

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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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

James Stauffer
Chairman
Allegheny Director

Leroy Barnes
Vice Chairman
PREA Director

Cindy Bigelow
Secretary

Robert Holmes
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Gregory Henry
Randall Huntsman
Linda McMath
Kevin States
Joanne Whitser

Corporate Office Hours
Monday - Thursday
7 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.

Huntingdon/Martinsburg/Shade Gap Office Hours
Monday - Thursday
7 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.

Outages & Emergencies
1-800-432-0680

Guest Column



Beauty – and danger – come in green boxes

By Doug Roles, *Vice President of Member Services*

AT THE time of this writing, snow still covers the ground. Truth be told, I'm getting a little tired of seeing it. I try to appreciate all the seasons, but I'm thinking green thoughts. I've leafed through the new seed and gardening catalogs multiple times. And I'm starting to notice TV shows or commercials set in a lush summer setting, appreciating greenery even in digital pixel form.

Hopefully, when this issue of *Penn Lines* reaches your mailbox, there will be some hints of spring. Maybe the ground is free of snow. Perhaps, we're even seeing a tinge of new green on the lawn.

Of course, there are always some splotches of green on the Valley Rural Electric Cooperative landscape, where pad-mounted transformers serve members' homes. This green is with us in every season, but it's especially important heading into springtime, when thoughts turn to landscaping and children spend more time playing outdoors.

From a utility perspective, we think our pad-mounted transformers look just fine in their evergreen boxes. To us, they have a certain appeal; they're like small monuments to reliable and affordable electric service.

But it often happens that homeowners don't view them in the same light as we do. They tire of seeing the "utility green" and opt to plant shrubs or flowers around the transformers or place planter boxes atop the equipment. But sprucing up a pad-mounted transformer can be dangerous.

While safe, they're not meant for decorating, touching, climbing or playing. You should never dig near a pad-mounted transformer; hitting an underground cable could result in electrical shock or disruption of service.

The surrounding area should be kept clear so that workers can safely maintain transformers if needed. Keep shrubs and structures at least 10 feet away from the transformer doors and 4 feet away from the sides.

Transformers should be visible in all their glory. Consider what could happen if a visitor to your home, perhaps a young driver, does not see the equipment and runs into it with a vehicle.

And remember, small plantings may not stay small. They could require pruning work later in the growing season, causing property owners to work in close proximity to electrical equipment. Children should be reminded to never put fingers, sticks or other objects through cracks in the transformer boxes. And we ask members to report problems. If you notice anything amiss, like a door hanging open, please contact us right away.

Homeowners may not see pad-mounted transformers as the most attractive piece of hardscaping — not like retaining walls, walking paths or koi ponds — but they're there for a reason. And we think they have a beauty all their own — an always green piece of equipment provided by an always ready electric distribution cooperative. ❁

2022 Valley REC Board Candidates

The candidates listed on these pages will have their names on the ballot at the April 8 annual meeting. Nominating meetings for director districts 7, 8 and 9 normally would have been held last month, at a fire hall in each district. However, the continued spread of the coronavirus caused the cancellation of those meetings, as it did last year. Members in the three districts with open seats again this year followed a signature-gathering process to have their name listed on the ballot.

DISTRICT 7

Gregory M. Henry
599 Plum Hollow Road
Hustontown, PA 17229



Greg Henry worked for Valley REC for 39 years. He joined Valley as a laborer in February 1969 and retired in February 2008 as Valley's manager of operations. He also worked as a lineman, a crew chief and manager of what was then the Hustontown-Shade Gap district.

Greg is a 1965 graduate of Forbes Road High School. He served in the U.S. Army from 1966 to 1968 in the USARAL Support Command, Alaska. While stationed there, he had the opportunity to attend the USARAL noncommissioned officer academy, where he was an honor graduate. While working for Valley REC, he completed the management internship program.

A native of Fort Littleton, Greg is president of the Forbes Road Lions Club. He is a member of Clear Ridge United Methodist Church. He serves as church treasurer, is a member of the Pastor-Parish Relationship Committee and is a delegate for this year's annual conference. Additionally, Greg is a trustee for the Clear Ridge Cemetery Association and serves as treasurer for the Clear Ridge Community Association. He is a member of the Fulton County chapter of Gideons International.

