

Valley Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives
serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

VALLEY RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

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COOPERATIVE CONNECTION

Guest Column

Electricity Brings Home Everyday Value



DOUG ROLES

A STUDY BY PEW RESEARCH CENTER earlier this summer found that a majority of Americans say young people today have it harder financially than their parents' generation did. Because of that, parents of young adults often ask: How are the kids going to make it?

The survey found that the percentage of U.S. adults who say it's harder for young adults to achieve financial milestones has increased since 2021. Sixty-four percent of respondents said it's more difficult for young people to find a job, which is up from the 39% who said the same in 2021.

Eighty-seven percent said it's more difficult for young people to buy a home, compared with 70% in 2021. Additionally, 80% of respondents said it's more difficult for young people to cover basic expenses today than it was for their parents.

One of the things young adults starting out on their own realize quickly is that everything associated with modern life costs money, electricity included. Many families across our communities are feeling the impact of rising costs for everyday expenses.

Groceries, gasoline, insurance and other necessities cost more than they did just a few years ago. And because of that, we understand that every household is carefully considering where each dollar goes.

That's why it's important to occasionally step back and consider the value that electricity provides, particularly if you are just getting started on your lifelong journey of managing household finances.

The average U.S. residential electric bill is about \$150 a month — roughly \$5 a day. That's about the price of a specialty coffee; yet, electricity powers nearly every moment of our lives, often without us giving it a second thought.

In fact, many typical purchases cost more than a day's worth of electricity. A fast-food combo meal averages about \$9, and a single movie ticket can cost about \$13.

For about \$5 a day, your refrigerator keeps food fresh around the clock. Your heating and cooling system helps keep your family comfortable through the seasons. Lights brighten your home after sunset. Appliances make cooking and cleaning easier. Devices stay charged so you can work, learn, communicate and stay connected with loved ones.

If you stop to think about everything that electricity makes possible, you'll realize it is one of the greatest values in the average household budget. But when household budgets are tight, every dollar matters. That's why it's important to consider how you use electricity and be alert for changes that can cause an unexpected increase in your monthly bill.

Cranking down the setting of your air conditioner, running a fan all night and having kids on summer break in the house during the day can all add up to an increase in summertime bills. In the fall, shorter days, increased use of indoor lighting and the start of heating season can increase electricity, too. Therefore, it's important to be tuned in to changes in your household electric use and budget accordingly.

In these uncertain economic times, paying attention to consumption and understanding the value of electricity can help lower the stress of managing household expenses. As a member-owned, not-for-profit cooperative, Valley Rural Electric Cooperative is committed to providing everyday value for you and your family, with reliable, affordable power — so you can make the most of every energy dollar. 🌱

DOUG ROLES

VICE PRESIDENT, MEMBER SERVICES

Valley REC Sponsors Students on Annual Youth Tour to Washington, D.C.

DOUG ROLES, VICE PRESIDENT, MEMBER SERVICES

VALLEY RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE sponsored five high school students from four school districts on the 2026 Rural Electric Youth Tour to Washington, D.C., June 15-20. The teens, who just completed their junior year, spent their time in the nation's capital meeting legislators and their staffers, learning about the cooperative business model, and touring monuments and memorials.

They joined nearly 1,800 other juniors from electric cooperatives all over the country. Of that number, 88 represented the 13 co-ops in Pennsylvania and one in New Jersey that comprise the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association.

The all-inclusive trip was packed with activities, including meetings with rural electric leaders, visits to historic sites throughout Washington, and tours of the Smithsonian museums, the Holocaust Museum, the National Zoo and Arlington Cemetery.

The agenda also included a Youth Night dinner featuring speakers from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the tour's host, and teens serving on the Youth Leadership Council, who were wrapping up their year as representatives of the previous year's Youth Tour students.

Each year, participants learn about the principles that govern rural electric and other cooperatives. Recommended by guidance counselors at their respective schools, the students were selected to participate based on academic achievement, leadership in extracurricular activities and community service.

