

# Valley Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

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## Valley Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

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## Guest Column



## Auld lang syne at Valley REC

By Luanne Eckenrode, *Vice President,  
Consumer Services & Public Relations*

WHERE has the year gone? Another turn of the calendar and here we are in December, one of the busiest months. It seems that right after Thanksgiving, the days fly by ever faster. There's deer season, Christmas shopping, holiday programs for the school kids, travel and family gatherings ... Fast away the old year passes.

In all the hustle and bustle, this special season can slip away, if we let it. Sometimes, after the gifts are all unwrapped and the new year has been ushered in, we can feel that, in all the celebration and revelry, there just wasn't enough time to share memories with all the folks we'd enjoy seeing again over an egg nog or fruitcake and coffee. We truly do have to make it a point to see people if we don't want to feel the passing of years is chilling the warmth of good friendships.


A new tradition begun last year by Valley Rural Electric Cooperative gives our employees a chance to make sure some old acquaintances are not forgotten. Last year, Valley's employees cooked breakfast on a mid-December morning and served the co-op's retirees at our Huntingdon District office. Many of our employees volunteered to come in early that day to start preparing the meal. Fourteen former employees (representing a collective service of more than 300 years!) enjoyed a full-course breakfast while meeting some of

our newest employees and making sure the more senior co-op staffers were continuing to run a tight ship.

Previously, retirees could attend the annual Christmas party. But our retiree breakfast gives our co-op veterans a specific opportunity to come back to the fold for a morning and catch up on co-op happenings. And our current employees get a chance to see what's new with some members of the co-op family who helped write Valley's story but no longer staff a desk, operate a bucket truck or stake out a new service.

Last year, a good time of fellowship left everyone feeling that the event should be repeated — that the years our retirees put into the co-op and the friendships forged over that time are too valuable to be allowed to slip away. And now the retiree breakfast is another one of the high points of the holiday season and, perhaps, slows the passing of December just a bit. Overall, it's a pretty good return for an early morning of mixing pancake batter and scrambling eggs!

If you have someone you've been meaning to see this holiday season but haven't had the time, here's hoping you go ahead and take a cup of kindness yet with that friend or family member, for old time's sake.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! 



ABOVE: Valley REC's new Reeds Gap Substation is located along Route 35 in Juniata County. It replaces a substation that had been in service since the early 1950s. Below: The construction project also includes some pole replacements in the vicinity. Photos by Doug Roles

## Co-op system boasts new Reeds Gap Substation

By Doug Roles  
*Manager of Member Services*

VALLEY Rural Electric Cooperative has completed construction of a new substation in Juniata County to improve service reliability for members in that area of the co-op's eight-county service territory. The new Reeds Gap Substation, located along Route 35 in Tuscarora Township, replaces the former substation situated just west of the site.

Construction work began last fall and the sub was energized in October. In addition to improving service, the new sub also provides better access for crews.

"By increasing the voltage on the distribution system, there are many advantages that we are able to gain for our members in the area," says Rich Bauer, Valley REC president and CEO. "The higher voltage provides greater reliability and less voltage loss than the lower voltage. As an added bonus, we were able to remove the substation

transformers, which were more than 60 years old, and we didn't need to replace them due to the higher voltage. It definitely was a win-win for both the cooperative and its members."

Due to the type of construction Valley has performed over the years, not a lot of work was needed to be done in order to convert the electrical system from 15 to 25 kilovolts. The higher voltage increased distribution capacity without making it necessary to replace existing power lines with larger-size wire or replacing poles with larger sizes to handle the additional weight of a wire upgrade.

"The distribution system pretty much stayed the same," says Valley REC Operations Manager Todd Ross. "We had to install new transformers and arrestors due to the voltage increase and some other devices that have been incorporated into the co-op's construction specifications."

To avoid service disruptions, much of the work was done using protective

gear and insulated tools while the lines remained energized.

Todd says the completed project provides the co-op with the ability to re-route or "backfeed" power to the Reeds Gap Substation from the Shade Gap Substation and vice versa. Back-feeding allows crews to more quickly restore service to members.

