.

The Parks put a lot of thought into what they wanted in a home. They wanted an open floor plan that wasn't a monster to heat. And they wanted great views in a home that would be practical for the years ahead.

"We tried to think of what would chase us away from our house," Tom says. "We asked and answered those questions. We can live on the first floor."

The Parks put the master bedroom on the first floor along with a laundry room. They included 36-inch doorways, just in case something happens to make wider entrances a necessity.

"We designed it ourselves, completely, on graph paper," Tom says. "Then an architect friend transferred the drawing into a computer-aided drafting (CAD) drawing. There isn't much in here we didn't do."

Highlands Log Structures, of Abing-

don, Va., built the frame using eastern white pine logs. In this custom log home building, the logs, which are numbered, are installed green. Each log is different in size and has its own character.

"Of course, they're very heavy. They exceed the side wall building code required in central PA," Tom says. "It's amazing how they radiate heat once they're warm."

Love Excavating of Robertsdale used a bulldozer to push the log trucks up the grade to the site. The task took a few days because of the home's remote location and winding, steep driveway.

Tom planned the placement of wiring and ductwork through door jambs, vertical chases and the back of closets. He installed the windows after the log construction crew did the rough openings.

For a home with towering open space, the couple needed a reliable and efficient heat source. Tom picked a 189,000-BTU, whole-house Yukon Eagle oil/wood/coal burner. Just in case of an electric service disruption, he also installed a 20-kilowatt, diesel-powered Dynagen whole-house generator. A GeoSpring hybrid air-source heat pump water heater not only heats water but helps dehumidify the utility room and basement. High-efficiency light-emitting diode (LED) fixtures were used for interior and exterior lighting, and energy-efficient windows and doors were installed to reduce heating and cooling costs. The large Anderson SmartSun™ windows filter sunlight and won't cause furniture to fade.

There is more than 4,000 feet of 12-2 wire in the house. Tom dug the trench and ran conduit for 150 feet of

SIDE PROJECT: While still living in New Jersey, Tom spent several months building a bed for the master bedroom. He used wood from a pine tree he and Debra cut from their Huntingdon County property.



WAKEUP CALL: Large windows at the rear of the home offer quite a view of Raystown Lake and Terrace Mountain.

underground service wire, working with Valley REC's crews to get the new service installed. The Parks say they're very satisfied Valley members.

"Our electricity here is less than half of what we were paying," Tom says. "Dealing with the co-op is a breath of fresh air to say the least. It's the greatest thing going."

Other work included sandblasting and staining logs, installing drywall and tile flooring. A skeptic at first, Tom says he learned how to use a divining rod during the well-drilling process. He used a brass welding rod and found water in the same spot that would be selected by Valley member D.R. Eriksen Well Drilling and Pump Service.

"I kept keying on one area 40 feet from the house," Tom says.

Though the house is situated 750 feet above the lake, Eriksen hit water at the 100-foot mark, then went to 250 feet to have a reserve.

"The water quality is excellent," Tom says.

Tom did all the interior plumbing work. A bathroom on the second floor features a glass-walled shower unit inspired by a magazine. The first-floor powder room features a stone sink with the countertop mounted on a three-pronged tree trunk cut from the property.

For the hardwood flooring on the first floor, Tom selected hickory because of its durability.

"It's extremely hard and doesn't install as easily as other woods," Tom says. "You have to work with it. We did the second floor in ash. We hauled a lot of flooring into this house. All the wood is from Pennsylvania forests,

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Meet your employees ...

FEATURED in this column is a recent addition to the Valley REC team, Tyi McCartney. Tyi, a resident of Rockhill, Huntingdon County, was hired in April as an electrician for Valley's new service arm, Valley Rural Energy Services (VRES). He works primarily from the co-op's Shade Gap District office.

Tyi is a 2009 graduate of Southern Huntingdon County High School. After graduation, he completed the electrical technician program at York Technical Institute (YTI) in York.

Tyi has always worked in his father, Todd's, business, McCartney's Contracting. The Orbisonia-based company does residential and commercial work. Following his training at YTI, Tyi held several electrician positions, including one in the maintenance department of JLG, a lift manufacturer in Fulton County.

With VRES, Tyi's responsibilities include a variety of electrical work, such as replacement of outdated residential services.

"As long as your electricity is working, you don't think about it, until it causes a problem," Tyi says. "Not many people get inside their panel boxes to see if they're up to code."

"And then, of course, we're putting in generators, water heaters and heat pumps, too," Tyi adds.

Bosch heat pumps, Marathon water heaters and Generac whole-house generators are offered through VRES.

One of the things Tyi enjoys most about his work is that he meets many interesting people and sees a lot of Valley's territory.



RECENT EMPLOYEE: Tyi McCartney works from the Shade Gap District office as an electrician for the co-op's service arm, Valley Rural Energy Services. He joined the Valley Rural Electric team in April.

"It's never the same thing. It's always different," he says. "You never know what you're going to run into next."

In his free time, Tyi enjoys hunting and fishing. He can also be seen riding the back roads of southern Huntingdon County on his Harley Street Bob motorcycle.

Tyi says his co-workers are "some of the best I've ever worked with." And the Valley team is glad to have him on board. He's one of the people you can count on. 🌟

Log home

(continued from page 12c)
from Peachey's Flooring in Reedsville (Mifflin County)."

Deb decorated the home, filling it with items from their childhoods and their life together. A second-floor bedroom has a bird-themed décor with collectible bird figurines and artwork throughout the space. The other second-floor bedroom she outfitted with dressers she used as a child, along with her model horses and a western horse motif. Many of the objects, including Tom's saddle from a pony he had when he was 8 years old, reflect a love of horses, which is how Tom and Deb met. Their parents knew each other through Lions Club. When Deb wanted someone to go riding with one winter, her parents suggested Tom. She called him on New Year's Day 1980.

The Parks can ring in this New Year from one of two balconies off each second-floor bedroom or a spacious rear deck. Tom and Debra preserved the

open outdoors feeling by using cable as safety railings on the second-floor loft, the deck and the balconies. Each 1/8-inch cable can hold up to 400 pounds.

"When you're seated, you're not losing the view," Tom says.

The second floor also includes a "man cave" space for Tom with all his fireman memorabilia, while his other "keepsakes" in the basement include a 1971 Buick Riviera, his high school car, and a 1971 Honda 70 motorcycle he's had since seventh grade.

"I kept it, and after all these years it's perfect for getting the mail," Tom says.

Ever the firefighter, Tom keeps a 60-gallon-per-minute pump mounted on a 275-gallon water tank behind the house. The apparatus serves as the Parks' fire suppression system until the Marklesburg Fire Co. would arrive in the event of an emergency.

"We drill with it," Tom says. "That was always my job in the fire department — to be prepared."

BE PREPARED: Tom Parks inspects fire suppression equipment he keeps ready at the rear of his home.



Tom now volunteers with the fire company and serves as chief engineer. Coincidentally, Marklesburg had purchased one of Cherry Hill's older fire trucks a few years ago.

After a full year in the house and the completion of the finishing touches, Tom and Debra say they feel at home up on the ridge in James Creek.

Asked how the pace of rural Huntingdon County compares to their former life, Tom says, "It's a lot slower but it's a kind of slow you can appreciate." 🌟