Greg and his late wife, Erma, have three children, eight grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. Greg enjoys hunting, bicycling and spending time with the grandkids. He is also an avid reader. Greg has been a Valley REC member since 1972 and has served on Valley's board of directors since 2013. Greg has received the Credentialed Cooperative Director Certificate, Board Leadership Certificate and Director Gold Credential, the highest level for directors. Greg is running unopposed on the ballot for District 7.

DISTRICT 8

Linda J. McMath
12007 Sawmill Road
Shade Gap, PA 17255



Currently, Linda McMath serves as tipstaff for the Huntingdon County Court of Common Pleas. She had also served a four-year term as jury commissioner, an elected position formerly used by county government.

Linda retired in 2004 as a reading specialist at Shade Gap Elementary School in the Southern Huntingdon County School District. She worked in education for 19 years, including one and a half years in the Mifflin County School District. For 12 years, she operated McMath School of Gymnastics in Shade Gap and was a Level 7-rated gymnastic judge. Linda and her husband, Tom, own and operate Avalon of Shade Mountain, a guest house and event facility in Blairs Mills, Huntingdon County, which they spent 14 years restoring. They also operated a family farm in Taylor Township, Fulton County, for 25 years, raising beef, crops and Christmas trees.

For the past 12 years, Linda has served on the Huntingdon County Children's Services Advisory Board. She has served nine years as a youth counselor at Tuscarora Catholic Summer Camp.

Linda is a 1965 graduate of Southern Huntingdon County High School and received her bachelor's degree in health and physical education from Slippery Rock University in 1970. She holds a master's degree in education (as a reading specialist) from Shippensburg University.

Linda and Tom have been married since 1969. They have four children and seven grandchildren. The McMaths attend St. Mary's Catholic Church, Shade Gap, where Linda has served as secretary of the pastoral council for 15 years. She enjoys organic gardening, upholstery, sewing, horseback riding, refinishing furniture, refurbishing old houses and teaching her grandchildren how to sew.

Linda has been a Valley member since 1973. She has served three terms on the co-op board of directors. Linda has received the Credentialed Cooperative Director Certificate, Board Leadership Certificate and Director Gold Credential, the highest level for directors. Linda is running unopposed on the ballot for District 8.

DISTRICT 9

Cindy D. Bigelow
2548 William Penn Highway
Williamsburg, PA 16693

Williamsburg native Cindy Bigelow owns a 180-acre dairy farm. She retired in 2015 from Penn England Farms in Williamsburg. Her prior work experience includes six years with Leidy's Greenhouse in Williamsburg and two and a half years as a baker with Brumbaugh's Old Fashioned Delites, also in Williamsburg.

A 1972 graduate of Central High School in Martinsburg, Cindy is a member of several cooperatives, such as Land O' Lakes and the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau. She serves on the Farmland Preservation Committee of Blair County and is involved with the Williamsburg Community Farm Show. For the past nine years, she has served on the Huntingdon/Blair County Farm Service Agency Committee and is now an FSA adviser.

Cindy has served one year on the Blair County Conservation District board. Additionally, she has served on the Blair County Dairy Promotion Committee.

Cindy has been a member of Fairview Church of the Brethren in Williamsburg for 52 years, where she has served as a deacon and a member of the church board. Her hobbies include making crafts, baking and collecting milk bottles.

Cindy and her late husband, Richard, were married 20 years. She has three children and six grandchildren. Cindy has been a Valley member since 1980. She has served six terms on the co-op board of directors. She currently serves as board secretary. Cindy has received the Credentialed Cooperative Director Certificate, Board Leadership Certificate and Director Gold Credential, the highest level for directors. Cindy's name will appear on the ballot for District 9.



DISTRICT 9

Robin J. Forshey
2492 William Penn Highway
Williamsburg, PA 16693

Robin Forshey is a native of Gannister, near Williamsburg in Blair County, and is a 1976 graduate of Williamsburg High School. She lived near Huntingdon for 20 years before returning to the Williamsburg area.

Since 1988, Robin has worked for Williamsburg Family Practice, part of the UPMC Altoona/AFP Residency Program that trains physicians during a three-year residency. Robin works in the front office as a secretary, receptionist, and billing clerk and teaches practice management to the residency program physicians. She specializes in medical billing and coding.

Robin worked for Altoona Hospital for two years right after high school, completing on-the-job training in medical secretary duties before leaving work to start a family. For 15 years, she helped run her husband Larry's business, Forshey's Landscaping and Nursery, near McConnellstown, Huntingdon County. She handled billing and sales for the business and cared for nursery plants.

