

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

Clean coal technology

Investments needed now to meet climate change goals



by Wayne Miller
President & CEO

AMERICA HAS more coal than any other nation, with reserves projected to last more than 200 years. Primarily responsible for the low cost and solid reliability of our electric supply, coal remains the largest source of fuel for the generation of electricity worldwide. Unfortunately, it is also the largest source of carbon dioxide, which is

believed to be contributing to a global warming crisis. Therefore, construction of coal-fired power plants — even the most commercially advanced ones — is currently being blocked. As of March 2008, the Sierra Club (a grassroots environmental organization founded in San Francisco) claims to have stopped the development of 63 coal power plants, with 15 more on the hit list.

This is a troubling statistic, considering that our nation's electricity needs are growing. Electric cooperatives alone need to add more than 22,000 megawatts of generation in the next decade to keep up with rising demand. Nuclear plants are pricey and require at least 10 years to build, and that's not counting the "red tape" involved with getting approval for a project. Wind and solar simply cannot provide enough dependable baseload power. Hydroelectric plants are a great carbon dioxide-free choice, but locations and feasibility are limited.


We must tap America's ingenuity to keep coal useful for meeting demand for electricity while still respecting carbon mitigation goals. Simply put, new clean coal technology has to be developed, and we don't have a minute to spare.

According to current economic assessments by the Electric Power Research Institute, if the United States relies solely on natural gas, renewables and energy efficiency to meet future capacity needs, electric rates will nearly triple by 2050. However, if advanced clean coal and new nuclear plants are part of the mix, utility rate increases attributable to a climate change strategy will average only about 10 percent (adjusted for inflation).

We need a significant technology "push" to make advanced clean coal a reality. Scientific experts agree that carbon capture and storage will not be available until 2020 at the earliest, even with significant investments in research and development.

Legislation is needed today to allow not-for-profit electric cooperatives to participate in major technological and environmental advances through the use of investment tax credits and clean coal technology bonds. Through our affiliation with the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, we are already urging members of Congress to:

- ▶ Create a substantial partnership between government and industry focused on clean coal technologies;
- ▶ Support legislation (soon to be introduced) that provides tax incentives for technologies including carbon capture and storage;
- ▶ Ensure co-ops can access those incentives by including bonds that provide low-cost financing to not-for-profit utilities.

Pennsylvania's rural electric cooperatives understand the importance of diversifying our energy portfolio. We want coal to remain a choice in our generation mix. We believe that if we can use technology to keep America's most abundant resource viable, we will all reap the benefits. 

WINE CONNOISSEUR: Todd Ross, right, has been employed at Valley Rural Electric Cooperative for nearly 20 years. After hours, he enjoys making his own varieties of wine. His family has a history of growing grapes and making wine.

When not at work, these Valley Rural Electric employees apply their talents and interests in some intriguing ways ...



OFF THE CLOCK

BY SUSAN R. PENNING
Director of Member Services

The fruit of his labor

Huntingdon District Manager Todd Ross fondly remembers his family's winemaking history.

"My great Aunt Ruth had a large grape vineyard in Fredonia, N.Y.," he explains. "She and her husband sold their grapes to Welch's for juice. She knew how to properly prune vines and showed my father how to trim the ones we had here at home. We didn't have a large vineyard, so Dad and our neighbor, Rich Tate, would look for grapes that people owned but didn't want to bother with. It takes close to 20 pounds of grapes to make a five-gallon batch of wine, so it's no easy task."

Todd began dabbling with winemaking himself about four years ago. His wife, Beverly, bought him a kit for Christmas. He used that, along with information he found on the internet, to get started.

"It is exciting, because you put a lot of time into preparing a batch of wine, then you have to wait for months, even a year at times, to see if it was a success or failure," he says.

Today, Todd's family and friends consider him a bit of a connoisseur. They enjoy visiting and tasting his homemade varieties.

Like his father, Todd gets together with his good friend and neighbor, Gary Swanger, to make an occasional batch.

"We both greatly enjoy when it is time to start the bottling process. This is

the moment when the taste-testing process is most important," he stresses.

Recently, Todd mentioned his winemaking to his childhood neighbor, Rich.

"I had made a batch and wanted to drop a bottle off for (Rich) to try," he says.

"When I stopped by, he opened up a bottle of wine that he and my father had bottled back in 1978. It was the last one he had, and he told me he was saving it for a special occasion. The two of us sat back and reminisced about the past. Dad's been gone for 11 years now, so that moment was special."

Todd says he recently heard that the Huntingdon County Fair holds a homemade wine-tasting contest. If it continues, he wants to enter a batch this year.

Sweeping her off her feet

Vice President of Finance and Administration Bob Wareham and his

wife, Cindy, have been dancing the night away since they attended college at Slippery Rock University in the 1970s. They were both physical education majors.

"Some of the dance classes were required as part of our academic program, but others we took just for the sheer enjoyment," Bob says.

Over the years, Bob and Cindy have taken lessons in the jitterbug, salsa, cha-cha and foxtrot, among others.

"It's fun," Bob says with a smile. "Plus it's a great way to get exercise and spend some quality time with your spouse."

The couple's latest footloose adventure involved taking lessons in waltz and swing dancing from an Altoona couple.

