

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



Grid resilience

By Ethan DeVore, *Director of Member Services*

A HOT topic in the electric industry today is resiliency. The concept is more prevalent because of the severe weather situations developing during the past few years. Take Hurricanes Irma and Maria for example. These types of weather extremes can have catastrophic impacts on communities. In Puerto Rico, the lack of resiliency of the country's electric grid after Maria struck resulted in the longest sustained outage in U.S. history.

Resiliency can mean many things. In the co-op world, it's our ability to quickly restore your power. To achieve a resilient electric grid, it's important to understand what makes one. It starts with a system that is constructed to endure the various factors that could result in outages. The main factor is, of course, the weather. Severe storms, season changes, strong winds ... we all know these factors wreak havoc on an electric grid. But did you know cybersecurity threats and other disturbances can also result in service disruptions? Without a well-built, resilient system, all these factors could cause prolonged outages that impact our daily lives.

Have you ever stopped to think about what it is you do when you experience a power outage? There's probably a good chance if you don't have an alternate power source, you'll likely be waiting around for someone from your electric company to turn it back on. If you are anything like me during an outage, you'll probably try to turn on three or four electric-powered devices before it finally sets in that you're out of

power. You might even use your smart-phone devices to try and check your social media platforms to see if anyone has any status updates. The bottom line is that most of us greatly depend on electricity, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. So, the next time — hopefully not anytime soon — you experience a power outage, please realize that the team at Valley REC is doing everything possible to get you connected.

Hurricane Maria's damage left thousands of consumers without power for several months in Puerto Rico. Although the lack of resiliency in the country's electric grid was displayed during the aftermath of the storm, it wasn't directly related to the hurricane's destruction alone. Years and years of accumulated negligence toward system maintenance and preparation played a large role in the lengthy power outage. This real-life example has prompted power utilities across the nation to take a better look at their own systems.

At Valley REC, we take system resiliency very seriously. Our goal is to be proactive and identify potential problems before they become one. The co-op conducts pole inspections on a 10-year cycle and aerial patrols annually to evaluate sections of line that may need to be improved. The cooperative is continually keeping up with advancements in technology, which enhances outage restoration times. As a member of Valley REC, you can rest assured your cooperative is constantly improving the system to provide you with safe, reliable and resilient power. 

Valley golf outing benefits two local children

By Ethan DeVore

Director of Member Services

VALLEY Rural Electric Cooperative hosted its seventh annual charity golf tournament on Thursday, June 28, to raise money for two local children with rare conditions. Employees, their friends and family, local businesses, sponsors, and co-op vendors came out to support the cause by spending the day on the links at Huntingdon Country Club. The recipients for this year's tournament were 6-year-old Lincoln Duvall and 3-year-old Owen Davison.

The golf outing raised over \$30,000, with net proceeds being divided among the beneficiaries.

"Our golf outing brings together many golfers and sponsors from local communities and beyond for a great cause," says Valley REC President & CEO Rich Bauer.

The tournament is split up into two flights, allowed nearly 180 golfers to play a round of 18 holes. The first flight is held in the morning at 8 a.m., and is followed by lunch. The second flight in the afternoon shotgun starts at 1 p.m., which is followed by dinner and the awards ceremony. This year, the tournament had 44 teams taking to the course to support the cause.

"This year's tournament recipients were two very deserving families,"

Bauer says.

Six-year-old Lincoln, son of Amy and Tom Duvall of Huntingdon, was born with a rare chromosome deletion that has caused several complications since his birth. He has had several surgeries and will likely need more as he grows older. Lincoln has three siblings, including his oldest brother, Jayden, and two younger sisters, Saylor and Savannah.

Three-year-old Owen, son of Nicole and Gary Davison of Holidaysburg, was diagnosed with a Wilms tumor on his right kidney last year. A few days later, doctors removed his kidney and the tumor that overtook it. Owen recently finished radiation and chemotherapy, and is currently in remission. He will require regular visits to the Pittsburgh Children's Hospital for routine scans. Owen has an older brother named Carter.

