

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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From the President & CEO



Electricity value in 2020

By Rich Bauer

EVEN though I work in the electric industry, like most people, I still don't think much about the electricity I use. I expect the lights to turn on when I flip the switch. Because electricity is expected, we don't think much about it. Since many of us have been spending more time at home over the past few months, we have likely been using more energy. And yet, we still expect an endless supply of power with uninterrupted service 24/7. The only time we really think about electricity is when the power goes out or perhaps when the monthly bill arrives.

Given how electricity powers our lifestyle every day, it's a great value. For example, think back to the cost of a gallon of gasoline 20 years ago. Consider the cost of groceries or a cup of your favorite specialty coffee from a few years back. In comparison, the cost of electricity has remained largely flat.

Like many of you, I have a cellphone to stay connected, and I subscribe to cable channels or satellite TV so I can enjoy more viewing options. Many of us consider these necessities for modern-day life. We can see what we're getting for our money, and we pay the price for those services. In contrast, when we use electricity, we don't necessarily "see" all that we're getting for our money.

But considering what electricity does for us, it's a tremendous value for our quality of life as well as our budgets. For comparison, consider that the average rent increase was nearly 4% (from 2014-2019) according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price

Index (CPI). The cost of medical care increased 3% during this time, and education was not too far behind at 2.6%. So, where did electricity rank? According to the CPI, electricity increased by less than half a percentage point, 0.4%. And as for your electric supplier, Valley REC, that percentage is 0%.

The bottom line: electricity brings everyday value. In fact, Valley REC members experience an average of less than one outage lasting just 118 minutes each year. Considering that electricity is something that we all use around the clock, I'm very proud of our track record. At the same time, we are striving to increase our service reliability, reduce those brief interruptions and reduce costs. We are continually working to improve our operations to ensure a smarter grid and exploring more renewable energy options where possible.

Valley REC provides the reliable service you expect and deserve as valued members of the co-op. And as your trusted energy adviser, we want to help you save you energy and money.

We recognize that the past few months have been challenging for many of our members and we're here to help. If you have questions about your account or need help to work out payment arrangements to keep your lights on, please give us a call, and we will work with you to ensure that the reliable flow of electricity is provided and at the best possible cost.

As always, if you have any questions, comments or concerns, please don't hesitate to give me a call. Thanks, God bless and stay safe. ☀️



PHOTO BY DOUG ROLES

STUDENTS RECOGNIZED: Students selected to represent Valley REC on the 2020 Youth Tour to Washington, D.C. are, front row, from left: Joslyn Frazier, Gabrielle Davignon, Rebecca Christophel, Taylor Uplinger and Briah Kling. Second row: Garrett Nicewonger, Trey Bennett, Allee England, Hannah Campbell, Nicholas Brumbaugh, Karly Diebold and Danelle Osborne. Valley REC President & CEO Rich Bauer, right, met with parents and students June 30 to express the co-op's appreciation of their interest in the program and to wish them well in the future. Missing from photo (but shown on these pages) are: Lauren Hartman, Amy Buseck, Abigail Neff and Lydia Daniels.

Co-op recognizes 2020 Youth Tour students

COVID-19 pandemic cancels annual trip

By Doug Roles

Vice President of Member Services

A highlight of the summer for electric cooperatives across America is sponsoring high school juniors on a weeklong educational trip to the nation's capital through the Rural Electric Youth Tour program. Sadly, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association canceled the 2020 event due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It was to be held June 21-26.

Normally, nearly 1,800 students participate, spending their time in the capital meeting legislators, learning about the cooperative business model, and touring monuments and memorials. More than 100 of those students come from the 13 co-ops in Pennsylvania and one in New Jersey that comprise the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association.

Earlier this year, Valley Rural Electric had selected 16 high school students from nine school districts for Youth

Tour. Recommended by guidance counselors at their respective schools, the students were selected for the trip on the basis of academic achievement, leadership in extracurricular activities and community service.

Because the trip was canceled, Valley REC invited its students to a short get-together at the corporate office near Huntingdon on June 30. Students had the opportunity to meet each other again and received several keepsakes, as well as a \$500 stipend from Valley REC.

