

# 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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1-800-432-0680  
www.valleyrec.com

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**James Stauffer**  
Chairman  
Allegheny Director

**Leroy Barnes**  
Vice Chairman  
PREA Director

**Cindy Bigelow**  
Secretary

**Randall Huntsman**  
Treasurer

**Gregory Henry**  
**Linda McMath**  
**Kenneth Soder**  
**Kevin States**  
**Joanne Whitsel**

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

**Huntingdon/Martinsburg/Shade Gap**  
**Office Hours**  
Monday - Thursday  
7 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.

**Outages & Emergencies**  
1-800-432-0680

## Being thankful for and supportive of small businesses



**AS MANY STORES AND FOLKS** replace their Halloween decorations and candy with Hanukkah, Christmas, or Kwanzaa decorations and preparations, two November holidays tend to get minimized during the hustle and bustle.

Veterans Day gives us the opportunity to honor relatives, friends, neighbors, co-workers and even strangers who have served in the military. Thanksgiving, another holiday of gratitude, is a time to be thankful for the things we are fortunate to

have: family, friends, good health, food and shelter.

Other things to be thankful for are small businesses. These enterprises are a vital part of our economies. According to the Small Business Administration, a small business is one with fewer than 500 employees and an annual revenue of less than \$8 million. Pennsylvania has 1.1 million small businesses, accounting for 99.6% of all businesses in the state and employing 2.5 million people (46.3% of employees). Approximately 80% of all small businesses are one-person operations.

Small businesses are also crucial to our local economies. They use their profits to improve their operations and support other local businesses. They donate to local charities. They sponsor local teams, school projects and organizations. Their advertising helps to fund local radio and television stations, magazines, and newspapers. Strong small businesses promote vibrant local communities.

Small businesses cannot produce these benefits by themselves; they need our help and money. That brings us to the unofficial holidays of November: Black Friday, the day after Thanksgiving that marks the traditional start of the holiday shopping season, and its online counterpart, Cyber Monday. Major retailers offer special discounts to attract shoppers to their stores and websites. Small shops can find it hard to compete against the lure of these highly promoted sales.

To help small merchant account holders during the start of the holiday shopping rush, American Express created and trademarked Small Business Saturday® in 2010. Held the Saturday after Black Friday, this shopping holiday has grown in popularity, encouraging folks to shop at small, local brick-and-mortar businesses.

Small Business Saturday is especially important this year. Many small businesses have been adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, supply chain disruptions and worker shortages. Now more than ever, those that have survived need our dollars to stay afloat.

If you patronize a local enterprise that participates in the Co-op Connections® discount program, you could also bag some savings while supporting the local economy. A list of participating businesses appears in the center of last month's issue of *Penn Lines*. You can also find the list on the co-op's website, valleyrec.com, by selecting "Programs & Services" and then "Co-op Connections Program."

This holiday season, please support local small businesses. Dine in a locally owned restaurant. Visit a locally based attraction. Snack at a locally owned shop. Hire a locally based professional service. Purchase some gifts or necessities from a locally owned store. With your help, we can encourage a small business comeback. 🍷

**JOHN H. BOOKWALTER JR.**  
SPECIAL PROJECTS COORDINATOR

# Valley Rural Electric nears finish line with Sinking Valley substation construction project

**VALLEY RURAL ELECTRIC** Cooperative (REC) is wrapping up a project to replace an aging substation in Blair County. Construction is nearly complete on a new Sinking Valley substation, a yearlong project.

Completion of the Sinking Valley job will mark the third time in three years the co-op has built a new substation to replace an aging facility. Energizing this substation will depend upon Penelec, the FirstEnergy company that supplies power to the substation, and is slated for spring/summer of 2023.

“The reason for the new Sinking Valley substation was the age of the existing one,” Valley REC’s Vice President of Operations Todd Ross explains. “Originally constructed back in the 1950s, it’s the last wooden structured substation at Valley REC.”

The distribution lines that leave the existing substation travel roughly one mile across a hard-to-access area, leaving a lot of exposure for outages, he says.

“The original substation lot was also very small and gave the cooperative no room for expansion,” Ross says. “Due to today’s electrical construction code requirements, there was no way for the cooperative to consider rebuilding a new substation on the present site.”

In the spring of 2020, the cooperative purchased a piece of property to relocate and build the new substation. He says the facility is in a much better location that will serve the membership for many years to come.

“The old substation will eventually be dismantled after the new substation is energized,” Ross says. “There has been no decision on what will be done with the old substation property at this time.”



**FINAL STRETCH:** Construction of Valley REC’s new Sinking Valley substation is nearly complete. In this photo from late September, poles have been erected for fencing.

Site preparation for the new substation began in late 2021. Located in Tyrone Township in Valley REC’s Martinsburg service district, it also serves members in Spruce Creek, Warriors Mark and Franklin townships in Huntingdon County.

Replacing the former substation along Kettle Road, the facility is located 13 line spans north along Church Hill Road. It is closer to a Penelec 46-kilovolt supply line, lessening the likelihood of a loss of service to the substation. It eliminates several spans of the old facility’s north feeder, which traversed a steep ridge that hindered line maintenance. The new facility also offers better access for crews.

“We’re happy with our progress on this project and look forward to getting this substation online,” says Mike Lansberry, Valley REC’s Martinsburg district manager. “The final work on the construction project, after the erection of the steel structure, will include the installation of fencing and landscaping.”

