

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
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Monday - Thursday
7 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.

Outages & Emergencies
1-800-432-0680

Guest Column

Co-op Migrates to New Pay-by-Phone Payment System



JOHN H. BOOKWALTER JR.

“TRY TO REMEMBER THE KIND of September / When life was slow and oh, so mellow.”

These opening lines from “Try to Remember,” the first song in the musical “The Fantasticks,” invoke feelings of nostalgia. However, as much as we might long for the simpler times of the past, the pages of the calendar keep turning ever forward, bringing constant change into our lives.


Such was the case with Valley Rural Electric Cooperative’s (REC) pay-by-phone payment system. Members had grown accustomed to it since its introduction, hearing its toll-free number when they called or seeing the number on bills and the co-op’s website. Change came to that payment option July 31 when National Information Solutions Cooperative (NISC), which provides Valley REC’s business software, migrated our co-op to a new pay-by-phone system.

NISC’s new cloud-based solution provides a better pay-by-phone experience. It offers more natural sounding voices and faster call flow. Being cloud-based, the secure system can scale upward to handle increased call volume, reducing busy signals, and then return to its smaller footprint when traffic decreases. Behind the scenes, it simplifies administrative tasks.

You should notice very little difference. However, there is a new toll-free telephone number — 855-922-3147 — to make a payment by phone. That new number now appears on our bills, disconnect notices and website. Should you accidentally dial the old number, you will hear an automated message asking you to call the new one.

You should not need to re-enter any of your stored information. As part of the migration, NISC securely moved all member payment information to the new system. NISC temporarily prevented the storing of any new card info during the migration to ensure nothing was lost.

Phone prompts also remain unchanged. You should hear the same messages and steps you heard before the migration.

Our other payment methods remain unchanged. If you pay online, you can still do so by using SmartHub®, our online payment platform from NISC. Links for SmartHub remain on valleyrec.com. If you yearn for those simpler days of old, you can still mail your payment stub and a check or money order (no cash, please) to the cooperative. Lastly, for that personal touch, you can also stop by any of our offices to pay in person. And, yes, unlike some businesses with automated check-out registers, we still accept cash for in-person transactions, just as we did “when life was slow and oh, so mellow.” 

JOHN H. BOOKWALTER JR.
SPECIAL PROJECTS COORDINATOR

NISC and SmartHub are registered trademarks of National Information Solutions Cooperative, Inc.

Fifteen Local Students Receive Cooperative Scholarships

VALLEY RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE (REC) recently awarded \$1,000 scholarships to 15 high school seniors and students already enrolled in post-secondary institutions for the 2024-25 academic year.

The co-op's Brighter Future Scholarship Program, established in 2010 to assist eligible students who are cooperative members or their dependents, has provided nearly \$285,000 in scholarship funds to date. Selection criteria include academic achievement, school activities and community service.

The money to finance this initiative comes from un-claimed capital credits. Valley REC uses these co-op funds to assist consumers facing financial hardships, support civic organizations and fund educational programs.



The following 13 high school students received scholarships from Valley REC:

Central High School — Megan L. Diehl of Martinsburg, niece of Donald A. Hoover, attending Penn State Altoona; and Hunter W. Smith of Roaring Spring, son of Monte and Kim Smith, attending Mansfield University.

Claysburg-Kimmel High School — Cameron R. Brown of Claysburg, son of Gary and Heather Brown, attending Penn State Altoona.

Forbes Road Junior-Senior High School — Camryn F. Horne of Hustontown, daughter of Devin and Mindy Horne, attending Messiah University; and Brenna G. Snyder of Hustontown, daughter of Terry and Stephanie Snyder, attending Saint Francis University.

Hollidaysburg Area Senior High School — Sophia

2024 Valley REC Junior Scholarship Recipients Named

VALLEY RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE'S (REC) Board of Directors recently recognized scholarly and community-minded young leaders through the co-op's Valley REC Junior Scholarship. High school juniors during the 2023-2024 school year were invited to submit applications from Jan. 1 to April 7. The board's committee selected recipients based on academic achievement, as well as participation in extracurricular activities and/or community service. Successful applicants received their grant earlier this summer.

