

Valley Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

Valley Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.
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OUTAGES & EMERGENCIES

1-800-432-0680

GUEST COLUMN

Opportunities abound 'this morning'



by **Doug Roles**
Director of Member Services

THERE'S a memorable line in the movie, "Gettysburg," where Gen. Robert E. Lee, contemplating the end of the first day of battle, asks himself (in actor Martin Sheen's voice), "What will you do tomorrow?" After reviewing the day's advances and setbacks, Lee didn't know for certain what action he would take the next day.

But he knew he had to be ready for any opportunities the morning would bring.

The early months of a new year are like that, good times to ask what we must do next to be prepared for the possibilities. The coming months are filled with opportunities for the co-op and its members.

Students take note

The start of the year brings opportunity for education. The co-op is again looking for students to participate in the Youth Tour to Washington, D.C., and is encouraging high school and adult students to apply for a Brighter Future scholarship.

Youth Tour provides high school juniors and seniors an opportunity to tour the nation's capital and meet representatives while also learning about the cooperative business model. Through the Brighter Future scholarship program, Valley REC offers up to 25 \$1,000 scholarships to Valley REC members or dependents. More information on both co-op programs is offered in the following pages.

Co-op business meetings

A new year also brings a new round of business meetings for the co-op membership. Nominating meetings are taking place in Districts 1, 3 and 5 this month. Selection of nominees begins the board election process. Invitations will soon be mailed to members for the annual meeting, to be held Friday, April 11. This

meeting provides a way to hear an update on co-op happenings while casting a vote for board members.

Audit continues

Our pole attachment audit is in its second month and will continue into the spring. Perhaps you've seen technicians with Davey Resource Group (DRG) braving the cold to access co-op rights-of-way. The audit they're conducting for us will provide a tally of phone and cable TV attachments on Valley REC utility poles. This effort now will pay off well into the future because it will ensure the co-op is recouping all revenue owed to it while providing all parties an accurate record of infrastructure.

A retiree's perspective

This edition of *Penn Lines* includes an article on the retirement of Bob Wareham, Valley REC's vice president of business administration and finance. Bob worked for Valley REC for more than 20 years. As he looked back over his time with the co-op, he made several observations.

Bob said he believed in the co-op business model and said he couldn't imagine where America would be without rural electrification. It's truly difficult to consider where we'd be without rural electric co-ops since the delivery of electricity to the far reaches of the nation is now part of our heritage.

Bob also noted that Valley REC's reliability has increased over the decades because dedicated employees have used new technologies — such as digital metering — to improve our distribution system.

"Our system has gotten bigger, but we've gotten more efficient," Bob said. "The number of employees hasn't changed in 25 years."

By thinking about the possibilities and working hard, Valley REC is accomplishing its mission of providing safe, affordable, and reliable service at the lowest possible cost — for now and tomorrow. 

Valley REC seeking participants for 2014 Youth Tour to capital

HIGH SCHOOL juniors and seniors connected to the co-op either through a parent's membership or employment have a great opportunity to make new friends and learn more about their government this summer.

Valley Rural Electric Cooperative will sponsor students from throughout the cooperative's eight-county service territory on an all-expenses-paid trip to the nation's capital June 15-20. The Rural Electric Youth Tour has brought high school students to Washington, D.C., every June since the 1960s. The 2014 event marks the 50th year for Youth Tour.

More than 40,000 students from rural areas and small towns across America have participated in this unique program. The featured speakers during National Youth Day provide insight regarding the important roles electric cooperatives play in their communities and in the nation. Students gain a personal understanding of American history and their responsibility as a citizen by meeting their representatives and senators, and exploring the sights around the nation's capital.

It's not unusual to see a former Youth Tour participant working as a congressional aide on Capitol Hill. In fact, several former Youth Tour students have gone on to serve in the highest ranks of government, including the U.S. Senate.



POLITICS 101: U.S. Rep. Bill Shuster (R-9th) speaks to students participating in Youth Tour 2013 in Washington, D.C. Congressional visits are one of the highlights of the trip, along with a performance at the Kennedy Center and a cruise on the Potomac River.

Juniors and seniors interested in joining the Youth Tour delegation should meet the following criteria: Any high school junior or senior whose parent or guardian is a member or employee of Valley REC is eligible to apply.

Students will be required to submit a transcript (transcript submission may be done electronically) along with additional information to the co-op selection committee.

Selections will be based on academic

achievement, as well as participation in extracurricular activities and/or community service programs. Students interested in attending Youth Tour this year should visit their high school guidance counselor's office today to apply. Final selections will be made in early March. For more details, visit www.valleyrec.com and follow the Programs and Services link to Youth Tour. Or call the co-op's member services department at 800-432-0680, extension 1663. ☀

Valley REC scholarship applications available now to traditional and returning adult students

For the fifth consecutive year, Valley will award up to 25 \$1,000 Brighter Future scholarships to deserving students who apply. The money to fund this initiative comes from unclaimed capital credits refunds that previously had to be turned over to the state treasury. Thanks to the efforts of the cooperative's political advocates, these funds can be kept in our local communities.

ELIGIBILITY

Any prospective student applying for a scholarship must be a Valley REC member or dependent of a member. Valley REC directors and employees and their dependents are not eligible. The applying student must be attending or planning to attend an accredited post-secondary institution. The applicant must

be enrolled or planning to enroll as a full-time student for the 2014-2015 academic year. Previous Brighter Future Scholarship recipients are not eligible.

