

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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From the President & CEO



Your cooperative in the community

By Rich Bauer

WHAT makes your cooperative different from other power companies in the area? Many people don't fully understand the benefit of being on cooperative power lines and being an owner of the cooperative.

One of the many benefits cooperative members have is the return of capital credits. Any margins (profits) the cooperative makes are returned to the members who used the power. Valley REC returns, on average, more than \$800,000 per year, and has retired almost \$23 million. But each year, there are a few members who move off our lines without leaving a forwarding address. We try to find them, but many times we can't. In the past, that unclaimed money was sent to the state, which decided how to spend it. Your cooperative fought to allow those unclaimed monies to be kept and used locally. With the help of our elected officials, a bill was passed so each cooperative could keep those unclaimed monies to use for very specific purposes: energy assistance to our members, civic/community activities and area education.

Born from that bill, Valley REC has created the Community Service Grant Program. This program, started in April 2015, has helped over 140 of our members with their electric bills. If a member has fallen on hard times due to an income issue or a medical issue, he or she is welcome to fill out an application. We have been able to give most of the applicants up to \$500 of help on their bills. We have also included secondary service repairs as part of the grant program.


In the civic and community category, we award funds to local organizations

for specific projects. So far, we have donated money to over 35 organizations. Funding is awarded for a defined project or item, not for an organization's general budget.

The last category we cover is educational programs. Valley REC has long been a believer in supporting the youth of our area and has granted scholarships to high school seniors, as well as those individuals who are heading to college later in life. The education component of the Community Service Grant Program has expanded Valley REC's support of education by allowing teachers and/or school districts to apply for grants for programs and activities that teach students about electricity or cooperative-related subjects. This grant funding can be of great help to school districts facing budget constraints.

It is truly amazing how those unclaimed capital credits can make such an impact in our little piece of Central Pennsylvania. You can see that what we previously had to turn over to the state of Pennsylvania is now helping those in our area better themselves, our community and our children.

Please remember this program if you or an organization you work with is in need of financial assistance. This is only one of many programs your cooperative provides, and is an example of what separates us from the other power companies. It is truly an honor to work for such a great cooperative.

As always, if you have any questions, comments or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact me. Thank you and God bless. 



Woodward's Cove

A rural treasure

By: Liza Parks

Member Services Intern

RURAL Pennsylvania is well-known for its natural scenic beauty, especially in the summertime when everything is full of life. Valley Rural Electric employees recently discovered a hidden treasure on co-op lines. Tucked in the woods along Route 35 in Juniata County is “Woodward’s Cove,” a beautifully redeveloped piece of farmland owned and operated by Donald and Roseann Woodward of Reed’s Gap. The cove’s special feature is a large pond that originated from an old mountain spring. The Woodwards have been members of the co-op since the 1960s but the family has owned the property for 185 years, making it nationally recognized as a “Century Farm.”

For years, people had encouraged Donald to make something of the little spring that trickled down the side of the mountain. After he retired and sold his old pickup truck, he found himself with an emptiness in his heart and schedule. He needed to occupy himself. So he hired numerous contractors to inspect the property’s potential. The feedback he received was discouraging, until the last contractor to scope out the property, Donnie Bryner, committed to bringing Donald’s dream of a pond to life. Donald thinks the world of Donnie, who managed a full-time job out of town during the year that it took him to dig up the foundation for the pond.

“From day one, Donnie was so in tune with exactly what I wanted; he was like an artist with a track hoe,” Donald says.

The Woodwards stay busy maintaining the land, with grass to be mowed, flowers to be watered, landscaping to be designed and collected antiques to be placed.

The pond requires a lot of maintenance of its own. Donald makes sure the water remains clean and stocked with fish for visitors to catch. The primitive nature of the property not only caught the eye of VREC employees; it also attracts some attention from a diverse crew of woodland critters. While it is home to over 30 different bird species, Donald declares he has a particular bone to pick with some local cranes that fly in (all too often) to snatch up the bass, blue gill and koi he keeps in the pond. Raccoons, deer and other furry friends enjoy the pond and surrounding property as well.

