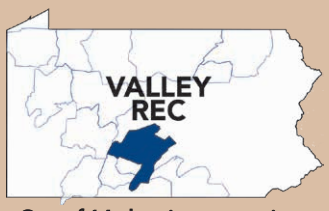
Valley Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



One of 14 electric cooperatives serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

VALLEY RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.
10700 Fairgrounds Road
P.O. Box 477
Huntingdon, PA 16652-0477
814-643-2650
1-800-432-0680
www.valleyrec.com

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Guest Column

Avoid Overhead Lines and Falls While Doing Holiday Decorating



DOUG ROLES

THE TURN OF THE CALENDAR to November has people thinking about preparing for the holidays. That includes stringing festive lights and putting out other decorations, which can mean a lot of work with ladders.

Accidents involving ladders increase significantly around Thanksgiving, when decorating gets into full swing. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission reports that nearly 160 decorating-related injuries occur every day in November and December, averaging about 15,000 emergency room visits per holiday season. Of course, ladders are great tools, but users need to stay focused to avoid injury.

Be extra cautious when using ladders around overhead electrical equipment, such as the service drop into your home or lines that run close to the roof. Don't carry an extended ladder vertically. If you lose your balance, you could trip and run the ladder into an energized line.

Remember that metal or wet wooden ladders don't have to physically touch the wire to cause injury. High-voltage electricity can arc through the air to a nearby conductive object. If possible, use a non-conductive fiberglass ladder and keep a minimum of 10 feet between the ladder and lines.

The Electrical Safety Foundation International reports that overhead power-line contact accounts for 49% of all workplace electrical fatalities. As much as we need to be careful on the job site, let's be equally cautious at home during what should be a festive time.

Perhaps the most common mishap with ladders is simply losing balance or footing. Don't overextend your reach while on the ladder and don't climb to the top. The top portion of the ladder is not a step — but how many of us have been guilty of that one? Remember: Gaining that extra bit of height is not worth the increased risk.

"Unfortunately, every year people are hurt in decorating accidents, including mishaps or serious accidents that involve electricity," says Erin Hollinshead, executive director of Safe Electricity. "We tend to get eager to finish decorating so we can enjoy the lights, but it's best to take your time, think before you start and don't forget to put safety first."

Erin is right on target, as usual. Don't rush. Keep the holiday season safe and festive. Make some time to get out and do some visiting but keep it to family and friends — not emergency room nurses and doctors because of a ladder mishap.

DOUG ROLES
VICE PRESIDENT, MEMBER SERVICES

If You Build It, They Will Run!

Wedding Barn Farm Marries Rural Space and Cross-Country Track

DOUG ROLES, VICE PRESIDENT, MEMBER SERVICES

STUDENT ATHLETES WHO RUN CROSS-COUNTRY don't require a lot of equipment. They need a school jersey, the right pair of running shoes, maybe a digital watch, and definitely breathable socks and shorts. They also need space — thousands of meters of open space.

Retired dairy farmers and Valley Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) members Bill and Deb Hoover of Tyrone have plenty of space and a son, Doug, who is the head track coach for the Saint Francis University Red Wolves. So, when Doug's team needed a new course five years ago, the farm, which boasts a scenic wedding barn, also began hosting college invitationals.

High school teams began running and competing at the B&D Acres course in 2022, which winds its way past a pollinator garden, a covered bridge, a small stream and a cover-crop field.

"This cross-country track we have here is an example of 'If you build it, they will come,'" Bill says, referencing the famous line from the classic baseball movie, "Field of Dreams." "The track is grass — the whole mile and a quarter — and 20 feet wide. It took about two years to make it nice."

Something different

The Saint Francis team previously hosted meets at Immergrun Golf Club at Saint Francis, but several factors caused them to look for a new location to host meets. Now the farm typically hosts three or four high school and collegiate events per year. The farm track combines Doug's love of sports and his rural roots.

"Runners really like the course from a competitive standpoint," Doug says. "They really like the environment. It's unusual to be in such a rural environment."

Doug is a 1990 graduate of Tyrone High School, where he was a track standout. A Penn State graduate, he is a five-time U.S. Biathlon Association champion, from 2006 to 2012, in a sport that combines cross-country running

Doug worked for 20 years in banking before becoming the university's full-time head coach in 2012. He was an assistant coach at Juniata College from 2007 to 2012.

"It's a good outreach for the university and a good recruiting event," Doug says. "Mom and Dad do a tremendous amount of work."

On track meet days, the farm transforms from a bucolic sea of hay and cornfield greens to a busy panorama bespeckled with school jerseys, ranging from Southern Huntingdon and Bald Eagle-area yellows and whites and Altoona and Clearfield reds to the blues of Bedford, Penn Cambria and Williamsburg. Teams erect their logoed pop-up tents and folding chairs in a long row along the first leg of the course.

