

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



Be the one that got away from downed wires

By Doug Roles, *Manager of Member Services*

A COUPLE of weekends ago, my son asked if I would take him and three of his friends fishing. Since I was due for some rod and reel time myself, and the kids wanted something to do other than video games, I piled the boys in the truck and headed to our favorite river access.

Now these boys range in age from 12 to 16 and vary in size and sensibleness. Making sure they stayed safe while wading was top priority. Getting home without any hooks lodged in body parts also made for a good day. There weren't any bee stings or bruises either – and just a small amount of bleeding.

Would you believe one of those boys got himself bitten by a dead muskie? This is no fish story. Well, it is a story about a fish. But it's true.

While wading near the shore, the boys found the intact carcass of a 3-foot long muskie. Boys being boys, they hefted up the fish to have a looksee. The youngest (who just happens to be the most accident-prone, too) poked his finger in the half-open maw to see how sharp the teeth are. Turns out, they're pretty darn sharp! Just as he touched his fingers to the teeth, the fish rolled. (No, not on its own; one of the other boys jostled it.) So, the youngest wound up with a nick on the end of his finger.

That fish looked harmless. But I guess it still had some bite in it after all.

You know it's the same with downed wires. They pique the curiosity (especially that of children) and they don't look all that dangerous. But a big jolt could still be in the making.

So don't be fooled. Downed power lines could carry an electric current strong enough to cause serious injury or possibly death. If you happen upon a downed power line, don't get lured into feeling things out for yourself. Just move away from the line and anything touching it.

And did you know there's a right way to move away if you're on foot? Shuffle away with small steps, keeping your feet together and on the ground at all times. Or hop away, keeping your feet together and making sure that both feet leave the ground and land simultaneously. We call this "bunny hopping" when we present safety programs to elementary school children. You call it what you like, but it minimizes the possibility for a strong electric shock since it prevents electricity from moving through you from a high voltage zone to a lower one.

Do not touch someone who is in contact with a downed wire and do not attempt to move the power line by using a broom handle or a stick. Even normally non-conductive materials like wood or cloth, if slightly wet or dirty, can conduct electricity and electrocute you.

If you are in a vehicle that is in contact with a downed line, stay put. If you must get out because of fire, jump out with both feet together and avoid contacting the energized vehicle and the ground at the same time. Then bunny hop away.

Call the co-op or emergency services if you see downed power lines. Remember, downed wires, like dead fish, can still bite. ⚡

Valley REC sponsors 10 area students on Youth Tour 2016

By Doug Roles
Manager of Member Services

VALLEY Rural Electric Cooperative sponsored 10 high school students on the 2016 Rural Electric Youth Tour to Washington, D.C., June 12-17. The teens, eight juniors and two seniors from five different schools, spent their time in the capital meeting legislators and learning about the cooperative business model.

They joined more than 1,700 other juniors and seniors from electric cooperatives all over the country — 88 from co-ops in Pennsylvania and New Jersey — who participated in the event.

Each year, the all-expenses-paid trip is packed with activities, including meetings with lawmakers and rural electric leaders, visits to historic monuments throughout Washington and tours of the Smithsonian museums, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Newseum, National Zoo and Arlington National Cemetery. The agenda also includes a cruise on the Potomac River and a parade at the Iwo Jima Memorial.

Youth Tour participants are dependents of co-op members. During the trip, they learn about the principles that govern rural electric and other cooperatives. Recommended by guidance counselors at their respective schools, the students are selected for the trip on the basis of academic achievement, leadership in extracurricular activities and community service.

The two recent graduates on the trip this year were both from Fannett-Metal High School. Nicolette Douglas of Fort Loudon is the daughter of Denise Douglas. Jordan Becker, also of Fort Loudon, is the daughter of Robert and Danielle Becker.

Nicolette's career goal is to become a state prosecutor. She served as president of her school's Library Journalism Club during her senior year and was involved in History Club. She enjoys

sculpting and drawing.

