

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 Lineworker's Perspective on Keeping the Lights On

In celebration of National Lineworker Appreciation Day on April 8, our longest-serving lineman offers his take on this demanding and rewarding career.



GREG DILLING

IF YOU LIVE IN Valley Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) territory, it's a good bet you've seen our bucket trucks and other vehicles on the road some. You've probably noticed co-op crews working along a field or in a right of way in the woods. For as often as people see Valley REC lineworkers doing our jobs, there may be a lot our members don't realize about this profession and what's involved in keeping the lights on.

The first thing to know: This job is a lot of hard work — but it's also rewarding. I've been at this for 38 years. I started out working for a contractor, and in June, I'll hit 30 years with the co-op.

One of the things that has always struck me is most people don't see the location and actual cause of an outage, especially nighttime outages. People in their homes often don't see the downed wires, fallen trees and broken poles. They may not realize their power is still out because a crew must cut trees out of the way just to get to the pole.

Aside from outage calls, a lot of service work has to be done, too. A typical day might involve inspecting padmount transformers or replacing aging, deteriorating poles. We also have to upgrade transformers in places where new homes are being built or where existing homes are using more electricity due to additions, renovations, or the use of more electronic devices.

One of our most time-consuming responsibilities is determining the cause of blinks, those short power fluctuations that cause lights to dim or digital clocks to flash 12:00. The cause is rarely easy to spot. It could be a bad insulator or tree limbs and leaves contacting the wire.

As one of Valley REC's linemen, I work day and night in all weather conditions to make sure our members have power. That can mean getting called out in the middle of a birthday party or dinner at a restaurant or having a good night's sleep interrupted. But we also know the cooperative's members are counting on us to restore service as quickly and as safely possible.

"Safely" is the key word. Lineworkers know their profession ranks in the top 10 most dangerous jobs. On job sites, we talk through the work from a safety standpoint. We keep an eye on each other, and younger guys are encouraged to speak up if they see something unsafe.

Becoming a journeyman lineworker can take four or five years, as younger workers complete apprenticeships to hone their skills and learn safe work practices around high-voltage. While we are trained extensively, there are times the job can be scary. I've made a life of this kind of work, and I don't mind saying I've had some memorable experiences up a pole when the wind was blowing and trees were creaking and cracking all around. There are times when we simply have to wait for weather conditions to improve before we can begin outage restoration work.

One other thing to know about co-op lineworkers is that we're your neighbors. We shop at the same stores, and our kids go to the same schools. If your lights are off, there is a good chance ours are off, too. So, you can trust we are doing our best to get the lights back on, for your families and ours. 🙌

GREG DILLING
CREW LEADER



Co-Op Golf Tournament to Benefit Three Area Children, Teen

DOUG ROLES, VICE PRESIDENT, MEMBER SERVICES

VALLEY RURAL Electric Cooperative’s (REC) employee golf committee has been busy planning this year’s tournament, which will benefit three area children and a teenager who are facing serious health challenges. The 2024 Benefit Golf Outing will be held Thursday, June 20, at the Huntingdon Country Club.

As in previous years, the event will feature a morning and afternoon flight of golfers in a shotgun-start best-ball scramble. All of the cooperative’s offices will be closed on the day of the tournament as all employees lend a hand on the course for the

staff-driven fundraising effort, which includes a silent auction.

“We’re grateful for all the support of our golfers, sponsors and donors,” Valley REC President & CEO Rich Bauer says. “Our hope each year is that this tournament will be a bright spot in the challenging journey these families are facing.”

The upcoming event will benefit 6-month-old Keylan Smith of Mount Union; 2-year-old Waylon Oldring, also of Mount Union; 3-year-old Isabelle Canedo of McVeytown; and 14-year-old Quinton Morrow of Hopewell.

Keylan was born in October with two heart conditions. At about 6 weeks old, he had a catheterization, and he may need valve surgery in the future. He also will need surgery due to premature closing of a cranial suture in utero. He has had many challenges, including using a feeding tube. Keylan’s parents are Tyler and Alexa “Sis” Smith. They say Keylan was born fighting and amazes them every day.

Waylon spent the first few months of his life at Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh due to a severe heart defect. He had two open-heart surgeries in 2022 and was doing well



WAYLON OLDRING

until October 2023, when he began losing weight. Tests determined he has liver cancer. Waylon is the son of Andrew and Nakesha Oldring.

A few days before Christmas 2023, **Isabelle** was diagnosed with leukemia as her parents, Jay and Kristen Canedo, were preparing for the arrival of another baby at the end of March. The Canedos travel to Hershey for Isabelle’s treatments. She completed her first 30 days of chemo in January and responded well.

Quinton, a football player and wrestler for Northern Bedford High School, developed mobility problems,



KEYLAN SMITH



ISABELLE CANEDO

initially thought to be from a hard hit in a football game. In December, he was diagnosed with two cancerous spinal tumors. He is undergoing radiation treatment and will later have chemotherapy. He will need spinal

fusion surgery due to the initial tumor surgery requiring the removal of vertebrae material. Quinton’s mother, Jen Morrow, says life has been “a whirlwind” since last fall.

