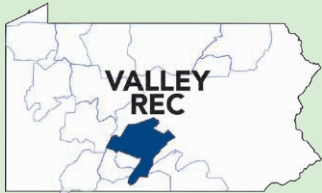


Valley Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

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

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Allegheny Director

Leroy Barnes
Vice Chairman
PREA Director

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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

Want Your Neighbor's Electric Bill? Swap Houses, Habits



DOUG ROLES

I CONSIDER MY COWORKER, Travis Kuhstos, a neighbor. Travis, a Valley Rural Electric Cooperative member, is our staff energy specialist. You may have seen his energy-saving tips and advice in this column from time to time.

Travis' house and my house are separated by four townships, a county line and a mountain, but at work, his office space is right next door. So, at the very least, he is my work neighbor.

Being in the same hallway, I often hear him speaking on the phone with our members about a variety of electrical service concerns. If you have questions about energy conservation or our demand response (water heater switch) program, or you think your bill has suddenly and inexplicably spiked, Travis is who you want to contact. In most instances, he can resolve your concern.

He does, however, get stumped every now and again when members call to say their electric bill is higher than their neighbor's bill. We're not sure how to respond to that one.


Certainly, we understand how the question could arise, as neighbors talk to each other and compare utility bills. But if there's one thing your friendly, neighborhood co-op energy specialist can't do, it's make your bill add up to what your neighbor pays. Callers will often say to Travis that since their house is similar to the one next door — perhaps they are both three-bedroom, single-story ranch houses — the bills should be similar.

That sounds reasonable, except no two homes/households are the same. Were the homes constructed of the same materials? Is the insulation the same? What about the age and size of appliances? Then there's a really big question: How is the home heated and cooled?

Let's say that somehow, some way, all those items are the same. Perhaps the homes were built at the same time in a development, but you still must consider the location. Is one on a hill? Is one shaded by trees? Which one gets the most afternoon sun?

What if at this point the answers have all been yes; everything truly is the same. There's one more aspect to consider, and it could be the most important: How does the family use energy?

Let's say you could move your family into that "lower-electric-bill" house. Perhaps the neighbors are moving, and they gave you a good deal. To have their bill, you would have to live like they did. That means the same thermostat settings, which may not be to your liking. It could mean shorter showers. What if your dog sleeps with a nightlight and their pet did not? What if their kids were model children who always turned off lights and never stood in front of the refrigerator with the door open? What if you sleep with a fan running?

Variables stack up quickly when it comes to energy use. There are numerous factors unique to your bill. For tips on making your bill the most affordable it can be, feel free to get in touch with us. We'll do what we can, except tell your neighbors they have to move. 

DOUG ROLES

VICE PRESIDENT, MEMBER SERVICES

Co-op Holds Nominating Meetings in Districts 2, 4 & 6

DOUG ROLES, VICE PRESIDENT, MEMBER SERVICES

IN FEBRUARY, NEARLY 400 MEMBERS and guests gathered at nominating meetings held to select board candidates for Valley Rural Electric Cooperative's (REC) Districts 2, 4 and 6. The nominees, shown on the following pages, were selected to stand for election to three-year terms on the co-op's nine-member board of directors. The election will take place at the drive-thru annual meeting, which starts at 4 p.m. Friday, April 5, at the Huntingdon County Fairgrounds.

This year's dinner meetings were held at the Newton-Wayne and Three Springs volunteer fire companies in Huntingdon County (Districts 2 and 4, respectively) and at the East Freedom Fire Hall in Blair County (District 6).

Valley REC President & CEO Rich Bauer chaired the meetings. Following the meal, he presided over the nominating process and gave members an update about their electric cooperative.

Bauer reported that, after the kilowatt-hour rate increase last year (the co-op's first in a decade), this year's rates and possibly next year's will likely remain stable. The 2023 increase was due to wholesale power costs increasing by nearly 30%. Bauer reported that, even with that adjustment, the co-op's rates are as much as 40% lower than other power company rates in the region.

"We may be able to hold that for 2025 and possibly beyond," Bauer said. "Things are looking really good, but I wouldn't want to predict too much further out."

The CEO explained the co-op is fortunate to own or have long-term contracts for more than 65% of its generation needs. He noted, however, that one of the biggest factors

impacting how much the cooperative pays for wholesale power on the open market is the capacity charge, a fee based on previous use during periods of peak demand. Bauer said Valley REC members can help mitigate that cost by participating in the demand response program.

"Capacity controls more than half that cost," Bauer said. "It's very important we keep our capacity charge down. By having a demand-response unit put on your water heater, you're helping your neighbors and you're helping the co-op."

Bauer encouraged members to consider participating. New participants receive a \$100 bill credit.

He also announced the co-op will rebuild its Three Springs substation this year and will again spend more than \$1.5 million on tree trimming to increase power quality and reliability. Bauer also discussed net metering and fielded several questions that addressed

such topics as electric vehicles and power surges.

A member at the Three Springs event said her rates are lower than those of her previous power company and praised Valley REC's line crews for braving poor weather to restore power in her area.

"We love being part of a co-op," she said.

Valley began holding open nomination meetings in 1975 instead of relying on a nominating committee appointed by the board. In 1989, those open meetings started to include full-course meals for all participating consumers. 🍴



NOMINATING MEETINGS: Valley Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) President & CEO Rich Bauer, above, speaks to co-op members at the Three Springs fire hall during the District 4 nomination meeting, which drew 146 members and guests. Below, Valley REC members move through the buffet line at the Newton-Wayne Fire Co. banquet hall following the District 2 nomination meeting to select candidates for the cooperative's board of directors.