From one end to the other, you can see an abundance of green grass, flowers, carefully-structured stone pathways, picnic areas, and swings. Donald has taken advantage of an underground spring that flows above the big pond to form a smaller pond. To accompany the mini pond, he built a picnic pavilion for visitors to use. Donald also built a small



WELCOME: Donald and Roseann Woodward encourage visitors to sign their guest book.



ABOVE LEFT: "Reed's Gap Country Store" is used by visitors as a changing room before swimming. A piece of Donald's antique gas pump collection is seen near the store. Above right: Walk onto the covered bridge that Donald built and find a spot to leave your signature on the wood.

covered bridge that serves as a dock extending into the main pond. An antique fanatic, he knows covered bridges are seldom seen in Pennsylvania, so he built his own to keep the history alive. This particular wooden bridge is customized and covered in signatures from folks who have visited the cove.

"People from all over have stopped here to admire nature," Roseann points out. "We have signatures from other states and even other countries."

The covered bridge is also used by younger visitors as a diving board to jump into the pond. This triggered an upcoming project for Donald: the installation of an actual diving board for the kids. Children are his favorite visitors, which is why he aims to make the property as kid-friendly as possible.

"It does my heart good to hear the kids laughing," says Donald. "This place is truly a little taste of heaven."

Donald believes his inner-child never aged, which is what fuels his inventive nature. He is constantly thinking of new ways to upgrade the landscaping and use of his land.

"Every part of the pond is what has become of his visions," Roseann says. "He comes up with new visions every time he walks through here. It's like a new surprise every time I come down."

Donald's wife says her husband makes additions to the pond and its landscaping regularly. When she asks about the changes, he always replies nonchalantly, "Oh yeah, I did that the other day."

Along with the beautiful landscaping, you can see that the Woodwards have a knack for collecting country farm antiques. A shack stands in the center of the property loaded with farm memorabilia. It also holds a special family "artifact," made by a local mason: a replica of an old cook stove, specially constructed with stones that were collected off of the Woodwards' farmland. Across the dirt road above the shack, there is a smaller wooden structure with a sign labeling it "Reed's Gap Country Store." This building is used by swimmers as a changing room and is also decorated with fascinating antiques. In fact, the entire length of the property is like an outdoor country museum, decorated with old farm equipment and tools for visitors to admire. Donald has taken

a specific liking to collecting old-fashioned gas pumps and model trains, which he proudly displays among the landscaping. The Woodwards

credit Valley Rural Electric for keeping the property powered. Donald says he appreciated the promptness he received when requesting that a new pole and lines be strung on the property so he and his visitors had access to electricity.

The pond exploded into a legendary post-retirement project for the Woodwards, one they certainly were not expecting. Used as an outdoor venue for weddings, reunions, parties and regular church services, the pond's popularity has been growing for over a decade. Donald is humbled by the opportunity to cultivate his beautiful piece of property. He feels that it is "undeniably a gift from God," and he hopes the beauty of all his hard work will outlive him. Both Donald and Roseann wish to share their blessing of nature with any and every one. They welcome visitors to stop down and enjoy the pond at any time. Along with swimming and picnicking, they have paddleboats on-deck, a fire pit equipped with "campfire cookin' gear" and plenty of towering trees providing great shade around the pond. Besides the herd of cows that graze the grasslands surrounding the property, there is also some pleasant privacy.

So if you're searching for a scenic summer hang-out, seeking some seclusion or looking for a fun road trip with the family, scope out Woodward's Cove in Reed's Gap. Donald and Roseann would love to have you stop down at the pond... Just be sure to sign the guest book! ☀️



Choices abound in modern age of lighting

By: Doug Roles
Manager of Member Services

The days of one type of lightbulb meeting most of our lighting needs are in the increasingly distant past. Technology has changed how we light our living spaces and given consumers a myriad of different lightbulb options to choose from.

So how much information do you need to change a lightbulb? Valley REC Energy Specialist Travis Kuhstos says shopping the lighting aisle of your local home improvement store is easier if you learn a few lighting basics and take the time to read labels.

"It's a bit of a learning curve," he says. "There are so many combinations. There's a whole science behind lighting now that's more in depth than in the past."

Consumers first need to choose the right lightbulb for the right light fixture, Travis says. That's a different shopping experience than purchasing the traditional 60-watt incandescent, a general purpose bulb that once worked in every fixture in your house.