Valley REC’s health and wellness committee organized its first benefit golf tournament in 2012. Since then, the golf outing has evolved into an all-hands-on-deck event. The generous support of a wide range of businesses and individuals helps the beneficiaries better meet the financial challenges associated with serious illnesses and accidents and lets them know their community cares.

The co-op’s golf outing has raised approximately \$345,000 since its inception. The tournament registration fee is \$100 per player, which includes 18 holes of golf, a cart, lunch, dinner and various prizes. For more infor-

mation on registering a team, being a sponsor or donating an item for the silent auction, call 800-432-0680 or visit valleyrec.com and click on the golf outing button. 📍



QUINTON MORROW

ANNUAL SAFETY TRAINING

Valley Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) employees participated in annual workplace safety classes provided by the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association (PREA) in late February at our district offices. Joe Selnekovic, PREA senior safety & environmental adviser, shown at left in top photo, presented the information. During a class on portable fire suppression, employees learned about the types of fire extinguishers and the correct procedures for using them. The bloodborne pathogen class covered Occupational Safety and Health Administration-mandated precautions. Co-op lineworkers also had a class on spill-control countermeasures.



PRIORITIZING SAFETY: Joe Selnekovic, PREA senior safety & environmental adviser, leads a class on proper safety precautions for preventing transmission of bloodborne pathogens for Valley REC employees.



Meet Your Employees

DOUG ROLES, VICE PRESIDENT, MEMBER SERVICES

HIGHLIGHTED IN THIS column is a recent addition to the Valley Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) team: Stephen Jefferis, who was hired full time in May 2022 as an apprentice. He is currently a first-year lineman and works from the co-op's Huntingdon district office.

"I worked here as an intern," Stephen recalls of his introduction to the co-op. "I painted a lot of walls and was able to go out with a line crew."

Stephen grew up near Merrillville, Ind., and his family moved back to central Pennsylvania a few years ago. Stephen's uncle, Valley REC lineman Curt White, connected him with the internship opportunity at the Huntingdon district office while Stephen was in college.

"Working here as an intern was the first time I thought of this as a career," he says. "Before that, I didn't even

know what a lineman was."

Stephen graduated from high school in Indiana in 2018 and has a bachelor's degree in criminal justice from Pensacola Christian College. He was interested in police work from a young age, but getting to know the co-op's employee team solidified his decision to go into utility work.

"When I worked here as an intern, I liked everybody I worked with," he says. "It's a good group of guys."

As a Valley REC lineman, Stephen does a mix of service work, line maintenance work and outage



NEW TEAM MEMBER: Stephen Jefferis, a first-year lineman at Valley Rural Electric Cooperative, works from the co-op's Huntingdon district.

restoration. He has attended the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association's Job Training & Safety schools for lineworkers, including a class for digger derrick truck operators.

Outside of work, Stephen enjoys hunting, especially archery hunting for deer. He says he recently got into using a hunting saddle, a sling seat that affixes to the trunk of a tree.

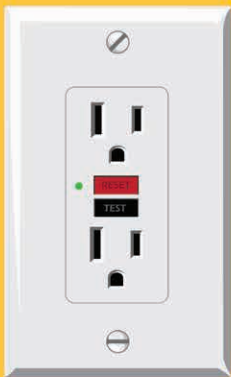
"It's different from a climbing stand," Stephen says of this new challenge. "It's a lot lighter."

Stephen also enjoys reading and is working his way through a book on the history of World War II.

His wife, Tori, works as a police dispatcher for UPMC Altoona. The couple lives in McConnellstown and is expecting their first child this month.

We're glad Stephen chose Valley REC's service territory as his "beat." He's one of the people you can count on. 🐾

WATT'S THE DIFFERENCE?



Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter

Prevents electrical shock by detecting variations in current.

Install in areas where water and electricity are in close proximity.

Test outlets with GFCIs monthly; if they don't work properly, consult your electrician.

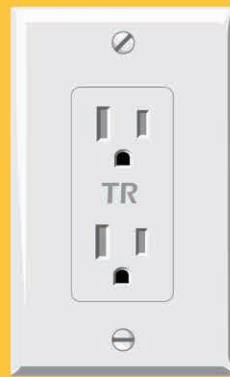


Arc Fault Circuit Interrupter

Prevents electrical fires caused by arc flash. Usually installed by an electrician.

An arc is an electrical discharge that can cause intense heat or light.

It interrupts the circuit when it detects an arc or other abnormalities in the flow of electricity.



Tamper Resistant Outlet

Prevents shocks caused by tampering with an outlet.

The protective shutters are designed to move when a plug is correctly inserted.

Became part of the National Electrical Code in 2008; if your home does not have these, install childproof devices.

