

# 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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**Corporate Office Hours**  
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7 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.

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1-800-432-0680

## From the President & CEO



### A special Valentine's gift

By Rich Bauer

THE middle of February can only mean one thing: Valentine's Day. Most guys begin to feel the pressure because we know we need to get our special someone something to let them know how important they are to us. I used to buy my wife chocolate, but then I got lectured about the number of calories in each piece. I turned to flowers briefly, but I have a hard time spending money on roses that will wilt and die soon. As far as jewelry goes, after 23-plus years of marriage, I am not even going there. Each year is a struggle to find that perfect thing that will put a smile on her face and keep me out of the doghouse.

A great idea for that special someone could be a DRU switch. Now hear me out, once you stop laughing. If you sign up for Valley's demand response program, we'll come to your home and install the switch (the demand response unit or DRU) on your water heater, as well as give you a \$100 credit on your electric bill. I promise neither you nor your spouse will even know it is attached. But if you do, we will come and adjust it to make sure you never think about it again. With the extra \$100 you would have had to pay on your electric bill, you can take your spouse out for a great dinner and maybe even a movie. Your wallet remains the same, but you have made your spouse happy. You got to enjoy a meal and a movie, and you helped yourself and the rest of the members of Valley REC.

In all seriousness, the DRU switch is a simple, cost-effective way to keep

our power costs as low as possible. The overall cost of electricity on the wholesale market has increased over the past three years, but our kilowatt-hour cost has remained the same. The reason we have held this portion of your bill stable is directly related to the installation of these DRUs. We have been averaging a little over 500 installations per year since 2013, and the results are showing in our wholesale power costs. The savings from these units, which shut your water heater elements off during peak use times, has offset the increase in kWh charges. If every member installed one of these switches, you would see a substantial decrease in your electric bill each month. I know many of our members don't have an electric water heater. But there are thousands of members who own an electric water heater who haven't taken advantage of this opportunity. All I can do is ask that you please consider allowing us to install one. Besides receiving the \$100 bill credit, if you are ever dissatisfied with the unit and we cannot fix it, we will remove it with no strings attached. I urge you to give it a try.

Thank you all for another great year at the cooperative and hopefully there are many more to come. As always, if you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please give me a call or email me. Hopefully, you will be taking your special Valentine out for dinner and a movie while supporting your friends and neighbors at the cooperative with a brand-new, shiny DRU switch. Happy Valentine's Day and God bless. ☀

## System improvement work slated throughout co-op



**GREAT VIEW:** A crew from the co-op's Huntingdon District replaces a pole at the top of Cassville Mountain, Huntingdon County, in January. Valley's crews in all three service districts will be busy throughout 2017 with a number of system improvement projects.

By Doug Roles

*Vice President, Member Services*

VALLEY Rural Electric's line crews and operations staff have a busy year of system maintenance and improvements ahead of them. Work projects are planned or already underway in all three of the co-op's service districts — Huntingdon, Martinsburg, and Shade Gap. Additionally, operations staff will be looking into future improvements at several of the co-op's substations.

The goal of any system improvement is to increase reliability for members. Sometimes that means replacing worn-out equipment. In other instances, crews may string new wire to either accommodate an increase in voltage (called conversion work) or to enable backfeeding (rerouting of electricity) in case of an outage.

Todd Ross, Valley REC's vice president of operations, says projects in the Huntingdon District will include on-

going conversion work in the areas of Cassville and Cass Township, Huntingdon County. A section of line there will be changed from 7,200 volts to 14,400 volts, and some of the load on the Dell Substation in Cass Township will be transferred to the Little Valley Substation in Todd Township. Distributing load more equally between the two substations will increase reliability and lessen voltage drop-off in that area.

"That work is a carry-over from last year and will be completed this year," Todd says.

Operations staff will also be exploring options for increasing the capacity of the Sinking Valley Substation in Tyrone Township, Blair County.

"Those are the two big things for the Huntingdon District," Todd notes.

In the Shade Gap District, crews will be removing a section of abandoned line in Belfast Township, Fulton County, and will extend three-phase (three-line) service there. The project will tie

## Members give Valley REC high marks in annual survey

VALLEY Rural Electric continues to receive positive ratings from its members who participate in the annual American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) survey. The co-op added to its string of good ratings with the 2016 survey, posting a 91 out of 100.