"It used to be you bought an incandescent lightbulb and it worked everywhere," he says.

CFLs (compact fluorescent lightbulbs), Travis says what people call the "twisty" bulbs, were created for vertical applications, such as in a lamp with a shade.

Other bulbs are designed to be exposed, such as the pear-shaped bulbs in chandelier lighting. There are also lightbulbs built specifically for outdoor use (such as halogen bulbs) and light fixtures for use in dusty areas, such as workshops.

"Consider the task that you're performing with your lighting, and use just the amount of lighting you need," Travis advises.

An under-cabinet light is great to use while working at a kitchen sink. But that light would not be needed in addition to ambient lighting if you're sitting at the kitchen table with friends.

Not only are there more choices in the lighting aisle, there is more terminology on packaging labels.

"There are LEDs (light-emitting diodes), CFLs, halogen, lumens, CRI (color rendering index), and more, and there is a host of lighting brands," says B. Denise Hawkins, who writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. "In recent years, the focus has been on making all bulbs more energy efficient and cost effective."

Denise says today's lighting choices have expanded and gotten serious makeovers. New lighting boxes include information on lumens, wattage and heat, but it's the lumens savvy shoppers are looking at now.

"It's all about the lumens," Denise writes in a recent column. She explains the lumen information indicates how much light the bulb produces. For example, to replace a 100-watt bulb, select a low-wattage bulb that produces 1,600 lumens. For other wattage/lumen matches, check out the conversion tables offered on the energystar.gov website.

Lighting experts say LEDs are the best choice for energy efficiency. They can last up to 20 years, but have a higher up-front price. The U.S. Department of Energy estimates a traditional incandescent adds about \$4.80 a year to the average household electric bill while a CFL adds \$1.20 and an LED uses just \$1 of electricity. Travis says consumers will see fewer CFLs in the future as LEDs continue to grow in popularity.

"LEDs are going to surpass the CFLs in the next five years, like the CFLs did to the incandescent," he predicts.

Lighting can account for up to 20 percent of a household electric bill. Ultimately, the brightness and type of lighting (soft white, warm light, etc.) is a personal preference and one that changes over time.

"As people age, their lighting needs change," Travis says. "As I get older, I need brighter 'task' lighting or spot lighting for reading." ☀

Eagle Scout enlisted help of Valley REC in service project

By: Doug Roles
Manager of Member Services

A local youth who enlisted the aid of Valley Rural Electric in his Eagle Scout project was awarded the rank in a ceremony Aug. 13. Pierce Hunter-Kysor of Walker Township, Huntingdon County, had his name added to the Troop 25 Eagle Scout Honor Roll after accomplishing all the require-



SCOUT PLEDGE: Roman Hunter-Kysor, right, a 2008 Eagle Scout, leads his brother Pierce Hunter-Kysor in the new Eagle Scout pledge as Scoutmaster Mike Kemp looks on.

ments for the prestigious award.

Pierce's Eagle Scout project improved the safety of the Scott Grugan Memorial Field located along Route 26 north of Huntingdon. Throughout the past year, Pierce coordinated the construction of a post and chain fence that separates a parking area from the soccer field, keeping motorists away from players and spectators.

"It makes pulling in and exiting Grugan field a lot safer," Pierce says of his project. "It keeps vehicles from pulling onto the field, too."

Valley REC donated used utility poles for the project. A crew from the co-op dug holes once the layout of the fence was complete. Soccer players from the high school team and the local youth soccer league helped with construction of the fence.

Pierce has been involved in Scouting since kindergarten. His leadership positions within the troop have included senior patrol leader, assistant senior patrol leader, instructor, troop guide and other positions. Pierce's accomplishments in Scouting include participating in the National Order of the Arrow Conference and the Seven Mountains Camp 20-Mile Hike, as well as placing second in the annual Klondike Derby.

"Pierce has been a really good Scout. It's been enjoyable having him in the troop and up through Eagle Scout," says Scoutmaster Mike Kemp.

Pierce is a junior at Huntingdon Area High School. He is the son of Darwin Kysor and Pat Hunter. ☀