Jordan hopes to attain a bachelor's degree in nursing and work in a neonatal intensive care unit. She was captain of her cheerleading squad and was involved in the Power Source Club and Drama Club. She has participated in mission trips to Honduras and New York state.

Mount Union Area High School had two students on Youth Tour 2016. They are Leah Hildebrand of Mapleton Depot, daughter of David and Jenice Hildebrand, and Zada Bucher of Mount Union, daughter of Wilmer Bucher of Mount Union and Margaretta Bucher of Hustontown.

"It was definitely a trip I'll never forget," Leah says. "I made a ton of new friends. It was definitely educational."

She especially enjoyed seeing the changing of the guard at the Tomb of the Unknowns and was interested in the tour of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Leah plans to have a career in sonography. She is involved in Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA), plays varsity soccer and is a member of the track and field team. She has completed three mission trips to Mexico.

Zada has been involved in Mount Union's band program for seven years and has competed at the county, regional and district level. She enjoys soccer and volunteering at her church. She plans to attend Indiana University of Pennsylvania and would like to be part of a military band.

Southern Huntingdon County High School (SHCHS) had two juniors on the trip. They are Alexis Crotsley of Huntingdon, daughter of Jeffrey and Tracy Crotsley, and Abigail Rose of Nellyton, daughter of Dale and Beth Rose.

Alexis would like to become a psychologist or a parole officer. A National Honor Society (NHS) student, she has been a member of SHCHS's Press Club for two years. She also volunteers with



ON TOUR: Valley Rural Electric's 2016 Youth Tour students take a break from sightseeing in Washington, D.C., to have a photo taken. The students are, front row, from left: Nicolette Douglas, Zada Bucher and Alexis Crotsley; middle row: Jordan Becker, Abigail Rose and Leah Hildebrand; and back row: Joshua Allison, Noah Wheland, Patrick McCauley and Nick Mauro.

Big Brothers/Big Sisters and enjoys playing the piano and scrapbooking.

Abigail sees military service in her future. She has been a member of the field hockey, and track and field teams for three years. She is a member of the NHS and enjoys activities with her church youth group.

Williamsburg High School (WHS) had three juniors on the trip. Patrick McCauley is the son of Timothy and Lisa McCauley. Noah Wheland is the son of Michael and April Wheland, and Joshua Allison is the son of Mark and Linda Allison. All are from Williamsburg.

Patrick plays football and baseball for WHS. He is also involved in the school's Quiz Bowl program and is a volunteer firefighter. He would like to become a physical therapist and is a NHS member.

Noah would like to become a waterways conservation officer. He also participates in Quiz Bowl, as well as Leadership Blair County Youth. He is a member of the track and field team and shoots a .22 rifle competitively.

Joshua sees himself becoming a computer technician. He takes computer programming and technician classes at the Greater Altoona Career and Technology Center. Another NHS student, he also is involved in Boy Scouts and

runs the sound booth for his church.


"It was fun and interesting; I made more friends than I ever expected," Josh says of the trip.

He says he particularly enjoyed the tour of Madame Tussauds wax museum.

Nick Mauro of East Freedom, the son of David and Melissa Mauro, just completed his junior year at Claysburg-Kimmel High School. Nick would like to become a physician assistant. He plays football and is involved in FBLA,

as well as student council. He enjoys skiing and being outdoors.

Valley Rural Electric Cooperative is a member-owned utility that serves more than 21,000 consumers in Bedford, Blair, Centre, Franklin, Fulton, Huntingdon, Juniata and Mifflin counties.

For more information on the Rural Electric Youth Tour, contact the member services department at Valley REC at 814-643-2650, toll-free 800-432-0680 or email memberservices@valleyrec.com. 

Valley Rural Electric Cooperative awards 15 \$1,000 scholarships to local students

VALLEY Rural Electric Cooperative recently awarded 15 \$1,000 scholarships to high school seniors, as well as students already enrolled in post-secondary institutions.

The co-op's Brighter Future Scholarship Program was established in 2010 to assist eligible students who are cooperative members or their dependents. To date, Valley has conferred more than \$150,000 in scholarship grants. Selection criteria include



academic achievement, financial need, school activities and community service.

