

Valley Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

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FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO

Demand response helps bridge gap to clean energy requirements



by Edward A. Dezich
President & CEO

VALLEY Rural Electric has a long history of promoting energy conservation and “clean power.” We have continually supported initiatives that encourage efficiency and earth-friendly power production. And recently, along with other Pennsylvania electric cooperatives, we helped shape the state’s renewable portfolio standard (RPS) law.

Under RPS, private power companies and competitive electric generation suppliers across the state must include increasing amounts of green energy in their generation mix — up to 18 percent by 2020. Rural electric co-ops aren’t daunted by these stringent regulations because we’ve already been meeting RPS requirements for more than two decades through programs like the Coordinated Load Management System (CLMS).

Want not, waste not

Over the years, Pennsylvania co-ops have successfully demonstrated to legislators that we are interested in renewable generation, as reflected in our ownership of the 21-megawatt hydroelectric project at Lake Raystown and our purchase of hydropower from the New York Power Authority. More importantly, we have advanced the argument that the cleanest megawatt is the one not produced at all.

Through the CLMS, the need for new generating capacity is reduced, system efficiency is improved and costly demand charges are cut. How?

Electricity is produced for immediate


use; it can’t be stored economically. Because of this, power plants must meet demand requirements at all times. Since electric systems are generally sized to correspond to peak demand — the times when consumers collectively use the most electricity — lowering peak demand reduces overall plant and capital cost requirements.

If we can decrease the amount of electricity needed during peak periods, we also reduce the price we pay for power because generation costs are higher during those times.

Technology at work

The CLMS reduces demand by shifting electric load to off-peak hours. Load control receivers are installed on consumers’ electric water heaters or other appliances. When demand approaches a high level, a signal is sent to the receivers, which temporarily switch off power to the heaters or appliances they are connected to, reducing demand across an entire service area.

We believe demand response is an important and viable resource to use in controlling electric rates. In fact, statistics show demand response initiatives have helped reduce electricity consumption by up to 4 percent. With that in mind, we are preparing to upgrade and enhance Valley’s current CLMS capabilities so that we can take advantage of all that load management has to offer.

Demand response is just another way your co-op is actively seeking ways to save you money while meeting your electric needs. In the ongoing battle to control costs and fulfill government requirements, remember that your co-op is on your side. 

Opportunity knocks on wood

Valley REC members
hit pay dirt with unlikely
business venture

BY SUSAN R. PENNING

*Communications Specialist,
Member Services Department*

WHEN YOU WALK INTO Marty and Lisa Parsons' sawmill sales center in rural Shade Gap, Huntingdon County, you might notice that the place looks more like a ski lodge than a woodworker's warehouse.

The tastefully decorated lobby boasts a vaulted ceiling with exposed beams and tongue and groove pine boards throughout. Interesting details include track lighting and a solid wood sales counter, built from various indigenous species, that incorporates an inlaid wooden checkerboard. A coffee bar and display racks full of shiny new outdoor power equipment lure customers to linger.

The sales center project, which was completed last summer, was the result of many factors working together in the Parsons' favor. The couple shares a strong entrepreneurial spirit and sharp business sense. They have family nearby to help and encourage them. And they're willing to take risks when necessary. Plus, they have a knack for being in the right place at the right time.



ABOVE: Lisa and Marty Parsons own the new Wood-Mizer sales center along Route 522 in Shade Gap. In addition to running a full-time business, the couple stays busy raising their three children.

RIGHT: Wood-Mizer employee Rich Hamman resharpens a blade at the Shade Gap sales center. Part-time employees Roger Curfman and Todd Parsons also help with business operations.

"Selling portable sawmills was never really in our plans," Marty says.

He had worked as a diesel mechanic for the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT). Lisa had developed training manuals for Ingersoll Rand in Shippensburg before taking on her toughest job — stay-at-home mom to twin boys, Nicky and Nathan.

In 2002, their career paths took a turn, however. In his search to find parts





ABOVE: The new facility, conveniently located along a well-traveled stretch of road, was built on land acquired from Marty's father, Bob Parsons. Bob also helped design the building plans.

for an old family sawmill, Marty was approached about becoming a regional product dealer for Wood-Mizer, an Indianapolis-based portable sawmill manufacturer.

"It sort of fell in our laps," Lisa says. "They dropped off a mill, Marty tried it out, and we agreed to start selling part time."

Lisa fondly remembers their first customer.

"This sweet elderly man came in with bib overalls and a brown paper bag full of \$20 bills and said, 'I came to order a sawmill. How much money do I need?' It took me 45 minutes on the phone just to figure out how to place the order. He was very patient through the whole thing," Lisa recalls.