HOW TO APPLY

Applications may be obtained by visiting the co-op's website at www.valleyrec.com. Follow the "Programs and Services" link to the "Scholarships" section. There are two versions of the application: one for high school students and one for high school graduates. Paper applications are also available at all Valley REC offices and in many school guidance offices, including the following public high schools:

Altoona Area High School
Central High School

Ice storm tests co-op's new outage management system

BY DOUG ROLES
Director of Member Services

LIKE MANY of the nation's co-ops, Valley Rural Electric Cooperative has modernized the way it responds to storm-related outages. Updates to Valley's outage management system (OMS) allow personnel to more quickly determine the scope of an outage and to more efficiently direct line workers to problem areas.

The new system was brought on-line in April. The winter storm at Thanksgiving was the first opportunity for co-op staff to utilize this new tool.

"More than anything, it gives us the ability to know much sooner how many members are actually affected by an outage," says Todd Ross, Valley REC manager of operations.



The Thanksgiving storm knocked out power to 6,400 members. Most of the outages were reported late on the Tuesday night before Thanksgiving as ice accumulated on trees causing them to snap and fall onto power lines.

Calls from members to report outages are the first step in the restoration effort. OMS integrates Valley's new advanced metering infrastructure with digital mapping and the co-op's database of consumers.

"When a member calls in and reports an outage, that phone number is associated with a meter," Ross explains. "Then, OMS goes upstream and downstream from that meter to see if there are other outages. It goes until it finds power or a safety cut-out."

The result is that co-op staff have a real-time display of outages in the co-op service territory. Having this new bird's-eye view of the system enables line crews and office staff to prioritize work and get service restored to the most members possible as quickly and safely as possible.

"It helps us strategically plan how we're going to restore power and how many crews to send out," Ross says. ☀



PHOTOS BY KEVIN DETWILER

ABOVE: Valley REC crews work with Penn Line Services, Inc. on Nov. 27 to clear a tree from a phone line in Walker Township, Huntingdon County, that leads to a Valley REC radio tower. **TOP RIGHT:** Ice-laden limbs threaten co-op power lines in Union Township, Huntingdon County.

- Claysburg-Kimmel High School
- Fannett-Metal High School
- Forbes Road Junior/Senior High School
- Hollidaysburg Area Senior High School
- Huntingdon Area High School
- Juniata High School
- Juniata Valley High School
- McConnellsburg High School
- Mifflin County High School
- Mount Union Area High School
- Northern Bedford County High School
- Southern Fulton Jr./Sr. High School
- Southern Huntingdon Co. High School
- Tussey Mountain High School
- Tyrone Area High School
- Williamsburg High School

Valley Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

brighter future

Scholarship Program

APPLICATION DEADLINE

Applications and all required information must be mailed to: Valley Rural Electric Cooperative - Scholarship, PO Box 477, 10700 Fairgrounds Road, Huntingdon, PA 16652. Mailings must be postmarked by April 15, 2014. Transcripts must be official school copies and be submitted in a sealed envelope. Scholarship selections will be made in May. Award recipients will be notified by the end of June. Applicants should direct questions to memberservices@valleyrec.com or call the member services department at 800-432-0680.

Retirement offers Valley employee

BY DOUG ROLES

Director of Member Services

While there's still snow on the ground, having a pantry filled with home-grown vegetables and seeing more plants sprouting in his greenhouse bring Bob Wareham a great sense of fulfillment. He's had more time to focus on his love of greenhouses and gardening since retiring from Valley REC in April 2013.

Bob started at Valley Rural Electric Cooperative Sept. 19, 1989. A native of Roaring Spring, Blair County, Bob is a 1971 graduate of Central High School. He graduated from Slippery Rock State College (now Slippery Rock University) with a bachelor's degree in health and physical education.

"When I got out of college, there were not many teaching jobs," Bob says. "So, I got a job assisting a local electrician in the Cove area."

Bob later attended Penn State Altoona, earning an associate degree in electrical engineering technology. After graduating, he took a job as an instrumentation engineer with DuPont and moved to Delaware. There he spent about six years working with instrumentation that monitors the flow of fluids.

He had moved back to the Martinsburg area and was working in electrical design for the EADS Group in Altoona when he saw a job listing for Valley REC in what was then termed the electrical department. Bob first worked for the co-op doing load management, activating load control receivers during periods of peak demand. He then became manager



GREEN THUMB: Valley REC retiree Bob Wareham checks the lettuce starts in his high tunnel greenhouse near Martinsburg, Blair County, in late December. Since retiring, Bob has enjoyed spending time with family and expanding his gardening pursuits.

of the engineering department.

He completed the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's management training program and took over human resource responsibilities for the co-op before becoming an office manager and working in finance, eventually being promoted to vice president of business administration and finance.

"I did just about everything there was to do at the co-op," Bob says.

A Valley REC member for 28 years, Bob says he found the whole co-op business model intriguing. Co-ops use a not-for-profit business model that focuses on supplying members with goods or services they could not acquire as cost-effectively otherwise.

"I just believed in the whole concept of the co-op system and what it could do for people," Bob says. "I miss the people, my co-workers. They're probably some of the most dedicated people I've been around in my life."

Since retiring, he's enjoyed spending more time with family. Bob and his wife, Cindy, have been married for 38 years. They are the parents of two grown children and have three grandchildren.

Bob calls himself a lifelong grower and has been busy working around the family farmstead. He's proud that he doesn't use any chemicals, "at all," in his large garden, greenhouse and high tunnel.

"We actually have stuff growing in the greenhouse right now," Bob says.



ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Tip of the month

Fighting winter chills? A crackling fire in the hearth warms the house, but don't let it heat up your electric bill. To cool energy costs, keep the fireplace damper closed when not in use. Caulk around the fireplace hearth. Double up on wood-earned warmth by lowering the thermostat setting to between 50 degrees and 55 degrees Fahrenheit. Learn more at www.energysaver.gov.

Source: U.S. Department of Energy

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