This offering is separate from the Brighter Future program, which provides scholarships to high school seniors

and adult students. The Junior Scholarship is awarded directly to the students and can be used toward future education-related expenses.

This opportunity is open to high school juniors who are enrolled in one of the 18 public school districts wholly or partly in Valley REC's territory or who live in our service area and are either home-schooled or enrolled in a private, charter, or cyber school. High school juniors whose parents or guardians are seasonal Valley REC account holders may also apply.

The students selected to receive funds are listed below, and we wish them the best in their senior year. 🍀

Altoona
Rachel Kennedy
Charlie Kephart
Paige Radel
Spencer Spallone

Huntingdon
Gabriella Cramer
Carly Hess
Sabrina Kyper
Kara Shultz

Mifflin County
Amaris Fultz

Northern Bedford
Savanna Hershberger

Katelyn Harper
Dalton Hartman
Haley Ross
Savanna Schooley
Hayley Sunderland
Elayna Thomas
Isabella Whitsel

Fannett-Metal
Alexis Doyle
Alesha Goshorn
Lauren Kline

Juniata
Riley Lyter
Teagan Trout
Kaylynn Wray

Southern-Fulton
Ashlyn Baker
Daniel Paul
Paige Risbon

Tussey Mountain
Barrett Brode
Ellie Cornelius
Keegan Traxler

Hollidaysburg
Samuel Blescia
Avery Hooper

McConnellsburg
Maggie Mellott

Southern Huntingdon
Chloe Brown
Hanalyn Grissinger

B. Blescia of Hollidaysburg, daughter of Adam and Jill Blescia, attending Penn State University; and Jacob M. Ott of Hollidaysburg, son of Timothy and Melissa Ott, attending Schreyer Honors College at Penn State University.

Juniata High School — Shaleyn K. Armstrong of Port Royal, daughter of Kevin and Lynnetta Armstrong, attending Penn State University.

Juniata Valley High School — Haylie E. Brown of Huntingdon, daughter of Todd and Amanda Brown, attending Penn State Altoona.

McConnellsburg High School — Linkyn S. Harmon of Big Cove Tannery, son of Russell and Talisha Harmon, attending Shippensburg University.

Southern Huntingdon County High School — Addie G. Barnett of Three Springs, daughter of Megan Barnett, attending University of Kentucky; and Sara K. Oakman of Calvin, daughter of Joshua Oakman and Jennifer Burdge, attending University of Pittsburgh.

Tussey Mountain High School — Kaylin N. Witters of Cassville, daughter of Robert and Angela Witters, attending Shippensburg University.

Two high school graduates from previous years also received a scholarship from Valley REC. They are: Evangeline I. McGargle of Alexandria, daughter of Samuel and Stephanie McGargle and a 2023 graduate of Juniata Valley High School, attending Penn State University; and Riley P. Zerbe of Huntingdon, daughter of Jeremy and Holly Zerbe and a 2023 graduate of Huntingdon Area High School, attending Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

Valley REC is a member-owned cooperative providing electric service to consumers in eight counties of south-central Pennsylvania, including Bedford, Blair, Centre, Franklin, Fulton, Huntingdon, Juniata and Mifflin. For more information about Valley REC's Brighter Future Scholarship Program, call 800-432-0680 or visit valleyrec.com and follow the "Programs and Services" tab to the "Scholarships" section. 📍

Three Springs Substation Replacement Project Nearing Completion

Construction of a new Three Springs substation at the site of the former facility in Cromwell Township, Huntingdon County, should be complete by the time this issue of *Penn Lines* magazine arrives in your mailbox. The project will increase service reliability and power quality for members throughout southern Huntingdon County.