Local Youth Tour students

Berkley Ayers, the daughter of Chad and Rebecca Ayers of Saxton, represented Tussey Mountain High School on the trip. Berkley plays varsity soccer and is a National Honor Society (NHS) student. She is a Student Council member and hopes to become an art teacher at a local school district.

"I really liked meeting students from all the other states and hearing about where they're from," Berkley says. "I would definitely recommend juniors take this opportunity. It's something you don't want to miss out on. I think Youth Tour helped me break out of a shell of shyness and talk to people."

Kristin Gregory, who represented Southern Fulton High School, is the daughter of Travis and Adrienne Gregory of Needmore. An NHS student, she also plays varsity soccer and had met Berkley at soccer matches. Kristin plays varsity basketball, is a member of her school's Future Farmers of America chapter, and participates in church youth group activities and missions. She shows dairy cattle at the Fulton County Fair and works with cow/



STUDENTS TAKE ON YOUTH TOUR: Valley Rural Electric Cooperative sponsored five students from local high schools on the 2026 Rural Electric Youth Tour to Washington, D.C., in June. The students who recently completed their junior year are, from left: Berkley Ayers, Tussey Mountain High School; Kristin Gregory, Southern Fulton High School; Joel Morris, Central High School; and Sam Mauk and Tallen Bennett, both from Claysburg-Kimmel High School.

calf pairs on her family's farm. Kristin hopes to work with children and possibly become a midwife.

Claysburg-Kimmel High School had two students on Youth Tour, **Sam Mauk** and **Tallen Bennet**. The son of Samuel Mauk and Erica Reigh of Claysburg, Sam is a member of his school's Future Business Leaders of America club and Agriculture Club and is an NHS student. Sam also says high school juniors who live on co-op lines should consider applying for Youth Tour.

"I really enjoyed the museums and the monuments, but more than that, [I enjoyed] meeting the people," he says. "I'll never forget that and hopefully will see some of them again."

Tallen, meanwhile, is the son of Troy Fagan and Chelsie Bennett of East Freedom. He has been a member of his school's Agriculture Club for three years and volunteers at a Claysburg food bank. He works at his father's electrical contracting business and plans to further his experience and education in the electrical trade. He enjoys work that involves fixing things, such as small-engine repair.

Joel Morris represented Central High School and is the son of Lance and Lindsay Morris of Roaring Spring. Joel has been wrestling since first grade and is on the varsity team. He volunteers with an annual bingo fundraiser in memory of a local cancer patient. Joel plans to join the U.S. Marine Corps and become a state trooper.

Valley Rural Electric Cooperative is a member-owned utility that serves more than 22,500 consumer-members in Bedford, Blair, Centre, Franklin, Fulton, Huntingdon, Juniata and Mifflin counties. For more information about the Rural Electric Youth Tour, contact the co-op's member services department at 814-643-2650, 800-432-0680 or memberservices@valleyrec.com. 📧

Goose Day Soars in Mifflin/Juniata Counties with Month of Bird-Themed Activities

DOUG ROLES, VICE PRESIDENT, MEMBER SERVICES

THE POPULARITY OF GOOSE DAY is soaring to new heights after more than a decade of marketing and promotion by the Lewistown-based Juniata River Valley Visitors Bureau (JRVVB). Tourism promoters are encouraging residents and visitors alike to take part in this month's festivities, centered around the Sept. 29 holiday.

Events include Lucky Friday, a street festival, as well as a drone light show. Local businesses also offer a variety of promotions and discounts.

Mifflin and Juniata county residents have long boasted that they have a unique local holiday. However, JRVVB leaders say Goose Day community events tapered off as storefronts in downtown Lewistown closed through the late 1980s and 1990s. Still, local restaurants continued to serve goose dinners to uphold the tradition that eating goose brings good luck and prosperity for the coming year.

"Back in the 1970s, it was a big deal here," says Jenny Landis, JRVVB executive director. "There was a parade at one time."

"We're the only area of the country that celebrates this day," adds Buffie Boyer, the bureau's communications director. "It's an authentic, local holiday."

