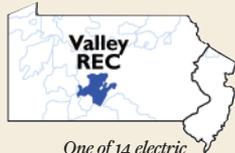


Valley
Rural Electric
Cooperative, Inc.

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

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7 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.

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Monday - Thursday
7 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.

FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO

The power of local control

The following is the second of three editorials that will focus on the cooperative difference.



by Wayne Miller
President & CEO

IN LAST month's editorial, I highlighted a few key principles that govern electric cooperatives. This month, I want to tell you about another one.

Valley Rural Electric Cooperative is an independent organization, yet we're not alone in our mission to deliver a safe, reliable and affordable supply of power to rural residents.

There are 12 electric distribution cooperatives like us in Pennsylvania and more than 850 nationwide. Despite our obvious similarities, each co-op is different — first and foremost because the areas we serve are unique.

Each co-op boasts its own history and serves a distinctive mix of residential, industrial, commercial and agricultural members. Co-ops make their own business decisions independently, as described in the Fourth Cooperative Principle, "Autonomy and Independence." It's one of the seven unique guidelines that govern cooperative operations.

Electric cooperatives are generally subject to less oversight by federal and state utility regulators because our members regulate us. This independence, embodied in the laws of most states, rests on our historic commitment to the communities we serve.

Remaining autonomous and independent allows us to best serve the needs of you, our owners. That's because what might be a sound decision for one co-op, say, with a relatively small number of members spread out over an extremely rural area, might not work for another that has a larger number of members in a more suburban setting. Local service and attention to your

unique needs explains why having local control is best for each locally owned and governed electric co-op.

But although Valley sails its own ship, so to speak, we are not sailing alone. Our co-op belongs to a statewide association, the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association, and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA). We're also a member of Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives, an alliance of more than 700 electric cooperatives nationwide.

These umbrella groups provide support as well as products like *Penn Lines* magazine and valuable safety courses for our employees. Touchstone Energy gives us access to marketing campaigns on a variety of topics. And our statewide association and NRECA advocate for us with lawmakers in Harrisburg and Washington, D.C., keeping these public officials aware of how their votes can impact our electric bills.

Despite these benefits, none of these groups tells us what to do. Decisions about how to deliver your electricity at the lowest possible cost are left to our board of directors, who are elected by you, our members.

On occasion, we may need a large amount of capital to pay for expansion. We can borrow it from a number of sources including the federal Rural Utilities Service and the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation. Of course, while we enter into any agreement with a great deal of deliberation, no deal gives a third party control over our operations.

Leaders of our co-op, who are also members just like you, know this area and its needs well. Our ability to make our own decisions allows us to serve you in the most efficient way possible. And that's the way it should be. 



ABOVE: Brandon Corvin of Doan's Bones Barbecue, with restaurants near Petersburg and in State College, prepares cuisine for the judges.

SMOKE

on the **WATER**

"IT'S AN ART. It's a hobby. It's a way of life ..."

That's how Brian Nevel describes his passion for barbecuing. And that's also what prompted him to work with the Huntingdon County Visitors Bureau to organize the first-ever BBQ at the Beach competition, held Sept. 18 and 19 at Valley REC-served Seven Points Recreation Area at Lake Raystown, Huntingdon County.

Sanctioned by the Kansas City Barbecue Society (KCBS), the weekend competition drew both amateur and professional barbecue teams from all over the country and as far away as Canada. Teams like 3 EYZ Barbecue of Maryland and Ontario-based Diva Q, both recently featured on TLC's television series BBQ Pitmasters, were "pitted" against hometown favorites such as Midnite Smokers of Willow Street, Pa., and Doan's Bones Barbecue, with restaurants in the Petersburg area and State College.

Firing up

During the two-day event, open to the public for a \$5 admission fee, teams squared off in a variety of grilling challenges. Saturday, they showed their backyard expertise in a burger, pizza and chef's choice competition. Midnite Smokers took first place in the opening day's informal event and the evening concluded with a live performance from the rock band Shallow 9.

The stakes got higher Sunday as local volunteers and certified judges from the KCBS took their places at the tables for a long afternoon of taste-testing and scoring. Four meat



COURTESY PHOTO

categories were judged in Sunday's sanctioned competition: chicken, pork ribs, pork and finally beef brisket. Teams were required to follow a stringent set of rules and regulations provided by the KCBS that explained how the meat must be inspected, cooked, seasoned, garnished and presented. Entries that made the cut were scored on appearance, taste and tenderness.

The Chix, Swine & Bovine BBQ team from Maryland smoked the competition, claiming the title of grand champion, a \$1,000 prize and a custom-made mini smoker. Reserve grand champion went to 3 EYZ BBQ, along with a \$500 prize. First, second and third place winners in each meat category received cash prizes as well. Medals were given to winners up to 10th place.

Meat methods

Barbecuing encompasses four distinct types of cooking techniques: smoking, baking, braising and grilling. The original technique is smoking — cooking using smoke at lower temperatures (usually around 240 F) and significantly longer cooking times.

Beach barbecue competition at Lake Raystown draws teams from all over North America

BY SUSAN R. PENNING
Director of Member Services



LEFT: Event organizer Brian Nevel of Huntingdon Co. Customs (center) and Ed Stoddard (right), membership services director for the Huntingdon Co. Visitors Bureau, congratulate BBQ at the Beach Grand Champion Chix, Swine and Bovine (in red) and Reserve Grand Champion 3 EYZ BBQ (left).

