

# Valley Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



One of 14 electric cooperatives serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

## VALLEY RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

10700 Fairgrounds Road  
P.O. Box 477  
Huntingdon, PA 16652-0477  
814-643-2650  
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

## Guest Column

### Seasonal Staffer Promotes Assistance Program



**AVA LANCHE**

**HAPPY DECEMBER!** I'M GLAD TO be with you because I wasn't sure — after a recent office kerfuffle — if I'd show up at all in *Penn Lines* this year. Certainly, you remember me from past November issues. I appeared four times in the early 2020s, including last year, promoting the co-op's gift certificate program.

But last month? Nope. Valley's illustrious (feel the sarcasm!) editorial staff gave me the boot. They replaced my sample certificate with a new promotional graphic (see the baubles at the bottom of the page). Some gratitude! Do you think it's been easy keeping my hands up like this

during appearances?

But, in the hustle and bustle, Valley's Member Services Department got pressed for time and needed someone to put together December's column. They came to me, hat in hand, asking for help. I wanted to give them the cold shoulder — I sure was frosted! — but it's the Christmas season and getting all hot under the collar does me no good. So, here I am.

The Valley team wanted me to remind folks about a couple things. First is the co-op's Members Helping Members (MHM) program, which is open to those who are experiencing employment-related hardships, like a layoff or reduction in hours, and it's funded by members. To receive MHM help for paying an electric bill, those in need must submit a confidential application. It's available under the "Programs & Services" menu at valleyrec.com or at our offices.

Members can contribute to the fund by rounding their electric bill up to the nearest whole dollar. They can also make a one-time or a recurring donation in any amount through their electric bills. It's a cool program!

The department also wanted me to pass along a few tips about budgeting. It's important to keep costs in check this time of year. Planning for purchases can offset the expense of spontaneous gift-buying. After all, you don't want December spending to put you in a fiscal deep freeze in the new year.

To save energy and money, adjust the thermostat. I set my thermostat way back, but most people do fine at 68 degrees. Other low-cost/no-cost steps include sealing air leaks around windows and doors, changing furnace filters and setting ceiling fans to push warm air downward — if that's your style.

Lastly, the department asked if I would help promote the gift certificates. The nerve! Those guys really take the ice cream cake, but I don't want anyone to miss out on a great stocking stuffer. So, take it from me, they're nice gifts — right up there with snow globes, skis and sleds.

Co-op gift certificates can be signed by the person who is giving them or the giver may remain anonymous. Purchasers can use the cut-out order form in the November issue of *Penn Lines*, stop by one of our offices or click the "Gift Certificate" button on our website (another place I used to appear).

I should clarify that Valley REC has gift certificates available year-round — in spring, summer and fall themes. But you'll need to talk to someone else about that. I only work winters.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! ❄️

**AVA LANCHE**  
MEMBER SERVICES SEASONAL STAFF



**GIFT IDEA:** It's not too late to add a co-op gift certificate to your holiday shopping list. They're available in several styles at all Valley REC offices.

# Longtime Members Recount Valley REC Christmas Outreach

**DOUG ROLES**, VICE PRESIDENT, MEMBER SERVICES

WHEN **DEBBIE FAGLEY OF HARRISONVILLE**, Fulton County, read that *Penn Lines* was celebrating its 60th year with photo contests, including for the “oldest” and “most well-traveled” issues, she went digging through her copies of the magazine.

She found a May 1980 issue to submit to the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association’s editorial team. She also rediscovered a trove of annual Christmas craft and recipe booklets, produced by longtime Valley Rural Electric Cooperative (VREC) Member Services Director Nan Hunt.

## Christmases past

The 1970s- and 1980s-era pieces reminded Debbie of Nan’s annual Christmastime outreach. Nan hosted gatherings at the cooperative’s district offices, including what was then Valley’s Hustontown district office, across Route 475 from the Hustontown Fire Company. The get-togethers were also held at restaurants, churches and fire halls.

“Members were able to go and have a good time and talk,” Debbie, 74, recalls. “We really had a good time. The booklets had things in there like hints for happy holidays. They had different recipes for cookies and fudge — all kinds of things you would want to serve at Christmas parties.”

Nan worked in Valley’s Member Services Department from 1971 to 1988, starting out as a “home service adviser.” She passed away in 2017. VREC’s records show Nan began her Christmas program in 1972 and produced a recipe and craft booklet each year during her time with the cooperative.

The inside cover of the booklets often featured a handwritten greeting. In the 1974 issue, Nan wrote: “Last year, there was bad news; this year, there’s good news. The Federal Energy Office has announced that there will be no curtailment of Christmas decorative lighting as there was last year. Nothing could make me happier!!”

