

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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Guest Column



'Forgettable' is fine with us

By Doug Roles, *Manager of Member Services*

IN 1951, jazz pianist and recording artist Nat King Cole scored a hit with the song "Unforgettable." If you've ever heard the song (or even crooned along to it in the shower, maybe), you know the lyrics praise someone for being "unforgettable, in every way."

So memorable is the subject of this tune that he/she is likened to "a song of love that clings to me."

Wow! That's some serious affection.

And the song has endured. It became a hit again in 1991 when Cole's daughter, Natalie, recorded it as a tribute to her father. How awesome to have someone find you that memorable (as long as you're remembered for a good reason!).

But there are times when it's all right to not be memorable. In fact, during February's series of nominating meetings, several members told Valley REC staff how "forgettable" they find one co-op program.

"You'll never notice it," said one member.

"You don't remember it's there," someone else agreed.

"I have one and I notice no difference," another member said.

These were some sweet nothings for us to hear, since the members were commenting on the co-op's demand response program.

So what is the demand response program? And why do we hope you forget all about it? The short version is that when homes and businesses are using the most electricity, such as

during a hazy, hot and humid summer afternoon, the open-market price for that power skyrockets as "demand" increases. Even though it can be driven by large population centers far away from our service territory, that across-the-grid capacity charge determines to a large extent Valley REC's wholesale power cost.

Fortunately, when these periods of peak demand occur, our generation supplier (Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc., in Harrisburg) can remotely activate demand response units and lessen load on the system by temporarily shutting off water heaters.

There is no cost to you to participate in the program. In fact, you get a \$100 bill credit. A technician comes to your home, installs the demand response unit (DRU) in about an hour, and then, we hope you forget all about it.

It's so forgettable because water heaters are well-insulated and can be shut off for periods of time — lessening capacity cost — with minimal loss in water temperature. The DRU can be adjusted to family size, so you shouldn't run out of hot water.

More than 4,200 Valley REC members are participating. They're helping to stabilize wholesale power costs for the co-op, even if they've forgotten they're doing it.

If you're not already in the program, please contact us and find out if it's right for you. It would be incredible if someone so unforgettable as you found us to be (un)forgettable, too. 

Co-op holds nominating meetings in Districts 7, 8 & 9

By Doug Roles
Manager of Member Services

IN February, Valley REC held nominating meetings in co-op Districts 7, 8 and 9. The nominees shown on the following page were selected to stand for election to the co-op board of directors at the annual meeting to be held Friday, April 8, at Huntingdon Area High School.

While the meetings [held in Hustontown, Fulton County; Shade Gap, Huntingdon County; and Geeseytown (Hollidaysburg), Blair County] gave co-op members the opportunity to select nominees, it also gave Valley REC President & CEO Rich Bauer an opportunity to update members on the state of the co-op during a question-and-answer period following the meal.

“The state of the union is: ‘Your cooperative is in great shape,’” he said.

Rich explained that the co-op’s equity is up to nearly 40 percent because the business has borrowed less money in recent years for operations. There also has not been an increase in the kilowatt-hour rate in three years.

Rich explained that the co-op, through Allegheny Electric Coopera-

tive, Inc. (Allegheny) in Harrisburg, is fortunate to own or control through long-term contracts 70 percent of its wholesale electric supply.

“We do have to go out on the open market for the other 30 percent,” he said. “But we’re finding ways to keep that 30 percent as low as we can.”

Members in attendance were urged to consider participating in the co-op’s demand response program, which offers a \$100 bill credit for helping to stabilize the price Allegheny (and Valley REC) pays for power. Members who have a demand response unit (DRU) placed on their water heater help the co-op lessen the amount of electricity being consumed during periods of peak demand. This helps stabilize the capacity charge paid by Allegheny. Nearly a dozen members made appointments for DRU installations following the nominating meetings.

Questions from members ranged from interconnection of renewable energy sources to the future of coal. One member said she was glad to have not lost power during a recent heavy snowfall. Rich said Valley’s rights-of-way maintenance program is the best he’s seen and minimizes chances for outages. He thanked members for their cooperation.