Substation construction has been

a major part of Valley REC’s maintenance and operations effort in recent years. In the fall of 2021, the co-op completed construction of a new Atkinson Mills substation in Wayne Township, Mifflin County. That project also replaced an aging wooden facility from the 1950s with a metal-frame structure.

In October 2020, the co-op completed construction of a new substation near Fort Loudon, Franklin County. The Path Valley substation now handles the load of the former Metal substation several miles to the north along Route 75. In 2016, Valley built a new Reeds Gap substation in Tuscarora Township, Juniata County, again replacing an older facility.

These projects are part of the co-op’s ongoing effort to improve system reliability and power quality. Crews in all three service districts continue to install line protective devices that can isolate faulted sections of line from the rest of the distribution system, reducing the number of members impacted by any one power outage. 📍

# Board member steps down after 26 years of service

**A LONGTIME VALLEY REC DIRECTOR** has left the co-op's board after moving out of the service area. Robert Holmes resigned in September after 26 years of service.

A Valley REC member since 1969, Holmes, who had resided in Oneida Township, Huntingdon County, was first elected to the board in 1996. He represented District 5, comprised of Ferguson and Harris townships in Centre County and Barree, Franklin, Jackson, Logan, Miller, Morris, Oneida, Porter, Spruce Creek, Warriors Mark and West townships in Huntingdon County. Holmes served as board treasurer and board secretary and represented Valley REC on the board of Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc. for 13 years.

"Serving on the Valley board was a very positive experience for me for many years. I miss the board members. I loved my experience, and I

enjoyed the opportunity to make decisions that helped the membership," Holmes says.

He added that during his time on the board, he often heard compliments from members on the reliability of Valley's electric service. He said directors "have to put in a fair amount of time" if they want to do a good job for the members.

"We've tried to make good decisions over the years, and I think we have," Holmes says. "We've had some pretty good boards and good leadership. I appreciate the chance to have served. I had a wonderful experience."

Holmes was principal at Huntingdon Area High School for 19 years and was assistant principal for five years prior. From 1997 through 1999, he served as acting superintendent for the Southern Huntingdon and Huntingdon Area school districts.



Robert Holmes



Kenneth Soder Jr.

This fall, Holmes moved to the Lititz area to be closer to family.

The Valley REC board appointed Kenneth Soder Jr. of West Township to fill the vacancy. Soder works for Patton Township as the public works director. He and his wife, Kathy, own a farm with about 130 sheep.

"The best thing someone can do is give back to the community," Soder says as to why he wanted to be a part of Valley REC's Board of Directors.

The District 5 seat, along with the District 1 and District 3 seats, is open for election in 2023. 🗳️



## Jump start your holiday shopping

**VALLEY REC GIFT CERTIFICATES** make great gifts for the co-op members on your list.

To purchase one, complete the information below. If you'd like to surprise more than one person, please list the names, addresses and amounts for each on a separate sheet. Then mail this form with your check or money order for the total amount to: Valley REC, PO Box 477, Huntingdon, PA 16652-0477.

After we receive your payment, the co-op member's account will be credited in December with the amount you've specified. The certificate may be mailed directly to the recipient, or it can be sent to you for personal delivery.

Recipient's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Amount of Gift (\$5 minimum) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

*(Make check or money order payable to Valley REC)*

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (including area code): \_\_\_\_\_

- Return certificate to me.
- Send certificate directly to recipient prior to \_\_\_\_\_ *(date)*
- I wish to remain anonymous.

# Co-op seeks students for 2023 Youth Tour

**WEEKLONG SUMMER TRIP TO NATION'S CAPITAL WILL BE FIRST SINCE COVID-19 CANCELED EVENT IN 2020**

**HIGH SCHOOL JUNIORS HAVE A** great opportunity to make new friends and learn more about their government next summer.

Valley Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) will sponsor students from throughout the cooperative's eight-county service territory on an all-expenses-paid trip to the nation's capital, June 18-23, 2023. The Rural Electric Youth Tour has brought high school students to Washington, D.C., almost every June since the 1950s. The COVID-19 pandemic canceled the trip in 2020, 2021 and 2022.

Applications are due to Valley REC's office by Jan. 9, 2023. Select students will be contacted to arrange an interview with the co-op's selection committee in mid-February.

Participating students and staff will follow masking and social distancing protocols.

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 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.



**ON TOUR:** Valley REC's 2019 group of Youth Tour students is shown pausing for a group photo near the Jefferson Memorial. Due to COVID-19, the co-op has not sent students to Washington, D.C., since that trip. Valley REC will be sponsoring students on the 2023 Youth Tour.

Whether or not their household is served by Valley REC, juniors from the following public schools — which have at least some portion of their district overlapping the co-op's service territory — are welcome to apply.

- ▶ 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

Additionally, students within these districts who are home-schooled or attend private school are welcome to apply. Students who live outside of these areas but have a parent/guardian who is a Valley REC member, such as someone with a seasonal residence or hunting camp on our lines, are also welcome to apply.

Students whose households are served by either Bedford Rural Electric or New Enterprise Rural Electric should apply to the Youth Tour programs of those co-ops.

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 in 2023 should visit their high school guidance counselor's office now to apply. Final selections will be made in early March.

For more details, visit [valleyrec.com](http://valleyrec.com), 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 ext. 1625. 📞