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Guest Column



'Fall back' into energy efficiency

By Doug Roles, *Vice President, Member Services*

THE RETURN to standard time on Nov. 5 — the “good” clock change because of the extra hour of sleep — raises the question of whether or not we gained energy efficiency when we “gained” an hour of daylight last spring. There isn't a clear answer.

The website livescience.com, which chronicles the history of Daylight Saving Time (DST), reports a Department of Energy study showed the national four-week extension of DST (initiated in 2007) saved about 0.03 percent of the country's total electric use. But another report that year found turning the clocks forward actually increased residential energy use by 1 percent. DST seems to save on electricity for lighting but increases consumption for heating and cooling, according to the website.

It's a good thing saving energy in your home depends more on you than on the clock. There are several simple steps to help cut back on costs, whether you're “falling back” or “springing forward.”

The first one is obvious, though often ignored: Turn off lights when you leave a room! On chilly but sunny winter days, open curtains to let the sunlight in. At night, make sure to close the curtains to help retain thermal energy. And set ceiling fans to rotate clockwise in cold months and counterclockwise in warmer months.

Did you start this heating season with a fresh filter and a thorough cleaning of your furnace? A dirty filter forces your heating system to work harder and waste energy. You may also


want to have a technician verify that the furnace will heat the home at peak efficiency. A programmable thermostat can help you save money, too.

Check for air leaks around windows, doors, fireplaces, electrical boxes, outlets and light switches. Use caulk and weather stripping to fill in gaps and leaks. Also check your attic insulation. As a general rule of thumb, if it is level with or below the floor joists, more insulation should be added. Adding area rugs can help insulate the floor, using less heat when temperatures drop.

Insulate your water heater so that it can stay warm longer without wasting energy. You can lower the temperature of the water heater to 120 degrees Fahrenheit and still enjoy comfortable hot water — with lowered heating costs.

Check that heating vents are not blocked by furniture or curtains. Radiators or baseboards should be clean and unobstructed. If you have a fireplace, keep the damper closed when it is not being used.

If you are looking to replace an older appliance, look for the Energy Star label, which can save you money over the life of the appliance, in standard or daylight-saving time.

By the way, you might ask who started all this clock talk in the first place. The idea of “saving” daylight appears to have originated with our very own Ben Franklin. He thought shifting clocks would save on burning candles in the evening. Thank goodness he moved on from candles to keys and kite strings! 

Thirty-two-year Navy vet helped prepare warships for service

Denny Park, a technician with Valley REC's Demand Response Program, met fellow U.S. Navy veteran Gordon Smith several weeks ago while installing a demand response unit in Gordon's home. As old sailors will do, the two swapped stories, laying the groundwork for the following article.

By Doug Roles

Vice President, Member Services

VALLEY REC's service territory boasts many military members past and present and they all have their own story. As time takes its toll on the number of vets still living who served in World War II (1940-45), another group comes to prominence: those who enlisted into the quickly shrinking U.S. armed forces in the years after Germany and Japan surrendered.

Gordon Smith, 89, of Duncansville, is among those who succeeded "the Greatest Generation" and sustained the force in the post-war years. A native of Elizabethtown, Ind., he served in the U.S. Navy for 32 years and participated in the commissioning of three ships that would serve through the Korean and Vietnam war years.

Gordon enlisted in the Indiana Guard Reserve in 1946 as an artilleryman. Then he decided to go into active service.

"I joined the Navy in May of '48," he says. "I was a machinist's mate. I had to operate the main engines and know how to bring them up to power."

Gordon was stationed in Philadelphia after Navy basic training and formed ties to central Pennsylvania through marriage. He left active service in 1968, then served for 12 years as a reservist.

"I was on the home front the whole time," he says. "I spent most of my time on the East Coast. The Navy was good to me. I always had a clean place to sleep and meals. When I got some rank, I had a room to myself a lot of the time."

Gordon helped put the USS Cabot to sea when it was recommissioned in 1948 for service as a training carrier af-



STILL PATRIOTIC: Though he concluded his Navy service nearly three decades ago, Gordon Smith, 89, of Duncansville remains as proud of the armed services as when he wore the uniform.

PHOTO BY DOUG ROLES

ter its initial commissioning in 1943 as a light aircraft carrier. After taking part in months-long maintenance checks and sea trials prior to the recommissioning, Gordon served aboard the ship for five years.

"Then I went to Richmond, Va., to help put the USS Forrestal (a super-carrier commissioned in 1955) into commission," Gordon recalls. "That was a big carrier. I served a year on her, about six months of that at sea."

The Forrestal is well known in Navy circles for a fatal fire on her flight deck while serving off the coast of Vietnam. The July 1967 blaze killed 134 sailors and injured 161 more while also destroying 21 aircraft.

Gordon recalls he next

served on the USS Currituck, a seaplane tender, and the USS Severn, a fleet oiler, prior to spending three years in Canton, Ohio, as a Naval Reserve recruiter. His last service aboard ship was on the USS Duluth, an amphibious transport dock, which he also helped put to sea.

Gordon says the military allowed him to see parts of the world he otherwise may never have visited. While aboard ship, he made port in France, Italy, Spain and Cuba.

Gordon, still living independently

MEMORIES: Navy vet Gordon Smith has kept many mementos of his service, including his line-crossing certificate (for the first time he crossed the equator at sea) and certificates he received for being part of the crew that commissioned the USS Forrestal and USS Duluth. He served as a machinist's mate in the active Navy and Naval Reserve for 32 years.