“We cut every five years, ground to sky and clean out the floor,” he said. “Everybody ‘downstream’ of you is counting on your right-of-way to have power.”



NOMINATION: District 7 Nominating Chairman Daniel Buchanan (above, right) and Valley REC President & CEO Rich Bauer review the nominating process at Hustontown Fire Hall.



ANSWERS: Valley REC Energy Specialist Travis Kuhstos, right, talks to members Bill and Sally Eisaman of Hustontown about the co-op’s demand response program.



CO-OP BUSINESS: Vincent Bobetich of Duncansville (at podium) asks for nominations at the Geeseytown Fire Hall (District 9). He is flanked by Kim Kane, Valley REC executive secretary, and Rich Bauer, co-op president & CEO. At right: Clay McMath of East Waterford (at podium) serves as nominating chairperson at the Shade Gap Fire Co. Ladies Auxiliary building for the District 8 meeting.



2015 Valley REC board candidates

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 as a repair specialist in the Quartermaster Corps. While working for Valley REC, he completed the Management Internship Program.

A native of Fort Littleton, Greg is a director and past president of the Forbes Road Lions Club. He is a charter organization representative for Cub Scout Pack 47, Hustontown. He is a member of Clear Ridge United Methodist Church, where he serves as treasurer and is a member of the Pastor-Parish Relationship Committee and a delegate to annual conference. Additionally, Greg is a trustee for the Clear Ridge Cemetery Association and is active with the Clear Ridge Community Association that plans benefit events.

Greg and his wife, Erma, have three children, eight grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. He is 68 years old and enjoys hunting, bicycling and spending time with the grandkids. Greg is also an avid reader. He has been a Valley member since 1972. Greg is running unopposed for the District 7 position.

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. 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 one-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 six years, Linda has served on the Huntingdon County Children's Services Advisory Board. She has served seven 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 six grandchildren. The McMaths attend St. Mary's Catholic Church, Shade Gap, where Linda has served as secretary of the pastoral council for nine years. She enjoys sewing, horseback riding, refinishing furniture, refurbishing old houses and teaching her grandchildren how to sew.

Linda is 68 years old and has been a Valley member since 1973. She has served one term on the co-op board of directors and has received both her Credentialed Cooperative Director Certificate and Board Leadership Certificate. Currently she is working on the Director Gold Certificate, the highest level for directors. Her name will appear in the first position on the ballot for District 8.

DISTRICT 8

Harry O'Donnell
21646 Shade Valley Road
Shade Gap, PA 17255

Harry O'Donnell worked for Valley Rural Electric Cooperative for 38 years, holding a number of positions before retiring from the co-op in 2010. He went to work for Valley REC a week after graduating from Southern Huntingdon County High School in 1971.

His first job was spraying herbicides on rights-of-way in what was then the co-op's Hustontown district. Harry became an equipment operator and then worked as a lineman in the Shade Gap district from 1980 to 1990 before becoming the outside supervisor for the Shade Gap district. Harry completed multiple safety trainings and also completed the co-op's supervisory training program.



Harry has volunteered with the auxiliary of the Shade Gap Fire Co. for the past eight years. He lends a hand with dinners and operates the burger grill at the Shade Gap Picnic. He especially enjoys making hoagies for fire company fundraisers.

Harry has been a member of the Cromwell Masonic Lodge No. 572 in Orbisonia for 26 years. He is a member of Calvary Independent Baptist Church in Saltillo.

Harry enjoys golf, travel and tinkering on the family farm. Harry and his wife, Trudy, have been married for 26 years. They have two daughters and five grandchildren. Harry, age 64, has been a Valley REC member since 1973. His name will appear in the second position on the ballot for District 8.

DISTRICT 9

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

A 61-year-old 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 one-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 Blair County Dairy Promotion Committee and the Farmland Preservation Committee of Blair County, and is involved with the Williamsburg Community Farm Show. For the past four years, she has served on the Huntingdon/Blair County Farm Service Agency Committee.

