

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



A new year of giving

By Doug Roles, *Manager of Member Services*

AS the song says, “Fast away the old year passes.” Well, “passed” with an “ed” at this point. Here we are in 2016 already, a fresh batch of months in front of us, and hopefully some goals and dreams we want to pursue. For many people, the new year is a time to resolve to accomplish something — be it losing weight, balancing a budget or making time to visit extended family. But what’s a look ahead without a look back for some perspective? What accomplishments do you see when you flip open the history book to page 2015?

For Valley REC, one of the noteworthy happenings of 2015 — after meeting our main mission of providing safe, reliable power at the lowest possible cost — was the co-op’s charitable giving effort. The co-op’s members and employees bore each other’s burdens in a number of ways throughout the year.

Of special note is the April launch of our new Community Service Grant Program. The program provides grants of up to \$1,000 for energy assistance, education, and community and civic programs. Though the co-op wasn’t able to fund every request, we did distribute \$75,000 to help fire companies with small equipment purchases and assist community groups with a variety of projects, including playground improvements and stocking a food pantry. The grants also assisted many members who are facing financial difficulty because of illness and other circumstances. The program is funded through unclaimed capital credits refunds that formerly had to be turned over to the state, but can now be kept in our local communities.

In 2015, Valley REC also gave out \$10,000 in energy assistance through the

Members Helping Members (MHM) program. This financial support, which appears on a recipient’s bill as a credit, is aimed at those members who are struggling to pay their bills due to a lack of income related to a job loss or change in employment.

The MHM program is a great example of members demonstrating their caring. Of the amount distributed last year, \$3,400 came from members who made a one-time gift to the program or an ongoing contribution — either by donating a set amount with each electric bill or having the amount rounded up to the nearest whole dollar. Funding for MHM also comes from members who donate an estate’s capital credits refund to the program.

The co-op’s 2015 charitable golf tournament brought together volunteers from the co-op and the community at large for a day on the links for a good cause. The event raised \$20,000 for two local high school students battling cancer. (Sadly, Wade Stains succumbed to the disease in late 2015.) We plan to host another tournament this summer.

Many of the co-op’s employees also gave hours upon hours to a variety of civic and church-related organizations. We really do get the most out of our time and money when we find ways to share with others.

One of the last giving-related actions of the year was the distribution of United Way pledge forms to co-op employees. Many Valley REC staffers have contributed over the years, with some annually earmarking a specific United Way agency to support.

It’s our hope that the good work by so many co-op employees and members in 2015 is a sign of things to come in 2016. May we all have a blessed New Year. 



VOLUNTEERS MAKE IT HAPPEN: Volunteers, from left, Polly Smith, Donna Atlesperger and Mary Ayers and Petersburg Church of the Nazarene Pastor Mark Mohnkern believe ES Ministries Thrift Shop helps donors and shoppers alike to be good stewards of their resources. The store is located in the lower level of the church, located along Route 305 north of Petersburg.

Thrift shop ministry marks 10 years of helping others

Store serves residents from Petersburg church site

Story and photos by Doug Roles
Manager of Member Services

A **THRIFT** shop ministry in northern Huntingdon County is celebrating 10 years of selling gently used clothing and household items to raise money for charities. ES Ministries Thrift Shop opened a decade ago to accomplish several goals in one nonprofit business.

The store, now located in the Petersburg Church of the Nazarene along Route 305, not only provides affordable goods, but also serves as a social center and provides a quick source of garments

and other items in emergencies.

After humble beginnings in a volunteer's garage, ES (Eternal Significance) Ministries operated out of the Mooresville United Methodist Church from 2007 through April 2013. But the deteriorating condition of the Mooresville building forced the congregation to vacate the property and the store to close for several months. (The Shavers Creek Fire Company now owns the property. The company razed the building in the hopes of using the site for a building project.)

As the store volunteers were searching for a new location, Pastors Mark and Sherri Mohnkern and the board of directors of the Petersburg church invited the ES Ministries officers to rent space in their building.

"It's a great partnership," Mark says. "It benefits a lot of folks in a lot of ways."

"I guess it was a blessing in disguise," adds Polly Smith, the store's clothing manager, who has volunteered with the store since 2011. "We were desperately looking for a place. We reopened here at the end of October 2013."