That first sale marked the beginning of a booming family business. In 2004, the same year the couple adopted 9-month-old daughter Aйдiana from Kazakhstan, Marty decided to retire early from PennDOT to run the Wood-Mizer operation full time. Since then, the Parsons' customer base has grown substantially. They own one of only eight authorized sales centers in the United States and serve a six-state region. In 2006, their best year so far, they sold 165 portable sawmills ranging from about \$4,000 to \$47,000 apiece.

Along with sawmill sales and service, the Parsons sell outdoor power equipment, such as chain saws and lawn



trimmers, and offer blade re-sharpening. They also participate in about 24 trade shows a year. And they recently hosted a Wood-Mizer 25th Anniversary Open House celebration at their new sales center. About 500 people attended the event, which was catered by the Shade Gap Fire Co. Ladies Auxiliary.

"There seems to be a real following behind Wood-Mizer products," Lisa says. "Our customers range from hobbyists and farmers to log home builders and wood-working professionals."

Interestingly, the Amish community gives the Parsons a lot of business.

Did you know?

Portable sawmills use a band blade rather than a circular blade, which reduces weight and the size of the bearings and support blocks. The head moves back and forth while the log being cut remains stationary. Portable mills can be set up on site, near the trees being cut.

WILL WORK FOR WOOD: The Parsons stock a wide range of Wood-Mizer portable sawmills at their store. The mills range in price from about \$4,000 to \$47,000 apiece.

"We have sold five large sawmills in the Belleville area," Marty says.

Although they stay pretty busy, the Parsons say they're glad they made the transition to self-employment.

"Being in charge of your own business is exciting," Lisa says. "Of course, you have to be totally dedicated. We've answered phone calls as late as 11 p.m. You have to be available because you need that business."

"It's good, though, because we develop a personal relationship with our customers and they know we're always there for them," Marty adds.

The Parsons' sales center at 22638 Croghan Pike in Shade Gap is open Mondays through Fridays from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturdays from 8:30 a.m. to noon. For more information, call 814/259-9976 or email pawoodmizer@earthlink.net. ☺

Meet your employees

Highlighted in this column is a recent addition to the Valley Rural Electric team, Susan R. Penning. Susan came to Valley REC in December 2006 as a communications specialist in the member services and public relations department at the co-op's headquarters near Huntingdon.

"I write stories and take photos for *Penn Lines* and *Valley News*, and I design and lay out the pages for both," Susan explains. "I draft press releases, develop ads and create other co-op materials. I help present educational programs for children and adults. I answer consumer questions about a variety of energy-related issues. And I help to plan and coordinate events, such as district nominating meetings, annual meeting, Youth Tour and county fair displays."

A native of Huntingdon County, Susan is a 1997 graduate of West Perry High School in Elliottsburg, Pa. She attended Word of Life Bible Institute in Schroon Lake, N.Y., for one year then transferred to Liberty University in Lynchburg, Va., where she received a bachelor's degree in communications. She later earned an



Susan R. Penning

associate degree in public affairs from the Community College of the Air Force and a master's degree in education from Troy State University of Troy, Ala.

Prior to her employment with Valley REC, Susan spent one year as a traffic assistant at television station WHTM in Harrisburg. She also worked for the Perry County Council of the Arts for a short time. She then joined the U.S. Air Force, serving four years as a public affairs specialist at Shaw Air Force Base, S.C.

Susan and her husband Matt have been married seven years. They live in Germany Valley near Mount Union, Huntingdon County, with their 15-month-old daughter, Eva. Susan's parents, Bob and Marge Allenbaugh, reside in Mount Union with

her two younger sisters, Megan and Jackie.


Susan attends the New Life Fellowship Church of God in Mount Union, where she is a member of the choir and assists with praise and worship. She also enjoys making music with her family, playing guitar and singing. The rest of her free time is spent in the outdoors — walking, hiking and fishing.

As for her job with the cooperative, Susan says it can't be beat.

"I like the fact that I live among the people I work for. I have a connection to the area," Susan says. "I also like the creativity involved with what we do — the design and layout and photography. I don't like starting a story and looking at that blank page — no one likes that stage — but the finished product brings satisfaction."

"The co-op as a whole really cares about people," Susan adds. "Because we're not-for-profit, we have an obligation to our consumers and that makes us different. The co-op also cares about the needs and concerns of its employees and tries to accommodate them. And I relate to the members because I believe they're like me — we enjoy being part of a rural community."

Susan's fellow employees at Valley REC are glad she is part of the co-op community. She's one of the people you can count on.



Reserve your seat for the

2008 Valley Rural Electric Cooperative District Nominating Meeting Dinners

District 1	Feb. 4 - 6 p.m.
	<i>Morrison's Cove Memorial Park</i>
District 3	Feb. 5 - 6 p.m.
	<i>Marklesburg Fire Hall</i>
District 5	Feb. 7 - 6 p.m.
	<i>Shaver's Creek Community Building</i>

Don't miss the opportunity to choose candidates for Valley REC's board of directors and to share a meal with your fellow co-op members.

Return your reservation card today!

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