Cindy has been a member of the Bible Baptist Church of Tyrone for the past two years and was a member of Fairview Church of the Brethren in Williamsburg for 46 years, where she 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 five grandchildren. Cindy has been a Valley member since 1980. She has served four terms on the co-op board of directors. She currently serves as board secretary. She has received the Credentialed Cooperative Director Certificate and the Board Leadership Certificate, as well as the Director Gold Certificate. Cindy is running unopposed on the ballot for District 9. 



Valley employees learn meth lab awareness, workplace safety

By Doug Roles

Manager of Member Services

WHAT do you do if you come across a bunch of discarded cold medicine containers, broken lithium batteries and jugs of acetone? What if you hear someone threatening to harm co-workers? Valley REC employees learned “If you see something, it’s best to say something” during a state police presentation in January that increased awareness of methamphetamine lab activity and workplace security.

Pennsylvania State Police Trooper Dave McGarvey, community service officer, and Megan Sands, an intelligence analyst with the Pennsylvania Criminal Intelligence Center, stressed that police rely on the public for tips on criminal activity. They presented information on the telltale signs of meth labs. They also discussed how to respond to a workplace violence incident and what to do if an employee encounters someone acting suspiciously.

Electric co-op employees often work in remote areas where they may be the first to stumble onto covert activities. The co-op also has the responsibility of keeping infrastructure, such as substations, secure.

“You guys in the energy sector are vital,” Megan said.

Dave, a co-op member for nearly 20 years, reviewed a list of meth lab indicators, including discarded cold medicine containers, match booklets and camp fuel or acetone. Discolored propane tanks are another giveaway because meth “cooks” use them to store anhydrous ammonia, another ingredient in the meth-making process.

“For every pound of meth, there are four pounds of trash produced,” Dave said. “Excessive trash is a good indicator that people are doing something they shouldn’t be.”

Why someone would want to ingest a substance made from batteries, fingernail polish remover and cold medicine is a subject of debate. Why someone would make it and sell it is pretty straightforward — money. Two hundred dollars of materials could yield a drug dealer \$2,000 in sales, Dave reported.



ABOVE: Trooper Dave McGarvey, a Pennsylvania State Police community service officer, talks to Valley REC employees about the dangers of meth labs. BELOW: Valley REC Operations Manager Todd Ross, right, invited McGarvey and Megan Sands, an intelligence analyst with the Pennsylvania Criminal Intelligence Center, to visit the co-op.



The number of meth labs in Pennsylvania and across the U.S. is increasing, and investigating them can be dangerous due to the explosive and caustic nature of the chemicals involved. The state police call in officers from their Clandestine Labs Response Team when sites are discovered. The cook site can be in a residence, a hotel room or even in the trunk of a car.

During the information session held at the co-op’s Huntingdon District office, co-op employees also watched a short video on the “Run, Hide, Fight” approach to handling an active shooter situation in a workplace. Remaining calm and having a plan are critical parts of a safe resolution.

Megan said one of the biggest security threats is the “lone wolf” threat from individuals who become radicalized. She said the FBI currently has 900 active terrorism investigations. Megan said it’s important that people report suspicious behavior and said if something doesn’t feel right, it probably isn’t.

“In this day and age you have to take every threat seriously,” Dave said.

Thanks to technology, reporting is now as easy as downloading the “See Something, Send Something” app. The download is available through iTunes or just do an internet search for “See Something, Send Something.”

2016 Annual Meeting

7 p.m., April 8, 2016 - Huntingdon Area High School
 Scenic territory slides - 6:30 p.m.
 Elections - Districts 7, 8 & 9

Activities and a dairy presentation for the kids

Entertainment

Authors and recording artists
 Steve and Annie Chapman

Door prizes - Co-op gift certificates
 1- \$250 & 4 - \$75

\$15 OFF YOUR ELECTRIC BILL AND A GREAT NIGHT OUT!
 YOU WON'T WANT TO MISS IT!