Nan and her team often solicited craft ideas and recipes from members and other electric cooperatives. Some years, other co-ops helped with printing, including the 15th book, which was printed by our sister co-ops in northern Pennsylvania, Tri-County Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) and Claverack REC. Nan credited former Valley employees Mary Ann Jarosick, Ruby Shearburn and Barry Kline for their assistance in producing the booklets.

“We had our own printing equipment,” recalls VREC’s



**CO-OP MEMORIES:** Delmar and Debbie Fagley of Harrisonville, Fulton County, display 1970s- and 1980s-era craft and recipe booklets produced by Valley Rural Electric Cooperative. The straw hat is from a 1991 Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association Annual Meeting.

Special Projects Coordinator John Bookwalter Jr., who joined the co-op’s team just as Nan left. “We would print many of our own materials. Mary Lou Ciampa would have done the printing.”

In 1988, Nan returned to her alma mater, Juniata College, and worked there as the director of the Annual Support Fund until 1990. From there, she completed her career at the Joseph M. Biddle Publishing Company, where for many years she was the editor of the School News pages and the Christmas Eve edition of *The Daily News*. Her husband, Jim Hunt, retired in 1997 as an editor with Biddle after a 41-year career. He died Nov. 25, 2020.

Reminders about Nan’s Christmas outreach were published each fall in *Penn Lines*. Organizations that could gather at least 15 participants were welcome to schedule an event. It’s likely that many VREC members have held on to at least some of the booklets Nan created. Debbie Fagley has nine of them. She says the get-togethers were a good way to meet co-op neighbors.

“We moved here in 1970; I didn’t know a lot of people,” she says. “My mother lived in Mercersburg, and she loved going up [to Hustontown] with me. My mother was very crafty. She’d say, ‘Don’t throw anything away; I’ll find a use for it.’”



## Longtime members

Debbie and her husband, Delmar, have been Valley members for more than five decades. They moved to their home along Pleasant Ridge Road on April 30, 1970, after marrying the previous year. They are the parents of two grown children and have six grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. Delmar will turn 80 in March.

Like many senior co-op members, the Fagleys have an interesting rural life story. Delmar grew up on a farm close to where he lives now. When he was 13, he began cutting timber with Blair “Doc” Mellot, a logger from Needmore.

“I’d run a chainsaw since I was 10 years old,” he recalls.

As the oldest of six (four boys and two girls), Delmar left Green Hills School (formed from the consolidation of several smaller schools) at 15 to work on the family’s 178-acre farm when his father became ill.

“Grove [now Manitowoc Company] was hiring like wild,” he says of the crane manufacturer. “My neighbor got me an application. This was 1964. He said you could work all the hours you wanted — five 12-hour shifts, 10 hours on Saturday and eight on Sundays.”

But Doc didn’t want to lose Delmar, so he agreed to stay on “for a while.” He logged from 3 to 11 a.m. and then went to Grove, where he worked the second shift.

“I did this about two and a half years,” he recalls. “In my spare time, I farmed.”

Debbie is an alumna of James Buchanan High School in Mercersburg and retired from JLG, where she was a benefits coordinator.

The Fagleys entered the *Penn Lines* contest with a photo of Delmar holding the 1980 issue while wearing a “PREA 1991 Summer Meeting” straw hat. Delmar received the hat years ago from his friend, the late Dave Wright, a former member of the VREC Board. Dave received the hat as a meeting attendance gift.

*Penn Lines* will mark its 60th year in 2026. The cover story of the Fagleys’ May 1980 issue was about Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc. (Allegheny), which provides wholesale energy to the co-ops in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. At the time, Allegheny was considering building a hydroelectric plant at Raystown Dam. The plant opened in 1988.

## Evolving department

In mid-1988, Nan left VREC. Her successor, retired Vice President of Consumer Services and Public Relations Luanne Eckenrode, joined the co-op that October. Luanne says the role of member services departments, including their products, programs and services, evolved over time.

“In the early days of the co-op, there was a focus on home economics and educating members about electric appliances,” Luanne explains. “There was a real mindset



**CHRISTMAS OUTREACH:** The late Nan Hunt, former member services director for Valley Rural Electric Cooperative, demonstrates how to make a Christmas craft at the co-op’s former Martinsburg office in 1985.

toward how electricity can benefit you. The last of that effort was directed to microwave ovens.”

Luanne says that as co-ops moved beyond the “getting-the-lights” period, their messaging shifted to safety and efficiency. Luanne praised Nan for her creativity and energy.