"It's tough to make the time for it, with work and family obligations," Bob points out. "But it's always a good time when you get out there."

Bob says he's seen a recent resurgence of folks interested in formal dancing. He attributes the renewed popularity to TV shows like "Dancing with the Stars," "So You Think You Can Dance" and "Step It Up and Dance."

Bob says his favorite dance is the jitterbug, because it offers "a lot of challenging movements and different turns. You can do so much with it."

"What's so cool about knowing some



DANCING THE NIGHT AWAY: Bob Wareham will celebrate 20 years with Valley REC this September. When he's not crunching numbers at the co-op, he enjoys ballroom dancing with his wife, Cindy. The couple has been "cutting a rug" since the 1970s.



MECHANICAL MIND: Barry Kline inspects the control board for a Torpedo Alley pinball machine he's currently restoring. The 26-year co-op veteran enjoys collecting, troubleshooting and fixing both vintage and newer models.

totally trashed — moldy, mildewed, badly damaged and completely dead. He has also fixed models with only one or two minor malfunctions.

“Not too many people want to fool with pinball machines because they have a lot of components and require quite a bit of maintenance and repair,” he points out.

Video games don't need nearly as much upkeep, so arcades and vendors have moved away from the pinball varieties.

Barry has sold a couple of

the machines he's restored, but he usually grows too attached to let them go.

The game guru says that when he retires he would love to buy a local storefront where he can set up pinball machines and other video games.

“I'm not interested in making money,” he emphasizes. “I just want to see people playing them again.”

He recently put two of his restored models in his brother's basement so that his niece and nephew can use them.

Someday, Barry says, he would love to visit the Pinball Hall of Fame in Las Vegas, where more than 300 machines are set up. His all-time favorite game is “Attack From Mars.”

Talking with her hands

Nancy Bucher, co-op cashier and office services clerk, has been using a second language for more than a decade. After becoming practically fluent in American Sign Language, signed English and Pidgin Sign, the Mount Union native now exercises her acquired skills when communicating with and interpreting for the deaf.

Nancy began her sign language training through Mount Aloysius College in 1995.

“I finished in March 1996,” she recalls. “I had just given birth to my daughter two weeks before the final class. They let me bring her with me, so that I could finish. I passed with a 4.0 grade point average.”

Nancy's love for signing is shared by her family. Her mother, Dolores Flasher, and sister, Suzanne Long, also sign. In fact, Nancy and Delores both worked as interpreters for the Mount Union School District. Nancy says her family uses the language a lot, noting, “It's great when you need to talk to someone across the room!”

Nancy says signing has become almost second nature to her.

“A few years ago I had surgery. I remember waking up and not being able to speak. I must have started to sign to the nurses, because I remember one saying to me, ‘Oh sweetie, I don't know sign language.’ They couldn't stop talking about it.”

Nancy is currently helping the teens at her church learn to sign a song, which they plan to perform for the congregation. 🌟

of these different dances is you fit in with any crowd,” he jokes. “When you're at a wedding or on a cruise, it doesn't matter what music they play, you're ready. It can be quite a head-turning experience.”

Enjoying the kid at heart

Barry Kline, the co-op's director of information technology, is a self-proclaimed “geek.” His idea of fun on a Friday night isn't necessarily hitting the movie theater or bowling alley, but rather troubleshooting one of his prized pinball machines.

Barry has been collecting and restoring various pinball machine models, some vintage, some newer, for the past three years.

“I loved playing pinball as a child,” he explains. “As opposed to video games, the steel balls in pinball machines must follow the laws of physics.”

If it has anything to do with computers or mechanics, Barry enjoys working with it. He attributes his inclination for intricacies to his father, a service technician at his own television and appliance repair shop.

Barry has restored to pristine working condition pinball machines that were



SHOW ME A SIGN: Nancy Bucher has been exercising her skills in American Sign Language, signed English and Pidgin Sign for more than a decade. She says the language has almost become second nature to her. She's been at Valley for nearly seven years.

Submit your meter readings online



Rather than sending meter readings via mail, members can now report them electronically on the co-op's updated website. Simply follow the instructions below.

- ▶ Visit www.valleyrec.com.
- ▶ Click the [Submit Meter Reading](#) link on the home page.
- ▶ [Input your account and member numbers](#) in the spaces provided (these digits are printed on your meter-reading card).
- ▶ [Enter your current reading](#) and click [Save](#).



Work in progress

Construction workers brave cold temperatures as they prepare to install drainage pipe at Valley Rural Electric's new Huntingdon district along Station Road. The buildings should be ready for occupation by early spring. Personnel from engineering and technical services, purchasing and warehousing, and line operations will work out of the facilities.

Reserve your seat!

2009 Valley Rural Electric Cooperative District Nominating Meeting Dinners



- District 2** **6 p.m. Feb. 3**
McVeytown Fire Hall
- District 4** **6 p.m. Feb. 2**
Three Springs Fire Hall
- District 6** **6 p.m. Feb. 5**
East Freedom Fire Hall

Don't miss the opportunity to choose candidates for Valley REC's board of directors and to share a meal with your fellow co-op members.

Return your reservation card today.

Statement of nondiscrimination

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