The Hoovers, assisted by Doug's college team, direct traffic (bus parking is next to the grain bins), hang pennant string and set up the starting- and finish-line areas. Local DJ John Horne sets up in the bank barn and cranks out tunes the whole time. Bill, in his ATV, drives ahead of each race to keep the course clear of spectators.

A Saint Francis invitational in mid-September had 428 registered runners from 22 area high schools. Junior high girls ran first, followed by the boys and then the girls'





ON YOUR MARK: Left: Varsity boys compete in a cross-country race at B&D Acres, a farm and wedding venue in Tyrone that doubles as a track. Below: High school girls' teams take off for a 5,000-meter run during a Saint Francis University invitational at the farm, owned by Valley REC members Bill and Deb Hoover.

and boys' varsity teams.

"We schedule the cross-country races ahead of taking wedding reservations," Bill says. "We started weddings in the old barn. We can do indoor ceremonies there, or in Hemlock Hall, our big building. A lot of ceremonies are held at the covered bridge."

Amazing and challenging

The bridge, a go-to spot for wedding photos, is a focal point of track meets, too, because the finish line and clock are nearby. The adjacent starting line is more than 100 feet wide and accommodates dozens of runners who have more than 300 feet to funnel into the 20-foot-wide main course, which skirts outbuildings and the Hoover home.

Parents and coaches post at vantage points around the course. Several coaches make repeated trips across the cover-crop field to check the progress of runners as they ascend the steepest incline at the back side of the field along Eden Hill Road.

"We've been here since it started, when there were only four teams," says Steve Keim, Southern Huntingdon County High School varsity coach and a Valley REC member. "It's amazing. It's well-groomed and easy to navigate, yet challenging. The students really like it."

Keim says he has a young team this year — but it also has good numbers. He's been encouraging his athletes "to run more aggressively." At B&D Acres, athletes must pick the right times to kick it into high gear.

"This is my fourth time running it; I think it's a great course," says Clearfield High School senior Trent Potter, who hopes to keep running in college as he pursues a degree in environmental science. "At first, it's hard. My first year, the hill kicked my butt. You have to plan for the hill, but it's a great course for strategy."

The Hoovers won't claim they planned it this way, but they've had young people come to the farm for the invitational and return for the nuptials.

Asked about that, Bill responds, "Yes, we have had that happen. We have had several weddings of Saint Francis runners here."



COACH THEM UP: Saint Francis University Track Coach Doug Hoover, left, pauses for a photo with parents Deb and Bill Hoover at the family farm before a Sept. 12 invitational.



KEEP GOING: Junior high girls, above, pass a row of team tents. The finish line is near the covered bridge, seen in the rear of the photo. Below: Junior high boys run the back part of the course. The wedding barn and parking area of B&D Acres can be seen in the background.



Co-op Seeks Students for Youth Tour 2027

HIGH SCHOOL JUNIORS CONNECTED TO Valley Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) 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 REC will sponsor students from throughout the cooperative's eight-county service territory on an all-inclusive trip to the nation's capital, June 17-22, 2027. NRECA's Electric Cooperative Youth Tour has brought high school students to Washington, D.C., every June since the 1950s.

More than 40,000 students from rural areas and small towns across America have participated in this unique program. The featured speakers during Youth Day provide insight about 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 citizens by meeting their representatives and senators while exploring the sights around the nation's capital.

It's not unusual to see a former Youth Tour delegate 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.

Current high school juniors interested in joining the Youth Tour delegation must meet several criteria. Any high school junior or senior whose parent or guardian is a member or employee of Valley REC is eligible to apply.



STUDENT GROUP: Students from Valley Rural Electric Cooperative and other co-ops speak to Tyler Mortier, legislative assistant to U.S. Rep. John Joyce of Pennsylvania (R-13th), during the 2026 NRECA Electric Cooperative Youth Tour.

Students will be required to submit a transcript 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 in 2027 should visit their high school guidance counselor's office now to apply or visit valleyrec.com and click on the "Programs & Services" tab. Applications are due by mid-January 2027 and final selections will be made in February.

JUMP-START YOUR HOLIDAY SHOPPING WITH VALLEY REC GIFT CERTIFICATES



Gift certificates from Valley Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) make great gifts for the co-op members on your list.

To purchase one, complete the information below. If you'd like to surprise more than one person, please list the names, addresses and amounts for each on a separate sheet of paper. Then mail this form with your check or money order for the total amount to: Valley REC, P.O. Box 477, Huntingdon, PA 16652-0477.

After we receive your payment, the co-op member's account will be credited in December with the amount you've specified. The certificate may be mailed directly to the recipient or it can be sent to you for personal delivery.

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