"Certainly, we're disappointed that the trip was canceled, but we understand NRECA made the decision with everyone's health and safety in mind," Valley REC President & CEO Rich Bauer said. "We wanted to give our students the opportunity to see each other again and recognize them for being selected as our 2020 Youth Tour group."

Southern Huntingdon County School District had three students selected. Lauren Hartman is the daughter of Leonard and Stacy Hartman of Blairs Mills.



Hartman

Lauren plays on her school's softball team and plays for the Lady Renegades travel team. She plans to major in medical laboratory science and work in a hospital.

Trey Bennett is the son of Dennis and Linda Bennett of Mapleton. Trey is a Boy Scouts of America Life Scout and serves as secretary of his 4-H chapter. He is interested in military history and plans to join the Army.

Rebecca Christophel is the daughter of Nicolee Christophel of Three Springs. She is an active member of her Future Business Leaders of America chapter and enjoys volunteering with the Rockhill Trolley Museum. Rebecca plans to become an audiologist.

Three of the 2020 students are from Tussey Mountain School District. Nicholas Brumbaugh is the son of Bill and Marcy Brumbaugh of James Creek. He is active in 4-H, showing steers and

sheep, and plays football and baseball and wrestles for his high school team. Nicholas' career goals include welding and engineering.

Amy Buseck is the daughter of Richard and Pamela Buseck of James Creek. She is involved in student council and cheerleading. Amy is a member of her school's Students Against Destructive Decisions chapter and plans to become a physical therapist.

Abigail Neff is the daughter of Kathy Creed and Shikir Styles of Cassville.

Abigail serves as class secretary, plays softball and is in the school band. An avid reader, she plans to become a cardiothoracic surgeon.

Joslyn Frazier was to represent Claysburg-Kimmel High School on the 2020 trip. Joslyn is the daughter of Casey Frazier of Claysburg. She also is active in FBLA, as well as student council and prom committee. She plans to pursue a career in business management.

Three Williamsburg High School students were selected. Allee England is the daughter of Keith England and Kara Frye of Williamsburg. She is another Valley REC Youth Tour student who serves as class secretary. She is also on the school volleyball team and the marching band. She enjoys art and music and is exploring career options.

Garrett Nicewonger is the son of Lorie Nicewonger of Williamsburg. He has participated in his school's Model U.N. activities and is involved in track and field, band, chorus, and 4-H. Garret was chosen as Valley REC's candidate to represent PREA in the NRECA Youth Leadership Council program.

Taylor Uplinger is the daughter of Aaron and Julie Uplinger of Williamsburg. She serves as treasurer for her Future Farmers of America (FFA) chapter and is involved in marching and concert band. She is on the track and field team and plays volleyball. Taylor plans to become an obstetrician.



Buseck



Neff

Two students hailed from the Mifflin County School District. Bria Kling of Reedsville is the daughter of Bryan Boreman and Letitia Kelly. She is treasurer of Spanish Club and serves as student council secretary. She enjoys dance and singing in her church choir. She aspires to become a veterinarian.

Danelle Osborne is the daughter of Dennis and Stacey Osborne of Lewistown. She is active in Key Club and History Club and has participated in two school musicals. Danelle plans to obtain her law license and hopes to serve in Congress.

Karly Diebold represented Tyrone High School. She is the daughter of Kenneth and Cheryl Diebold of Altoona. She is active in her church and 4-H, and plays on the school softball team. An FFA member, she plans to become an animal geneticist or livestock nutritionist.

One 2020 Youth Tour student was from Huntingdon Area High School. Gabrielle Davignon is the daughter of Michael and Kathleen Davignon of Huntingdon. She is a member of the volleyball, basketball and track teams. Gabrielle is active in her church and student council and plans to become a nurse practitioner.

Hannah Campbell is a Hollidaysburg Area High School student. The daughter of Carrie Campbell of Duncansville, Hannah is involved in marching band and student council. She also participates in orchestra and has competed in

Rotary Club student speech contests. She plans to study forensics and become an officer in the Navy.