The former facility was the final 1950s-era substation still in operation on the Valley Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) distribution system after the co-op upgraded or replaced four others in the past four years. Work included converting associated lines in Cromwell, Clay and Springfield townships from 7,200 volts to 14,400 volts.

During construction, operations personnel rerouted power from the co-op's Clear Ridge and Riverview substations — in Taylor Township, Fulton County, and Shirley Township, Huntingdon County — to members normally served by the Three Springs substation. Service interruptions to members were minimal. Consumers were notified ahead of time of the planned outages. 📍



NEW CONSTRUCTION: The Three Springs substation is located along Route 994 near Orbisonia. The grounds of the Southern Huntingdon County High School can be seen in the far right of the photo. At right, an EnergyTest employee installs post insulators on the new steel structure at the site.



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, Jamie Jones, who lives in Saxton, Bedford County. Joining Valley REC in August 2022, she is the co-op's accounting assistant. Her duties include ensuring vendors are paid and consumer-members receive capital credits payments.

Jamie has a wealth of experience in management, office procedures and bookkeeping. She holds an associate degree in office administration from the former Computer Learning Network, Altoona.

After finishing her degree, Jamie worked for 13 years at Pleasant View Farms, a dairy in Martinsburg, Blair County. She was an administrative assistant to the owner and then the office manager. Her duties included managing payroll and accounts payable. Nationwide, dairy operations are expanding, and she witnessed a local example of that trend.

"At the time I left, they were milking 4,500 head at three locations," she recalls of the farm's growth.

Jamie next worked for Greenleaf Medical in Saxton, a medical marijuana growing facility that opened in 2019. She started as a human resource manager then was promoted to general manager. She worked at the facility for three years, at one point managing as many as 200 employees.

Jamie says her two previous jobs had many similarities, though managing the growing facility entailed more government regulation and many more employees. After several years there, she was looking to lessen her work-related stress. That's when she saw a vacancy notice for Valley REC on a job-search platform.

"When I interviewed, I was like, 'Yes, this is the job I want!'" she recalls. "I plan to stay here."

Her attitude hasn't changed.



NEW TEAM MEMBER: Jamie Jones works as Valley Rural Electric Cooperative's accounting assistant in the co-op's corporate office.

"I like it all," she says. "It's a family-oriented atmosphere. I'm able to come in and do my work and go home."

Jamie's office management prowess extends into her role as the business manager of the Saxton Sportsmen Association, a position she's held for a total of six years. She manages the association's bar and grill and other activities.

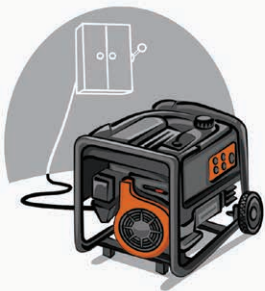
"We have ground for hunting, and we promote wildlife conservation and firearms safety," she says.

When not working, Jamie enjoys spending time with family. Her fiancé, Eric, is a union carpenter who currently works as a construction superintendent at the James E. Van Zandt Medical Center, Altoona. Jamie has two daughters: Haylie, a senior at Shippensburg University, majoring in business; and Alexis, who works in the Zen Leaf medical marijuana dispensary in Altoona.

Jamie is a dog lover. The family includes two boxers, Reese and Remi, and a huskie, Toby.

Valley REC's team is glad Jamie is putting her experience to work for the co-op. She's one of the people you can count on. 🐾

What is a **TRANSFER SWITCH**?



A transfer or throw switch is an essential mechanism that safely shuts off power to the electrical grid before backup power is used. This switch is sometimes referred to as a double-throw switch, as it controls two separate circuits.

The switch's job is to safely transfer power from its primary source to a backup power source, enabling users to maintain power during an outage. It works by connecting a generator to your home's main circuits to provide backup power.

Properly installed transfer switches are essential because they prevent dangerous backfeed into the power grid, which endangers utility workers and others.

Make sure your permanent generator and switch are installed according to code and working properly. Never plug a portable generator into a wall outlet, as this can cause backfeed.

Learn more at:

Safe Electricity.org