The two families were able to make an appearance at the tournament.

"We'd like to thank everyone who was able to make this all possible," Tom says of Valley's 2018 golf outing. "I can't express how impactful this day has been to our family."

"Seeing so many people take time to do good, offer us kind words of encouragement, and tell us they are praying for us has given our family hope and strength to keep facing the future," Nicole adds.



WINNING TEAM: Ed Strickler, right, poses with the winning team, which posted the best score of the day. Ed's teammates are Glen Young, left; Ryan Strickler, middle; and Noah Strickler.

Since the inception of the tournament in 2012, the co-op has been fortunate to help raise more than \$134,000. To keep up with the growth of the event, a golf committee made up of employees was formed to help plan and coordinate the outing.

"We're thankful for all the support our golf tournament receives from our vendors, employees and all other parties involved that help make this event so successful," Bauer says.

On the day of the event, Valley REC offices are closed and employees either golf or help staff the tournament. This year, the co-op was very fortunate yet again to put on a successful golf outing to support a great cause. 🌞



LEFT: Valley REC President & CEO Rich Bauer, right, joins the family of 6-year-old Lincoln Duvall, one of the beneficiaries of the 2018 Valley Rural Electric Golf Outing. Joining Bauer are, from left: Lincoln's parents, Amy and Tom; and children, Savannah, Lincoln, Jayden and Saylor. RIGHT: Rich Bauer, right, joins the family of 3-year-old Owen Davison, the other beneficiary of the tournament. Joining Bauer are, from right: Owen's grandmother, Genee Kabi; Owen's parents, Nichole and Gary; and Owen's older brother, Carter.





ABOVE: Valley REC lineman Kenny Sipes chips his shot up on the green as fellow Valley employees Patrick Lightner, left, and Josh Gutshall watch to see where it lands.
RIGHT: Valley REC electrician Zach Yohn winds up a swing from the tee box hoping to land his drive on the fairway.



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Valley REC sends 15 area students to D.C.

By Ethan DeVore
Director, Member Services

VALLEY Rural Electric Cooperative sponsored 15 high school students from eight school districts on the 2018 Rural Electric Youth Tour to Washington, D.C., held June 10-15. The teens had the opportunity to spend their time in the nation's capital meeting with legislators, touring the city, and learning about the cooperative business model.

More than 1,800 other juniors and seniors from electric cooperatives all over the country joined them. Pennsylvania and New Jersey sent 110 students. The all-expenses-paid trip is packed with activities, including meetings with lawmakers and rural electric leaders, visits to historic monuments throughout Washington, D.C., and tours of the Smithsonian museums, Holocaust Museum, National Zoo, and Arlington Cemetery.

Youth Tour participants this year were students who reside within the co-op's service territory, both member and non-member. They found out about the trip through their respective high school guidance counselors. From there, they were interviewed and selected based on academic achievement, leadership in extra-curricular activities, and community service.

"I could tell you story upon story about each day I spent at Youth Tour," says Olivia Wilson of Huntingdon Area High School. "I would absolutely recommend Youth Tour to other students. It was an opportunity to connect with people our age from all across the country, and the friendships we built with the other PA/NJ representatives will last a lifetime."

Olivia is headed into her senior year at Huntingdon Area High School. She is the daughter of Wendy Dick and Mark Wilson, and plans to study engineering physics and secondary education at Juniata College. She is very involved in extra-curricular activities. One she is very proud of is her in-

volvement in CHAMP, a county-wide student-run organization, that puts its efforts toward raising money for families in need in her community.

Williamsburg Community High School had three students participate in Youth Tour this year. Alex James, son of Shane and Daniel James, plans to attend Penn State after graduation. His career aspirations are to become a successful music director. Chandler Edwards, son of Dawn Isenberg and Brian Edwards, is involved in extra-curricular activities and spends a lot of time outside of school helping in his community. He is undecided on what school he wants to attend after graduation,

but plans to major in psychology. Morgan Clouser, daughter of Melissa Bungalow and Christopher Clouser, plans to attend Penn State to major in astronomy. She is ranked at the top of her class and participates in band, volleyball, student council and National Honor Society.