The thrift store was featured in Valley REC's *Penn Lines* pages in November 2009. At that time, volunteers had just celebrated the second anniversary of the enterprise operating from the Mooresville location.

The store now uses a Sunday school space in the lower level of the Petersburg building. Polly, Donna Atlesperger, co-manager in charge of operations, and Mary Ayers, co-manager for non-clothing

items, come in every Thursday to set up the shop. They pull clothing racks from storage and get ready for their Friday and Saturday hours. At closing time Saturday, inventory is packed away until the following week.

“The church has been so supportive of us and has helped to spread the word,” Donna says.

As the years have passed, volunteers have honed the process of sorting and tagging donated items. The ministry has about 16 volunteers. They like goods to move in and out of the store in a timely way so that returning shoppers can always find something “new.” When shoppers check out, they can feel good about the bargains they’ve found and that they’re helping the community.

The store’s proceeds are donated to a variety of causes. ES Ministries has supported the Juniata Valley Ministerium’s fuel assistance program and donates to Valley Rural Electric’s Members Helping Members program that assists consumers who are having trouble paying electric bills.

The thrift shop also supports the Alexandria, Petersburg, Shavers Creek and Stone Creek Valley fire companies, as well as the Twin Creeks and Juniata Valley ambulance companies. The store provides scholarships to Juniata Valley High School seniors and supports a backpack food program that makes sure children have enough to eat over weekends.

The store has become something of an exchange. People drop off donated items



NICE PLACE TO SHOP: Shoppers entering the thrift store will find a clean and tidy shop with a variety of clothing and household goods.

when they come in and then explore the clothing racks and bookshelves. The store has had a lot of children’s clothing come in recently, and has name-brand dress clothing on the racks for just a few dollars. Polly says she knows one local office worker who purchases much of her workday wardrobe at ES Ministries.

The store carries jewelry, toys, some small appliances and other items. Bibles are free. After sorting, donated items are either used by the store or taken to other local charitable organizations. The store will accept small appliances. There’s very little waste.

“We are heavy believers in conservation

of energy, recycling and reuse,” Polly says.

The store serves as a gathering place of sorts and is family friendly. It’s common for couples to come to the store together. The men lounge and sip coffee while their wives check out the latest merchandise. Younger moms can receive a helping hand.

“We tend to the babies while the moms shop,” Polly says, pointing out the children’s play area. “People come to hang out and talk and they will do little things, like match up the kids’ PJ bin or other small jobs.”

“This is the most rewarding thing I’ve ever done,” Polly says.

The “ES” moniker memorializes Dr. Kimberly Paterson, a Juniata Valley High School graduate, who lived by the mantra that projects to help others should have some kind of eternal significance. She succumbed to cancer at an early age in February 2004. Kimberly’s sister, Janie Paterson Ayers, serves as the organization’s treasurer.

Store hours are 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Fridays and 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturdays (weather permitting). Donations are accepted during store hours only and should not be left outside the building. ☀

BARGAIN-HUNTING: Donna Ross of Logan Township, Huntingdon County, looks for a bargain at the ES Ministries Thrift Shop. The store is open Fridays and Saturdays.



Co-op seeks students for 2016 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 12-17. The Rural Electric Youth Tour has brought high school students to Washington, D.C., every June since the 1950s.

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 sen-



CONGRESSIONAL VISIT: U.S. Rep. Bill Shuster (R-9th), center right, speaks to Youth Tour students during the 2015 tour. In addition to the congressional visits, students learn about the cooperative business model, attend a theater performance, go sightseeing and take a Potomac River cruise.

ators, and exploring the sights around the nation's capital.

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.

Juniors and seniors interested in joining the Youth Tour delegation must meet several criteria. Any high school junior or senior whose parent or guardian is a member or employee of Valley REC is eligible to apply.

Students will be required to submit a transcript along with additional informa-

tion to the co-op selection committee. Transcript submission may be done 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 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. 

Did you know?

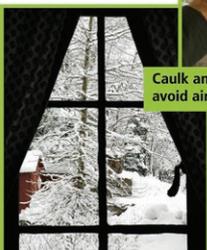
Heating your home accounts for up to 48 percent of your utility bill.

A few tips to help you save:

Clean or replace your furnace filter once a month (or as recommended).



Caulk and seal windows to avoid air leaks.



Keep draperies and shades open during the day and closed at night.



Visit www.energy.gov for more ways to save!