Goose Day gets its start

Goose Day traces its origins to St. Michaelmas Day in England, a fourth-century feast day dedicated to the archangel Michael. Sept. 29 was also traditionally the day when rent and accounts between businesses, landowners, and tenants were settled. A goose was often part of the payments because the birds were in their prime that time of year. Because of this, geese became associated with good fortune.

The arrival of the tradition in central Pennsylvania is credited to settler Archibald Hunter, who jumped ship from the British fleet in Philadelphia and moved to central Pennsylvania, becoming a tenant farmer to Dutch landowner Andrew Pontius. The two men set Sept. 29 as their day to settle accounts, and Hunter brought along a goose as had been done in England.

"Groundhog Day is also associated with a minor Catholic holiday, Candlemas Day," Buffie explains. "We just haven't had a major motion picture to promote Goose Day."

"And we eat the goose, unlike Groundhog Day," Jenny jokes.

By official proclamation, commissioners in Mifflin and Juniata counties named Goose Day a holiday in 1976. Some traditions have been constant since then, such as the annual Goose Day 5k Run/Walk and the Goose Day Road Rally, during which teams receive clues to navigate

their way to points across the region in the shortest distance. The rally winner earns the right to plan the following year's motorized route.

"It's taken awhile; it's been an uphill climb," Jenny says of the bureau's push to make the holiday a hallmark event again.

New life for a unique holiday

Jenny started a "Do You Believe in Goose Day?"

campaign in 2015 to gauge business and public perception about the potential for Goose Day to boost tourism, generate revenue for local businesses and serve as the focus of community events.

In 2019, the "Wild Geese: Flock Together" public art campaign took flight, led by the Community Partnerships Resource Conservation & Development Council, the regional partner of the PA Partners in Arts program. The project places sponsored, fiberglass goose statues around Mifflin and Juniata counties. There are currently 55 geese in the flock.

The visitors bureau has held goose-themed photo contests, including a "Caps, Gowns & Geese" contest that encouraged graduating high school and college students to submit photos taken with flock statues. The light show and street festival are now in their fourth year.

Other promotions have included themed pop-art photo shoots offered during Goose Day festivities. There's been "Goosebusters," a Halloween theme; "A Goosemas Story" for Christmas; "Top Goose," a nod to the "Top Gun" movies; and "Goose Lightning" from the movie "Grease."

And JRVVB debuted "Goose Washington" this year on swag that includes pins, stickers, and keychains to mark America's 250th birthday in the two counties.

"It's about being quirky and different," Jenny says. "It's authentic, and it's a foodie thing. You can get goose tacos, goose stew, goose chili and goose pizza. I hold to the idea that you have to eat goose on the 29th for it to work, but one bite is enough for good luck."

This year's celebration runs Sept. 25 to 29. JRVVB's much-anticipated 12-page Goose Day List is published each year on Sept. 1. To see all the events, restaurant, deli, and winery specials, and local business discounts, visit jrvvisitors.com. Also go to cpartnerships.com for a map of Wild Geese Flock statue locations. 📍



HELLO HARVEY!: Artist Daphne Marthouse, left, painted Harvey the Harvest Goose for the owners of Bilger Pumpkins, Bryan and Rosemary Bilger of McVeytown, who are also Valley Rural Electric Cooperative members.

VALLEY RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE AWARDS \$1,000 SCHOLARSHIPS TO 19 LOCAL STUDENTS

Valley Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) recently awarded \$1,000 scholarships to 19 high school seniors enrolled in post-secondary institutions for the 2026-2027 academic year.



The co-op's Brighter Future Scholarship Program was established in 2010 to help eligible students who are cooperative members or their dependents. To date, the program has awarded nearly \$329,000 in scholarship funds. Selection criteria include academic achievement, school activities and community service.

The money to finance this initiative comes from unclaimed capital credits. Valley REC uses these co-op funds to assist consumers facing financial hardships, support civic organizations and fund educational programs.