Mount Union Area High School had two students head to D.C. Adriana Loner, daughter of Jessi Loner, plans to attend the Berklee College of Music with career aspirations of becoming a music producer. Nicholas Pearce, son of Christina and Robert Pearce, plans to attend either Stevens Institute of Technology or the University of Pittsburgh to major in civil engineering. Both students are very active inside and outside of school, volunteering time to organizations within their community while also participating in extra-curricular activities.

Southern Huntingdon County High School had two students attend Youth Tour. Jacob Christophel, son of Nicolee and Dwayne Christophel, is involved in



AT THE CAPITOL: Valley REC sponsored 15 area high school students on the 2018 Youth Tour. The students are, from left: Caroline Eckenrode, Chandler Edwards, Josh Pandolph, Chloe Harrison, Alex James, Morgan Clouser, Ryan Bennett, Olivia Wilson, Justin Jacobs, Neeley Ayers, Nicholas Pearce, Brittany Chadwick, Savannah Zook, Adriana Loner, and Jacob Christophel.

band, chorus and various other clubs in school. He has yet to determine which school he'll attend after graduation, but plans to major in computer graphics design. Ryan Bennett, son of Linda and Dennis Bennett, plans to attend Penn State to major in biology. Ryan is a lifeguard at the Three Springs pool in the summer. He's also a member of the Boy Scouts of America and 4-H.

Central High School had two students participate in Youth Tour as well. Neeley Ayers, daughter of Barbara Ayers, plans to study forensic psychology once she decides which school to attend after graduation. Neeley is involved in mock trial, band, chorus, tennis, and yearbook. Caroline Eckenrode, daughter of Jim and Luanne Eckenrode, plans to attend either Mount Aloysius College or Saint Francis University to study dance or counseling. She is heavily involved in sports and cheerleading and has career aspirations to become a dance instructor.

Mifflin County High School sent two

students to D.C. Justin Jacobs, son of Jennifer and Jeff Jacobs, plans to attend Liberty University where he will major in digital media video. After college, Justin has career aspirations of working in New York City or Washington, D.C., for a broadcasting company. Savannah Zook, daughter of Angela and Wade Zook, plans to attend either Harrisburg Community College or Lock Haven. She is interested in furthering her studies in communications, political science and computer programming.

The lone student from Hollidaysburg Area Senior High School who attended Youth Tour this year was Josh Pandolph. Josh is the son of Melissa and Michael Pandolph. He plans to attend Penn College to study information technology. He is also part of student council and likes to repair small electronics in his spare time.

From Forbes Road High School, Chloe Harrison, daughter of Kristy and Troy Harrison, attended the trip to the nation's capital. Chloe is heavily involved in her church and plays the guitar in her second youth group. In school, she plays field hockey and participates in cheerleading. She plans to attend Shippensburg University to



TOURING THE NATIONAL ZOO: The group of Valley REC-sponsored Youth Tour students wrap up their week touring the Washington National Zoo.

study early childhood education with career aspirations of becoming an early childhood educator.

Wrapping up the group of students who participated in the 2018 Rural Electric Youth Tour this year was Brittany Chadwick. Brittany, who is the daughter of Annette and Darrin Chadwick, is heading into her senior year at Tussey Mountain High School. She is currently exploring local options to continue her education after graduation. Her plans involve obtaining her degree and becoming an elementary

school teacher. Her extra-curricular activities include sports, clubs, band and cheer competition. Outside of school, Brittany works at the Pioneer Family Campground and enjoys dance.

The recruiting process for next year's visit to the nation's capital will begin later this year. For more information on the Rural Electric Youth Tour and how a student can participate, contact the member services department at Valley REC at 814-643-2650, toll-free at 800-432-0680 or email memberservices@valleyrec.com. 

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