The 2016 survey marked the sixth consecutive year for the polling, which is accomplished through a mailing in late autumn. Surveys were mailed to a random sampling of 1,000 consumers at the end of October. Members were asked to complete the questionnaire and return it, either in person or by dropping the postage-paid card in the mail. Surveys were due back in the corporate office by Nov. 23.

The survey asks consumers to rate

the co-op on a scale of 1 to 10 in four areas: how their experiences with the co-op have been; whether or not their expectations have been met; how Valley REC compares to the ideal electric utility; and how likely they would be to choose Valley for their electric service if they had other choices.

In 2011 (Valley's first year for the survey) and 2012, the co-op received a satisfaction score of 91. Valley posted a score of 92 in 2013 and 90 in 2014. Survey respondents collectively gave the co-op a 91 in 2015. These ratings put Valley REC in the top 10 percent of electric co-ops nationwide.

The average ACSI score for Touchstone Energy co-ops is 77. Investor-owned utilities average a 72, while

municipal systems post an average score of 68.

To learn more about the ACSI survey, visit the [www.acsi.org](http://www.acsi.org) website. Once there, you can check the ratings of other companies and industries.

*The American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) is a uniform and independent measure of household consumption experience. As an economic indicator, the ACSI tracks trends in customer satisfaction and provides benchmarking insights of the consumer economy for companies, industry trade associations and government agencies. The ACSI is produced by the Stephen M. Ross Business School at the University of Michigan, in partnership with the American Society for Quality (ASQ) and the international consulting firm CFI Group.*

together two line sections south of the Harrisonville Substation to improve reliability.

“And we’re going to continue work on our Reeds Gap Substation conversion project,” Todd says.

In 2016, Valley REC completed construction of a new Reeds Gap Substation in Tuscarora Township, Juniata County. The upgrade entails installing taller poles and new wire to increase voltage from 14 kilovolts to 25 kilovolts. This year, crews will conclude the project by finishing conversion work on the east feeder (line) of the substation.

System improvement work will take place in the Martinsburg District along Route 22 in Catharine Township, Blair County. Operations staff will also begin planning substation improvements to take place over the next five years in the Martinsburg District.

“We’re also retiring a lot of idle services,” Todd says of an ongoing effort throughout Valley’s territory.

Idle services are places where electric equipment, such as a transformer, is

still in place though there is no longer an active account. Energizing a transformer where there is no member is costly for the co-op, so crews have been aggressive in tackling this issue.

“We saved ourselves about 1 percent line loss last year by taking care of these idle services,” Todd says. “We’re really cleaning up our system. That translates to a lot of money saved.”

In addition to a busy year of system improvements, the co-op will also be carrying out its annual aerial patrol in the early summer. The helicopter flyover, conducted by Pine Bottom Aviation of Martinsburg, gives co-op employees a bird’s-eye view of rights-of-way and quickly identifies problem areas.

Additionally, Osmose Utility Services will be conducting Valley’s annual pole



**WORKING TOGETHER:** From left, Journeyman Linemen Adam Atherton, Justin Berrier and John Fogelsonger move an energized line in preparation for setting a new pole.

inspection. That work will take place throughout the summer months as Osmose crews follow rights-of-way and visually inspect poles and take core samples.

“They inspect for us and treat poles to give them longevity,” Todd says, “which is a big money saver for the co-op.” 🌞

## Co-op scholarship applications available now

VALLEY Rural Electric Cooperative will award up to 15 \$1,000 scholarships this year to eligible students who qualify. The money to fund this scholarship program comes from unclaimed capital credits refunds that previously had to be turned over to the state. Thanks to the efforts of our political advocates, we can now keep those funds in our local communities.

### Eligibility requirements

The applicant must be:

- ▶ An active Valley REC member or dependent of an active member. (Valley REC directors and employees and their dependents are not eligible.)
- ▶ Attending or planning to attend an accredited post-secondary institution.
- ▶ Enrolled or planning to enroll full time for the 2017-2018 academic year.

Previous Brighter Future Scholarship recipients are not eligible.

Valley Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.  
**brighter future**  
Scholarship Program

### How to apply

Applications are available at the co-op’s website. Visit [www.valleyrec.com](http://www.valleyrec.com) and follow the “Programs and Services” link to the “Scholarships” section.

There are two versions of the application: one for high school students and one for high school graduates.