Lydia Daniels, a student from Waynesboro, attends Shalom Christian Academy. Her parents, Joe and Larae Daniels, have a seasonal account with Valley REC. Lydia serves as student council vice president and has acted in two school plays. She participates in her school's youth group and enjoys photography. She hopes to work with children following graduation.

The all-expenses-paid Youth Tour trip is packed with activities, including meetings with rural electric leaders and learning about the principles that govern rural electric and other cooperatives. Students also visit historic sites throughout Washington and tour the Smithsonian museums, Holocaust Museum, National Zoo and Arlington Cemetery. The Youth Tour agenda also includes a dinner cruise on the Potomac River.

Valley REC's selection process begins in October, when school districts are provided Youth Tour applications. The application is also available on Valley's website. The program is open to high school juniors in school districts in which Valley REC has territory. The program is open to students who reside in member and non-member households. 🌟



Daniels



Visitors to Greenwood Furnace State Park, Huntingdon County, can charge their electric vehicles at this station while enjoying the park. A charging station is also available at Cowans Gap State Park, Fulton County. In the fall of 2018, the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources began an initiative to place EV-charging stations at 40 state park locations. Twenty-three have been installed to date. PHOTO BY DOUG ROLES

Meet your employees

Highlighted in this column is a recent addition to the Valley REC team, Ashlee Hicks. She started with the co-op in March as a customer service representative at our corporate office near Huntingdon.

Her responsibilities include processing bill payments that the co-op receives electronically or through the mail. She also directs consumer phone calls to the appropriate departments and speaks with members who are experiencing an outage or having difficulty making monthly payments.

"I enjoy customer service," Hicks says. "I like talking to people and helping them."

Hicks is a 2011 graduate of Southern Huntingdon County High School. Following graduation, she completed a six-month course at Phlebotomy Institute of Central Pennsylvania, in State College, completing more than 100 blood draws to receive her certification.

Not satisfied with the part-time work available at the time in phlebotomy, She found full-time employment working as a bank teller. She spent four years as a teller, working with Clearfield Bank & Trust and then Community State Bank, in Mount Union and Orbisonia, respectively.

She then accepted a position as a receptionist with Mutual Benefit Group, a large insurance provider based in Huntingdon. She was soon promoted to the position of direct bill assistant and then operations service representative. Her work included



PHOTO BY DOUG ROLES

NEW EMPLOYEE: Ashlee Hicks joined the Valley REC team in March. She works as a customer service representative in our corporate office.

processing customer payments and balancing ledgers.

"I was processing commercial lines policies and personal policies and still doing customer service work with the policyholder, helping them to understand their bills," Hicks says of her nearly five years in the insurance industry.

Hicks has been a Valley REC member for the past seven years. She and her husband, Levi, live in Shirley Township, Huntingdon County. They have a son, Jagger, 5, and share their home with two Great Danes and a yellow Labrador.

In their free time, the couple enjoys going to dirt track races, particularly at Port Royal Speedway, and also enjoy trail riding and mudding on ATVs. They recently participated in Mud Bash, a North Carolina event that brings utility vehicle enthusiasts together to test their skills on a variety of off-road courses and water holes.

Hicks says a highlight of her work so far with Valley REC has been meeting members, either over the phone or while helping to staff the front counter.

"I like working for the co-op," she says. "Everyone has been really nice, and the office is laid back."

We're glad she is on the team and willing to dive right in. She's one of the people you can count on. ⚡

THE VALUE OF ELECTRICITY

\$5.30
average cost of a Big Mac® value meal

\$3.87
average daily cost of power

Electricity is expressed on a daily basis using EIA, 2018 Average U.S. Monthly Residential Bill of \$117. Big Mac® is a registered trademark of McDonald's Corporation. McDonald's Corporation does not endorse or sponsor this material.

Sources: Economist.com and EIA, 2018 data.

See you at the Juniata County Fair!
Sept. 5-12, 2020

Look for our display in the commercial building.