This year's scholarship recipients

Central High School – Jaycie Butler of Martinsburg, daughter of Jason and Jennifer Butler, attending Grace College to study elementary education; Piper F. Diehl of Duncansville, daughter of Sherie Piper and Kevin Diehl, attending Mount Aloysius College to study medical imaging - ultrasound; and Hunter I. Keith of Martinsburg, son of Allen Keith, attending Penn State Altoona to study elementary education.

Fannett-Metal High School – Logan Hall of Amberson, son of Eric and Tara Hall, attending Penn State Altoona to study mechanical engineering.

Halifax Area High School – Evelyn Mei Qin Snyder of Halifax, daughter of Lisa Romberger and Dean Snyder, attending Penn State University to study architectural engineering.

Hollidaysburg Area Senior High School – Angeliki Shilaos of Hollidaysburg, daughter of John and Lisa Shilaos, attending Penn State University to study pre-medicine.

Huntingdon Area High School – Leah Beck of James Creek, daughter of Bethany and David Beck, attending Mount Aloysius College to study medical imaging - radiology; Addalee G. Buza of Huntingdon, daughter of Leslie Buza, attending University of North Carolina Wilmington to study nursing; and Daniel Robert Sentman of Huntingdon, son

of Andy and Melissa Sentman, attending Juniata College to study accounting and business.

Juniata High School – Kalynn Brown of Port Royal, daughter of Kyla Whitesel and Clayton Brown, attending South Hills School of Business and Technology to study respiratory therapy.

Juniata Valley High School – Peyton Houck of Petersburg, son of Tom and Nadine Houck, attending Penn State University to study veterinary and biomedical science; and Anna Taylor of Petersburg, daughter of Danielle and William Taylor, attending Commonwealth University of Pennsylvania - Mansfield to study biomedical sciences.

Mifflin County High School – Rylynn J. Patkalitsky of McVeytown, daughter of Nicole and Joseph Patkalitsky Jr., attending Penn State University to study communications.

Mount Union Area High School – Sarah K. Varner of Mount Union, daughter of Lori and Duane Varner, attending Delaware Valley University to study animal science.

Southern Huntingdon County High School – Brooke Lynn Kunz of Blairs Mills, daughter of Liza and Christian Kunz, attending University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown to study journalism; and Hannah A. Oswald of Todd, daughter of Joshua and Tracy Oswald, attending Western Governors University to study elementary education.

Tussey Mountain High School – Isaiah Keegan Gambol of Broad Top, son of Kaylin and Paul Gambol, attending Juniata College to study business and finance.

Williamsburg High School – Kassie R. Mingle of Williamsburg, daughter of Michael and Rebecca Mingle, attending Indiana University of Pennsylvania to study speech and language pathology; and Ty Uplinger of Williamsburg, son of Aaron and Julie Uplinger, attending Penn State University to study biological engineering with an emphasis on agriculture.

For more information about Valley REC's Brighter Future Scholarship Program, call the cooperative at 800-432-0680 or visit valleyrec.com (click on the "Programs and Services" tab and go to the "Scholarships" section).

2026 VALLEY REC JUNIOR SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS NAMED

Valley REC's Board of Directors recently recognized academic- and community-minded young leaders through the Valley REC Junior Scholarship program.

High school students who were juniors during the 2025-2026 school year were invited to submit applications. The board's committee selected recipients based on academic achievement as well as participation in extracurricular activities and/or community service. Successful applicants received their grants earlier this summer. Awards of \$500 and \$750 were given to the recipients.

We wish the following students the best in their senior year.

Central

Mya Long

Forbes Road

Riley Broadwater

Hollidaysburg Area

Noah Kanish

Josephine Watt

Huntingdon Area

Jackson Sharpless

Addison Young

Juniata Valley

Aubrey Anderson

McConnellsburg

Olivia Slater

Mount Union

Talia Whitesel

Southern Fulton County

Kristin Gregory

Kara Harper

Cameron King

Gabriel Mosemann

Southern Huntingdon County

Haylee Slep

Emma Smith

Ella Young

Tussey Mountain

Berkley Ayers

Nathan Brode

Hillary Horton

Tyrone

Elayna Hess