Applications are also available at all Valley REC offices and in the guidance offices of the following public high schools:

Altoona Area High School  
Central High School  
Claysburg-Kimmel High School  
Fannett-Metal High School  
Forbes Road Junior/Senior High School  
Hollidaysburg Area Senior High School  
Huntingdon Area High School  
Juniata High School

Juniata Valley High School  
McConnellsburg High School  
Mifflin County High School  
Mount Union Area High School  
Northern Bedford County High School  
Southern Fulton Junior/Senior High School  
Southern Huntingdon County High School  
Tussey Mountain High School  
Tyrone Area High School  
Williamsburg High School

### Application deadline

Applications and all required information must be mailed to Valley Rural Electric Cooperative and postmarked by April 15.

Scholarship selections will be made in May. Award recipients will be notified by the end of June.

Please direct questions to [member-services@valleyrec.com](mailto:member-services@valleyrec.com) or call 1-800-432-0680.

# Co-op seeks students for 2017 Youth Tour

HIGH SCHOOL juniors and seniors connected to the co-op either through a parent's membership or employment have a great opportunity to make new friends and learn more about their government this summer.

Valley Rural Electric Cooperative will sponsor students from throughout the cooperative's eight-county service territory on an all-expenses-paid trip to the nation's capital June 11-16. The Rural Electric Youth Tour has brought high school students to Washington, D.C., every June since the 1960s.

More than 40,000 students from rural areas and small towns across America have participated in this unique program. The featured speakers during National Youth Day provide insight regarding the important roles electric cooperatives play in their communities and in the nation. Students gain a personal understanding of American history and their responsibility as citizens by meeting their representatives and senators and exploring the city.

It's not unusual to see a former Youth Tour participant working as a congressional aide on Capitol Hill. In fact, several former Youth Tour students have gone on to serve in the highest ranks of government, including the U.S. Senate.

Any high school junior or senior whose parent or guardian is a member or employee of Valley REC is eligible to apply.

Students must submit a transcript along with additional information to the co-op selection committee. Transcripts may be submitted electronically.

Selections will be based on academic achievement, as well as participation in extracurricular activities and/or community service programs. Students interested in attending Youth Tour this year should visit their high school guidance counselor's office now to apply. Final selections will be made in early March.

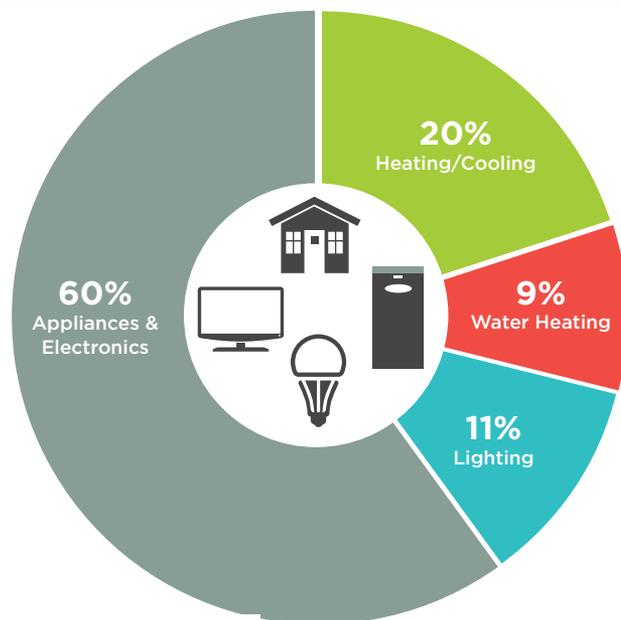
For more details, visit [www.valleyrec.com](http://www.valleyrec.com) and click on the Programs and Services tab and scroll down the page. Or call the co-op's member services department at 800-432-0680, extension 1663.



MEET YOUR CONGRESSMAN: U.S. Rep. Bill Shuster (R-9th), center, speaks to 2016 Youth Tour students. In addition to meeting congressional representatives, students learn about the cooperative business model, explore museums and monuments, and take a Potomac River cruise.

## How Americans Use Electricity

The latest data from the U.S. Energy Information Administration shows that appliances and electronics account for the largest amount of electricity consumption in American homes.



Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration, 2015 Annual Energy Outlook. \*U.S. residential sector electricity by major end uses.