The money to finance this initiative comes from unclaimed capital credits refunds that previously had to be turned over to the state treasury. But thanks to the efforts of the cooperative's political advocates, these resources can be kept in co-op communities and used to assist consumers facing financial hardships, to support civic organizations, and to fund educational programs.

The following 13 high school seniors were awarded scholarships from Valley REC:

Blair County: Altoona Area High School – Miranda L. Stouffer of Altoona, daughter of Mark and Jeannine Stouffer, attending Penn State Altoona; Claysburg-Kimmel High School – Kait-

lyn D. Fluke of Claysburg, daughter of Samuel and Linda Fluke, attending Saint Francis University; Hollidaysburg Area Senior High School – William C. Calvert of Hollidaysburg, son of William and Renee Calvert, attending Shippensburg University; and Emre D. Cardakli, also of Hollidaysburg, daughter of Kubilay and U. Fusun Cardakli, attending Duke University.

Fulton County: Forbes Road Junior/Senior High School – Brittany L. Truax of Hustontown, daughter of Lee and Suzette Truax, attending Virginia Tech.

Huntingdon County: Huntingdon Area High School – Katherine G. Thurston-Griswold of Huntingdon, daughter of Henry and Joanne Thurston-Griswold, attending The College of Wooster; and Jacob D. Nead of James Creek, son of Brenda Nead of James Creek and Daniel Nead of Huntingdon, attending West Virginia University; Juniata Valley High School – Alyssa M. Smithmyer of Huntingdon, daughter of Matthew and Polly Smithmyer, attending Penn State; and Erin C. Forgy of Tyrone, daughter of Larry and Mischelle Forgy, also attending Penn State; Mount Union Area High School – Heidi R. Bliss of Huntingdon, daughter of Tim and Jacquita Bliss, attending Lebanon Valley College; Southern Huntingdon County High School – Michael T. Morgan of Shirleysburg, son of Michael and Pamela Morgan, attending Penn


State; and Joshua A. Appleby of Shade Gap, son of Galen and Bonita Appleby, attending Harrisburg Area Community College.

In addition, Matthew J. Saich, son of Robert and Karen Saich of Pittsburgh, who is a graduate of Plum Senior High School and plans to attend Case Western Reserve University, was selected to receive a Brighter Future Scholarship.

Two students currently enrolled in post-secondary institutions were also awarded scholarships from Valley REC for the 2016-17 academic year. They are:

Alyssa M. Handy of Mill Creek, daughter of Michael and Tracey Handy, a 2015 graduate of Huntingdon Area High School attending Pennsylvania Highlands Community College; and Abbey R. Cresswell of Cassville, daughter of Tim and Jodi Cresswell, a 2015 graduate of Southern Huntingdon County High School attending Shippensburg University.

Valley Rural Electric is a member-owned cooperative providing electric service to consumers in eight counties of south-central Pennsylvania, including Bedford, Blair, Centre, Franklin, Fulton, Huntingdon, Juniata and Mifflin.

For more information about Valley Rural Electric Cooperative's Brighter Future Scholarship Program, call 800-432-0680 or visit www.valleyrec.com and follow the Programs and Services link to the Scholarship section. 

Co-op golf tournament benefits two local youths

By Doug Roles
Manager of Member Services

VALLEY REC employees and friends of the co-op spent a day on the links at Huntingdon Country Club June 30 to raise money for two local youths with life-altering medical conditions. The 2016 Valley Rural Electric Golf Outing benefited Huntingdon County residents Evan Yoder, a young man who was paralyzed last summer in a tragic swimming accident; and Ashton Stone, a 2016 high school graduate who battles an illness that makes it impossible for her to process food.

This year's tournament raised \$27,000. The beneficiaries will split the proceeds.

"All the employees came together for a good cause," said Valley REC President & CEO Rich Bauer. "We had so much support from our vendors, employees and the community."