“Nan was terrific at networking at the state and local levels,” Luanne says. “She was known. She got national recognition for some of the programs she developed.

“Her Christmas programs were extremely popular and well attended from what I’ve been told,” she adds.

“Those were really popular programs for their time. Times changed. It was the evolution of our department. Everything has a life cycle. Programs aren’t stagnant. They need to change and grow.” 📌



**VARYING IN SIZE:** Christmas booklet sizes varied from an 8.5-by-11-inch format to a 7-by-8.5-inch layout. The *Penn Lines* issue, shown above, is from May 1980.

# Meet Your Employees

**DOUG ROLES,** VICE PRESIDENT, MEMBER SERVICES

Highlighted in this column is a recent addition to the Valley Rural Electric Cooperative (VREC) team, Cody Acord. Cody joined VREC in October 2023 and works in the co-op's Martinsburg district, Blair County, as a fourth-year lineman.

Cody, a native of Sanford, N.C., is a 2012 graduate of Central Carolina Community College and holds an associate degree in machining technology.

After college, Cody enlisted in the active-duty Marine Corps. He was stationed at Camp Lejeune, N.C. In 2013, he was part of a combat deployment that took him to a dozen countries in the Mideast and Northern Africa. A fire team leader, Cody left the Corps in 2015 with the rank of corporal.

"I bounced around for a while," Cody says. "In 2019, I went to climbing school, and I have been doing this line of work ever since. I'm one for schooling and trying new things. Line work just clicked with me."

Cody became a married man while in the Marines. His wife, Kaitlin, and her family are from James Creek, Huntingdon County. Both their fathers are pastors, and Kaitlin and Cody met while her father was pastoring at a congregation in Florida.

"She's from Pennsylvania, was living in Florida, and we met in Alabama at a church camp," Cody explains. "We met as kids. We've known each other since we were 10 or 11 years old."

Cody's parents and his younger brother now live in southern Virginia. Cody and Kaitlin moved to Pennsylvania in 2017. They have a 9-year-old son and an 8-year-old daughter.

Cody was working for UPS in Duncansville when he saw an ad for the Global Powerline Academy, a lineworker training school in Blue Knob, Blair County. He attended the three-month course using G.I. Bill funding.



**VALUED TEAM MEMBER:** Cody Acord joined the Valley Rural Electric Cooperative team in 2023. He works as a fourth-year lineman in the co-op's Martinsburg district.






For three years, Cody worked for Roaring Spring-based BNF Powerline Construction. With BNF, he worked contracted jobs for Valley's sister co-ops – Tri-County Rural Electric Cooperative in Mansfield; REA Energy in Indiana, Pa.; and United Electric Cooperative in DuBois. He then worked for the power division of Penn Line Service.

Working for Valley landed on Cody's radar when the cooperative was looking at installing a new transformer near his house. A Valley staking engineer mentioned to Cody the cooperative was looking for lineworkers, and he applied.

"I like it," Cody says. "I plan on making this work a career. Valley's one of the better companies I've worked for. I like the people I work with."

In his free time, Cody enjoys family activities, especially fishing with his kids on Raystown Lake or the Juniata River. He also enjoys riding motorcycles.

We hope Cody's career with Valley REC will be a long, smooth ride. He's one of the people you can count on.

Product Type	Best Time to Buy for Discounts
 <b>Refrigerators and Freezers</b>	Late winter to early spring (March/April); New models arrive in spring, and older models are discounted; Holiday sales (Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day).
 <b>Washers/Dryers, Dishwashers, Ovens and Ranges</b>	September and October when new models are released and older models are discounted; Holiday sales (Labor Day, Black Friday, Presidents' Day, Memorial Day); End-of-year clearance.
 <b>Large Home Electronics (TVs, home theater)</b>	Holiday sales (Black Friday and Cyber Monday); Amazon Prime Days; Late fall/early winter; Other promos, like Super Bowl sales for televisions.
 <b>Smart Assistants and Other Smart Devices</b>	Holiday sales (Black Friday, Cyber Monday); Other sales events, like Amazon Prime Days.
 <b>Air Conditioners, Heaters and Other Seasonal Appliances</b>	Off season (purchase AC units in fall or winter, heaters in summer); Retailers offer bigger discounts when demand is low.

## Purchasing Appliances and Electronics: Best Times to Buy



### Additional Purchasing Tips:

- When possible, bundle major appliances for significant savings.
- Be on the lookout. When new models arrive, older models drop in price.
- Retailers typically clear out inventory at the end of the year, which means big discounts.
- Local retailers typically try to meet end-of-month/quarter sales quotas, which could mean flexible prices and/or negotiating opportunities.