PHOTOS BY DOUG ROLES

and still driving at 89, is quick to point out that his career technically includes World War II service, since President Harry Truman didn't declare the nation's war with Germany over until 1951, even though fighting ended in 1945.

Gordon retired as a chief petty officer. His years of service saw some anxious periods.

"I was most worried during the war years (Korea and Vietnam)," he says. "We were part of the blockade of Cuba, too."

Gordon recalls the quarantine the Navy imposed on the island nation in October 1962 during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

After the military, Gordon worked in engineering and as a truck driver in the Altoona area. He is the father of five children and a proud grandparent. He has also been an ordained minister with Apostolic Brethren, Inc. for 20 years.

When asked what he enjoyed most about his military career, Gordon says, "I guess just serving the USA." ☀



Denny Park, a technician with Valley's Demand Response water heater switch program, enlisted in

the Navy while still in high school in 1972 and began active service the following year. After his initial training, he completed the Navy's Basic Electronics and Interior Communications School. He also attended the Navy Nuclear Power School and the Basic Submarine School. He served in the Command Submarine Atlantic Fleet and the Command Submarine Pacific Fleet. He was honorably discharged in 1977 at the rank of third class petty officer.

Fall colors



PHOTO BY LUANNE ECKENRODE

When orange starts popping up in Valley REC territory, it's a sure sign of hot-line work. The fall on-the-job training (held Sept. 19-21 this year) gave line crews in all districts the opportunity to review energized line safety procedures while completing system maintenance projects. Journeyman Linemen Adam Atherton, above, center, and Curt White replace a three-phase pole in Juniata Township, Huntingdon County during their OJT.

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Meet your employees ...

FEATURED in this column is a recent addition to the Valley REC team, Zach Yohn. Zach was hired in April as an electrician for Valley's new service arm, Valley Rural Energy Services (VRES). He works primarily from the co-op's Martinsburg District office.

Zach, from Blue Knob, Blair County, is a 2005 graduate of Central High School, where he played football. After graduation, Zach attended Triangle Tech, Greensburg, and earned an associate degree in electrical construction and maintenance. He then worked for several contractors doing residential, commercial and industrial electrical work.

"I wanted to get a feel for one area I was into the most," Zach says.

Prior to joining Valley REC, Zach worked for nearly five years for Brent Cogan Electrical Services in Duncansville, Blair County.

With VRES, his responsibilities include preparing bids, giving estimates and scheduling jobs to help the team meet its goal of providing electrical services to area residents who need smaller jobs done in a hurry. VRES's technicians also install Bosch heat pumps, Marathon water heaters and Generac whole-house generators. They will do work for co-op members and non-members alike.

"The electrical work for Valley Rural Energy Services is picking up, particularly with the generators," Zach says.

Awareness, protection keys to hearing loss prevention

By Doug Roles
Vice President, Member Services

SOMETIMES you don't know what you're missing until someone tells you. At least that's often the case when it comes to hearing loss, says Jodi Richmond, of Occupational Medicine of York (OMY), which provided on-site hearing testing for Valley REC employees in October (National Audiology Awareness Month).

Jodi says people can be slow to realize their own hearing loss or ignore it because they don't want to face the prospect, or the expense, of getting a hearing aid.

"It's usually a family member; for many, it's a spouse, normally the wife, who notices something is different," says Jodi, OMY's operations manager.

The website, hearingloss.org, reports that 20 percent of Americans (nearly 48 million people) have some degree of hearing loss. Prevention through limiting exposure to harmful noise and using safety equipment is critical. OSHA requires testing for those who have a work environment that exposes them to 85 decibels over a period of time.

Hearing loss can affect anyone, regardless of age, because of heredity or medical conditions. Jodi says awareness is key.

"As you age, the ability to hear higher frequencies is the



CO-OP EMPLOYEE: Zach Yohn works from the Martinsburg District office as an electrician for the co-op's service arm, Valley Rural Energy Services. He joined the Valley Rural Electric team in April.

"We're staying busy."

Zach says he enjoys working for Valley because the folks here are down-to-earth and good-humored.

"It feels like home, which is good because you're here almost as much as you're home," Zach says. "You're not a number here. You know everybody."

In his free time, Zach and his wife, Carissa, stay busy with their five children: Noah, 14; Aidan, 11; Kace, 9; Nevaeh, 7; and Kolston, 18 months.

"And when I have time, I really enjoy hunting and fishing," Zach adds.

Zach's co-workers are glad to have him on the job. He's one of the people you can count on. ☀



HEARING TEST: Occupational Medicine of York Operations Manager Jodi Richmond, right, reviews hearing test results with Travis Kuhstos, Valley REC's energy specialist. Nearly 20 percent of Americans have some degree of hearing loss.

first to go," she says. "It can be hard to accept."

Many U.S. workers have regular hearing tests because their jobs fall within OSHA regulations or meet other regulatory requirements such as transportation department rules for commercial driver's license (CDL) drivers. Those whose employers don't require or don't offer hearing testing should contact an audiologist if they suspect a problem.

"We're required to have the linemen tested annually, per OSHA regulations," says Lisa Carper, Valley REC operations assistant. "But we offer the testing to all employees." ☀