Todd notes the layout of the new



RIGHT: Valley REC's board of directors tours the new Reeds Gap substation Oct. 25. The new facility increases service reliability for members in Juniata County and replaces the aging substation that was located about 100 yards west of the new site. Photo by Rich Bauer

substation provides more space for crews to pull in and park trucks and other equipment between Route 35 and the substation fencing.

"That section of road is traveled pretty heavily," he points out. "This new location provides safer access for crews."

The old substation was located right next to the home of Valley member Don Woodward. As plans for a new sub moved forward, Don worked with the co-op to swap the use of the ground next to his house for a piece of his property about 100 yards to the north.

"It made the project more feasible from a financial standpoint," Todd says. "And there was no major cost incurred in connecting to the Penelec supply line since the new location is very close to the old location."

"This really fell into place," Todd adds. "Don Woodward was very gracious. It couldn't have worked out any better than it did."

The original Reeds Gap Substation

BELOW: The project includes removal of the old Reeds Gap Substation. There are 22 substations in the Valley REC system.



was energized Sept. 18, 1953. It was upgraded in 1972.

Ayers Line Construction assisted in the removal of the old substation, as well as some associated electrical equipment outside the substation at the edge of the highway.

The new construction was completed by Valley REC crews from the Shade Gap District with the assistance of other co-op personnel. It is estimated the new equipment should provide service for at least the next 50 years. ⚡



ABOVE: Crew Leader Kenny Sipes, left, and Journeyman Lineman Jonathan Shields place expulsion fuse hangers at the new Reeds Gap Substation in August.



## Shade Gap District secretary enjoys more family time in retirement

By Doug Roles

*Manager of Member Services*

ONE OF Valley Rural Electric Cooperative's consumer services employees is enjoying some well-deserved porch-sitting time and local travel following her retirement in June. Ivy Lee Yohn of Tell Township, Huntingdon County, retired from the Shade Gap District office after nearly 16 years with the co-op.

Ivy Lee, a Valley member, is well-known in her local community and to co-op members who stopped by the Shade Gap office with questions about service or to make payments. In her retirement, she says she is enjoying time with her husband, Bob, and "being a taxi service for our grandchildren."

Immediately following her retirement, she and Bob took the grandkids on vacation for a week to the beach at Stone Harbor, N.J., near Wildwood. They've also taken a few day trips, but they most enjoy having time together at home.

"We bought some porch furniture," she says. "We sit out and drink coffee, read books and watch the turkeys. Our biggest decision now when we get up in the morning is what we are going to do."

Ivy Lee started with Valley REC in the fall of 2000. Her duties entailed taking payments from members, signing up new accounts, putting together work orders for line crews and doing inventory.

"Office work has changed so much because of computers," Ivy Lee says.



ENJOYING RETIREMENT: Ivy Lee Yohn retired in June from Valley REC's Shade Gap district office.

"Clerical work as I've known it all these years has really changed."

Before coming to Valley REC, Ivy Lee worked in banking for 17 years. She was employed by the former Fulton County National Bank, in the branch located next to the Shade Gap Mini Mart convenience store and gas station. Before becoming part of the Fulton County banking chain, the branch was part of Mellon Bank and before that, First National Bank of Mapleton.

"I worked there since the day it opened," Ivy Lee says.

Ivy Lee was a teller and then worked as a branch manager for her last five years in banking. When she left the bank, she took a six-month hiatus from

the working world and then came on board with Valley in a part-time position at the co-op's Hustontown location. When the Hustontown office was closed, Ivy Lee moved to the Shade Gap office and became a full-time employee.

Asked what she'll miss most about her work with Valley, Ivy Lee says, "the people."

"Your co-workers get to be like family," she says.

Ivy Lee is a Three Springs native and a 1970 graduate of Southern Huntingdon County High School. She and Bob have been married for 45 years. They have two grown children and four grandchildren. We wish her the very best in her retirement. ☀

### Making a beeline

Travelers to Raystown Lake may have noticed some right-of-way clearing work in the area of Upper Corners Road recently. Valley Rural Electric Cooperative is teaming up with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at Raystown to help the honeybee. The corps will use the cleared portion of right-of-way to plant a variety of wildflowers as part of a project to recolonize bees in the area. The honeybee has recently been classified as an endangered species.

Photo by Liza Parks