Together, Robin and Larry have five grown children and nine grandchildren. Robin looks forward to spending more time with the grandkids after retiring in April.

Robin enjoys attending Dry Run Independent Baptist Church in Duncansville with her daughter. She also enjoys sewing, baking and canning. She and Larry have had service from Valley Rural Electric Cooperative for 20 years while living in the Huntingdon and Williamsburg areas. Robin's name will appear on the ballot for District 9.



2022 Annual Meeting

Due to ongoing COVID-19 restrictions on gatherings, Valley REC's 2022 annual meeting will again follow a drive-thru format. Members can arrive at the fairgrounds anytime from 4-7 p.m. Participants will receive a ballot, an annual report and a \$25 bill credit.

Drive-thru event at the Huntingdon County Fairgrounds

4-7 p.m. Friday, April 8

Elections - Districts 7, 8 & 9

\$25 OFF YOUR ELECTRIC BILL!

A drawing will be held after the event for door prizes. The winners of co-op gift certificates (1 - \$200 & 6 - \$100) will be notified the week following the meeting.

Candidate bios are listed above and on the previous page.

Valley REC announces Youth Tour grant for high school juniors

COVID-19 cancels co-op's 2022 trip

VALLEY Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) is announcing a new grant for high school juniors who ordinarily would have the opportunity to apply for an exciting and educational weeklong trip to the nation's capital. Before COVID-19, Valley REC would sponsor as many as 18 high school juniors on the annual summertime National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's Youth Tour. Now, the co-op is offering a special educational grant in lieu of the trip until travel returns to normal.

Because of the coronavirus pandemic, 2019 was the last time Valley REC sent students to Washington, D.C. In normal years, Valley's students joined nearly 100 other students from electric cooperatives in Pennsylvania and New Jersey and traveled by coach in mid-June to the capital, where they linked up with about 1,500 more high school juniors from across the nation.

"We're saddened that ongoing uncertainty about travel restrictions has again canceled this event for our students," says Doug Roles, Valley's vice president of member services. "Our board of directors wanted to find another way to recognize some of our brightest and most community-minded young leaders and developed this educational grant for that reason."

Youth Tour traces its beginnings to a 1957 address by then Sen. Lyndon Johnson to an NRECA Annual Meeting in Chicago, where he urged co-ops to send young people to the nation's capital to learn about their government. Various states began sending busloads of students, and in 1964, NRECA began coordinating the visits of state delegations.

Valley REC sponsors juniors from member and non-member households, from public, private and home-school programs across its eight-county service territory, on this once-in-a-lifetime experience. Students learn about the cooperative business model and the rural electrification movement of the 1930s. They also tour monuments and museums, meet their congressional representatives, and even enjoy a dinner cruise on the Potomac River.

In 2020, Valley had selected students, but the trip was canceled. The 2021 trip was also canceled, and Valley and its sister co-ops under the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association umbrella decided not to participate in the 2022 event due to travel logistics and restrictions on tourism.

Valley's Youth Tour grant can be used toward future education-related expenses. Applications are available through high school guidance counselors or by contacting the co-op. Selected applicants will be invited to participate in an interview with the co-op board's Youth Tour Committee. The committee will select up to 20 grant recipients based on academic achievement, as well as participation in extracurricular

Electric Cooperative Youth Tour 2014

1,600 high school students in the nation's capital

Representing **640** of America's Electric Cooperatives

ONE WEEK

DAY 1 DAY 2 DAY 3 DAY 4 DAY 5 DAY 6 DAY 7

LEADERSHIP TRAINING **ONE-ON-ONE**
TOUR WASHINGTON DC **CONVERSATIONS WITH**
NATIONAL PEER NETWORK **ELECTED OFFICIALS**

50,000 dreams realized since 1964

youthtour.coop #ytdc

A TRADITION: This 2014 National Rural Electric Cooperative Association ad celebrates 50 years of Youth Tour. In normal years, as many as 1,600 high school juniors participate.

activities and/or community service. It's anticipated that the amount of the award will be approximately \$500. Successful applicants will receive their funds in mid-June.

Juniors in school districts located wholly or in part within Valley's service territory are eligible to apply. Juniors whose parents or guardians are seasonal VREC account holders are also eligible to apply. Completed applications must be received by April 8, 2022. ❁