Forty-eight teams played in the day-long best ball scramble. The first flight hit the course at 8 a.m. while the afternoon flight began play at 1 p.m. Valley REC employees share the workload of planning and staffing the tournament and also reach out to local businesses and co-op vendors alike for donations and sponsorships. The event truly depends on the time, effort and generosity of many folks.

"Not one dime goes anywhere but to Ashton and Evan," Rich said.

Evan, 24, is the son of Ed and Carol Yoder of McAlevy's Fort, whose farm is served by Valley lines. A 2010 Huntingdon Area High School (HAHS) graduate, Evan earned a degree in animal science from Penn State in 2014 and was helping to manage the family dairy farm when a freak accident July 25, 2015, changed his life. Taking a break from making hay, he went to a family picnic at nearby Greenwood State Park.



PREPARATION: Valley REC employee Chris Myers lines up his shot to the green as fellow employees Mike Williams, left, Eric Henchey and Alicia Stoner look on at Huntingdon Country Club June 30.

While running into the lake, he blacked out and belly flopped into the water, breaking vertebrae in his neck. Doctors believe an undiagnosed heart condition caused the fall.

Evan and his family were able to attend a portion of the tournament.

"I think it was wonderful; I had a great time being there," Evan said. "A lot of people came up to me and told me they were thinking of me."

Carol added that the family "felt a lot of love and support" at the tournament. The family plans to put the proceeds toward



STONE FAMILY: Valley REC Health and Wellness Committee Chairman Travis Kuhstos, left, pauses for a photo with Ashton Stone, center, and her family, from left: stepmother Beth Stone, father Chee Stone, mother Christy Stone and sister Amanda Stone.



YODER FAMILY: Evan Yoder, front, visited the tournament with his sisters, from left, Cassandra Yoder and Vanessa Yoder, and his parents, Carol and Ed Yoder. They are joined by Valley REC board members Linda McMath and Cindy Bigelow and Valley REC President & CEO Rich Bauer.



WINNERS: Team Jostens won the morning flight. Team members are, from left, Valley REC employees Ben Gorman, Rich Bauer and Ethan DeVore. Also on the team, but not in the photo, is Daron DeVore.



MORE WINNERS: The Containment Solutions team won the second flight. The team is comprised of, from left: Scott Casner of Huntingdon, Dana Yakimczyk of Huntingdon, Scott Eichelberger of Alexandria, and John Cormas of Huntingdon.

construction of a deck off of Evan's bedroom or the purchase of a ruggedized, track wheelchair to further increase his mobility.

Ashton, 17, of Huntingdon is the daughter of Chee Stone and Christy Stone. She was diagnosed with gastroparesis two years ago. She has endured over 20 surgeries, including the removal of much of her large intestine due to internal bleeding.

The disease requires lengthy hospital stays and makes it necessary for her to use a feeding tube for all but the smallest liquid intake. Ashton plans to start college this fall and will use her share of the tournament proceeds toward school expenses.

She was released from a several-day stay at a children's hospital in Philadelphia the morning of the tournament and stopped by the country club as the awards ceremony and results of a silent auction were being announced over dinner.

"I feel loved and I feel love from the community," Ashton says. "It's amazing to see the community come together like this."

"We want to thank Valley Rural Electric; they did a wonderful job. And we want to thank the Huntingdon Country Club, the community and all the event sponsors. It was a great tournament," Chee says.

Christy, a Valley REC member, agrees, saying, "We, as a family, just want to thank everybody."

The 2016 event was the fifth golf tournament organized by Valley REC's Health and Wellness Committee, which has raised more than \$83,000 for charity since 2010. In addition to the golf outing, fundraising events have included a walkathon, a horseshoe tournament, a "Kickin It For Cans" food drive, softball tournaments and participation in Relay For Life events.

"We have really been blessed with this tournament over the years," says Valley REC Energy Specialist Travis Kuhstos, who chairs the Health and Wellness Committee. "We have teams that have followed this event for all five years." 🌞

Thank you, 2016 Valley Rural Electric Golf Outing sponsors and donors!

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