BELOW: Steve Wise, of Slumbuster BBQ in York, prepares ribs for competition Sept. 19.



ABOVE: Judges mark their scores on appearance for a chicken entry.



Smoking can be done with wood or charcoal, although many common commercial smokers use a gas, such as propane, to heat up a box of wet wood chips enough to cause smoke. (For a sanctioned KCBS competition, the fires used by barbecue competitors must be wood, wood pellets or charcoal. Gas and electric heat sources are prohibited.)

The heat from the fire helps cook the meat while the smoke adds its unique flavor. Smoking is often referred to as “low and slow.” During the smoking period, the barbecue lid or smoker door is closed, causing a thick, dense cloud of smoke to envelop the meat. The smoke must be able to move freely around the meat and out of the top of the apparatus

quickly; otherwise, foul-tasting creosote will build up on the meat, giving it a bitter flavor.

A chef begins the barbecue process by starting a fire using starter chips or small parts of soft wood. Once the flame is burning hot, the chef may take pieces of harder wood like hickory or maple and place them into water to soften. The wet hardwood is then added to the flames. The smoke adds flavor to the meat while the moisture cools the heat of the flame. The chef must always keep a balance between heating and cooling to cook the meat properly.

Popular woods used for barbecue are hickory, mesquite, oak, pecan, alder, maple, apple, cherry and plum. Most barbecue connoisseurs would agree that the key to a good barbecue is the slow-cooking method and the seasoning of the meat (with sauces and/or rubs).

Organizers of the BBQ at the Beach hope to host another competition at the lake next year.

“We’ve received great feedback and we want to do it again. We’ll definitely need more volunteers and more sponsors to make it happen,” says Matt Price, executive director at the Huntingdon County Visitors Bureau. ☀

More money available for energy efficient home improvement projects

Members may borrow up to \$15,000 through co-op loan program

BY SUSAN R. PENNING
Director of Member Services

FOR MORE THAN 20 YEARS, Valley REC has helped consumers finance projects that improve the energy efficiency of their homes, businesses and farms. And now, the maximum amount available through the low-interest Energy Resources Conservation (ERC) Loan Program has increased from \$5,000 to \$15,000.

Personnel from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Development branch recently approved the co-op's request to provide increased funding for ERC loans — good news for co-op consumers who want to finance projects, such as heating and cooling systems, that cost significantly more than the previous loan cap amount of \$5,000.

All ERC loans will still be offered at an interest rate of 5 percent. Loans may be taken out for a maximum term of seven years. Loan funds are available for any existing agricultural, commercial or residential structure on Valley lines. New construction is not included in the program. The following items are eligible for financing:

- ▶ Efficient electric heating and/or cooling equipment (such as heat pump or electric thermal storage units) that reduces the consumption of electricity, oil or gas
- ▶ Efficient electric water heating equipment
- ▶ Insulation (including ceiling, floor, wall, duct, pipe and water heater insulation)
- ▶ Storm windows and doors
- ▶ Replacement thermal windows and doors

- ▶ Clock thermostats
- ▶ Caulking and weatherstripping
- ▶ Attic fans

The loan may cover the cost of materials and labor if installed by a contractor, or materials only if installed by the member.

Members who plan to purchase a heating/cooling system or water heater will be required to schedule a free energy audit (provided by the co-op). To qualify for a loan, members must have a good payment history with Valley and other creditors.

Participants will be required to make regular monthly loan payments. To apply, call 800/432-0680 or download an application at www.valleyrec.com. ☀

Sample Monthly Payments (based on 5 percent interest rate)

Loan Amount	Term	Monthly Payment	Total (w/ interest)
\$5,000	36 months	\$149.85	\$5,394.60
\$10,000	66 months	\$173.62	\$11,458.92
\$15,000	84 months	\$212.01	\$17,808.84

Meet your employees

BY SUSAN R. PENNING
Director of Member Services

Highlighted in this column is a recent addition to the Valley REC team, Justin Berrier. Justin came to work at the co-op last fall, working full time as a lineman in the Huntingdon district.

Justin's main responsibilities include installing, removing, maintaining, and repairing electric overhead and underground equipment.

"I also perform trouble call duty, responding to outages around the clock as needed," he adds.

Justin came to Valley with experience in line work, after being employed for three years with a local electrical workers union, which secured contracted



Justin Berrier

jobs for him. During his time there, Justin worked on electric lines in places like Erie, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Harrisburg, as well as New York and Kentucky.

In his career so far, Justin has completed training in basic lineman's duties,

climbing and transformer and substation work. He's also received specialized training in using chain saws, rubber gloves and hot sticks when working around energized equipment.

A 2006 graduate of Southern Huntingdon County High School, Justin grew up near Orbisonia, in Blacklog Valley, Huntingdon County. He is the son of Jamie Berrier of Camp Hill and Sherry Lalli of Blacklog Valley.

In his spare time, Justin enjoys hunting, fishing and spending time with friends and family. His goal is to maximize his career at Valley by completing all his lineman training with excellence.

"I really like my job and I work with a great group of guys. I'm excited to go to the next level and become a journeyman lineman," he says.

Justin's fellow co-op employees look forward to working with him for a long time. He's one of the people you can count on. ☀