2024 Valley REC Board Candidates

DISTRICT 2

A 1978 graduate of Kishacoquillas High School, **Jim Stauffer** owns and operates a 60-acre dairy farm with a herd of 150 milking cows and 90 replacement heifers. He farms a total of 170 acres and ships his milk through Dairy Farms of America Cooperative.

Jim was employed for 10 years as manager of Brookland Mills, a retail livestock feed and fuel oil delivery service in McVeytown. Before that, he was a truck driver for a fertilizer plant in the Belleville area.

Jim and his wife, Carol, attend Calvary Bible Church. Married 43 years, they have three grown, married children — twins, Ben and Brittney, and their younger sibling, Josh — and six grandchildren.

A native of Belleville, Jim has been a member of Valley Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) since 1993 and has served on the co-op's board of directors since 1997. He held the office of vice chairman for two years and currently serves as the board's chairman. He also represents Valley REC on the Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc., Board of Directors and was recently elected the board's chairman.



Jim Stauffer
175 Aultz Lane
McVeytown, PA 17051

DISTRICT 4

Joanne Whitsel has been a Valley REC member since 1971. Before retiring, she was director of the Crossroads Pregnancy Center, a faith-based and life-affirming service with offices in Huntingdon, Mifflin, and Juniata counties. She also recently retired from an antique consignment business she successfully operated for eight and a half years at the Antique Depot in Duncansville, Blair County.

Joanne served as jury commissioner for the Huntingdon County Court of Common Pleas for 14 years, and, for the past 10 years, she has served the court as tipstaff. Joanne graduated from Captain Jack (now Mount Union Area) High School and then completed the cosmetology program at Penn State Beauty Academy, State College. She was a self-employed hairdresser for 20 years.

A native of Wayne Township, Mifflin County, Joanne likes to stay active and, when time permits, enjoys painting and drawing. She is a member of Cornelius Chapel Methodist Church and also attends Beech Run Brethren Church, both in Hares Valley. Joanne enjoys spending time with her extended family. She and her late husband, Nelson, have three grown children, Jonelle, Nathan, and Jonathan.

Since joining the cooperative's board of directors in 2015, Joanne has earned the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's (NRECA) Credentialed Cooperative Director certificate, the Board Leadership certificate, and the Director Gold credential, the highest honor for any director. She has maintained this certification by continuing to participate in educational opportunities presented by NRECA.



Joanne Whitsel
7925 Windy Summit Lane
Mapleton Depot, PA
17052

DISTRICT 4

James Palmer, a Valley REC member since 1991, has served as principal of Youth Forestry Camp No. 3 in Trough Creek State Park, James Creek, for the past four years. He was a vocational instructor at the facility, operated by Tuscarora Intermediate Unit 11, for many of his 18 years of service there.

James graduated from Riverside High School in Ellwood City, Pa. He then attended Penn State University, where he earned bachelor's degrees in horticulture and agriculture education. After college, he spent 14 years as an ag science teacher at Huntingdon Area High School.

James has been a Lions Club member for 34 years and is currently treasurer of the Trough Creek Valley Lions Club. He has served as president and vice president and held other club offices.

James and his wife, Lora, attend Harmony Church of God in Calvin, where she plays piano and he is leader of the worship team. They also attend Crossview Missional Church, where their children are involved in various activities. The church is in the former Trough Creek Elementary School building.

James and Lora have six biological children and have served as a foster family for 15 years. They've fostered 20 children, eight of whom they adopted. Three of those children live with the Palmers and attend the Southern Huntingdon County School District.

The Palmers ride and raise horses on their 60-acre property. They enjoy family time and boating on the lake, and they are classic and antique car enthusiasts.



James R. Palmer
17125 Beavertown Road
Todd, PA 16685

Continued on page 16D

2024 Valley REC Board Candidates

DISTRICT 6

Leroy Barnes has successfully operated a family farm in partnership with his brother, Barry, since 1968. Previously, they milked more than 200 Holsteins, but they transitioned to a beef operation and now manage a herd of about 200. They also raise corn and beans on approximately 700 acres.

A 1966 graduate of Claysburg-Kimmel High School, Leroy holds an associate degree in computer management from the ICM School of Business in Pittsburgh.

Leroy is a member of the Mount Hope United Church of Christ in Blue Knob. He is a former member of the Blue Knob Fire Company and served three years as a director for Long's Dairy, a milk marketing cooperative in Tyrone. He also served as a director on the Allied Milk Producers board.

In his free time, Leroy enjoys hunting. He has three grown children and six grandchildren. A native of Blue Knob, Leroy has been a member of Valley Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) for more than 36 years. He has served on the co-op board for 24 years, including as vice chairman, and is the co-op's representative on the board of the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association.



Leroy Barnes
445 Sarah Drive
Portage, PA 15946

DISTRICT 6

Dennis Strayer has owned and operated Strayer Excavating in East Freedom for 27 years. The business provides site work for new home construction, including digging basements and installing driveways, and offers excavation services for septic system repairs.

Before starting his own business, Dennis worked locally in construction. He is a 1990 graduate of Claysburg-Kimmel High School. He has been a member of Valley REC since 2014.

Dennis has two children, ages 16 and 20, with his late wife, Amy, who passed away in 2011. He is engaged to Bobbijo Markovich and will be stepfather to two more children, ages 14 and 21.

In his free time, Dennis enjoys hunting, riding motorcycles and spending time with family.



Dennis Strayer
163 Cream Hollow Road
East Freedom, PA 16637

**Pull it
together!**



BUSY JANUARY: High winds on Jan. 9-10 and again on Jan. 14 kept Valley Rural Electric Cooperative's line crews busy. Scenes like this one from Todd Township, Huntingdon County, were common. Crew Leader Adam Atherton, left, and Third-Year Lineman James "Storm" Vaughn, right, pulled this line back into place and spliced it together, restoring service to about a dozen members.

