

# Valley Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

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

FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO

## Co-op offers free energy education



by Wayne Miller  
President & CEO

**IS YOUR FAMILY** “in the know” about electricity?

Do you understand the purpose of those buttons on your bathroom’s electrical outlet? Would you know if your home’s circuits were overloaded?

According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, over a recent five-year period, an annual average of 104,500 unin-

tentional electrical residential structure fires occurred, resulting in approximately 500 deaths, 4,280 injuries and nearly \$1.5 billion in property loss. Plus there were an estimated 160 electrocutions related to consumer products.

Here at Valley Rural Electric, we know that knowledge can save lives when it comes to electricity. That’s why we offer a wide range of free educational programs designed to arm both children and adults with information about the wonders and dangers of electricity.

For example, at each of our district offices, we offer high voltage demonstrations which show young people what can happen when objects come into contact with energized equipment.

We also offer a children’s *Safety City* exhibit, which reveals common outdoor electrical safety hazards.

*Firefighters and Electricity* focuses on

safety basics for emergency first responders.


*Electricity Quiz* explores how electricity is produced and used. This presentation can be modified to suit various age groups.

In addition, we often tailor educational programs to meet the specific needs of a group or organization.

For example, we have coordinated presentations that focus on the changing energy industry and the potential impact of climate change legislation. We have also developed programs that explore the co-op’s rate structure and power mix. And, of course, we do a lot of programs relating to energy savings and efficiency.

If you’d prefer to create your own energy-related program for your group, we encourage you to check out our website at [www.valleyrec.com](http://www.valleyrec.com). Follow the Kids Korner link to the teacher features for some great materials and handouts that you can use in your own presentation.

As you begin to fill your organization’s schedule this year, we hope you’ll consider taking us up on our offer to provide free expertise and materials on a wide range of energy-related topics. It’s just another way your electric cooperative is enhancing the quality of life in the communities we serve.

For more information or to schedule a program, call the co-op’s member services department at 814/643-2650 or toll-free 800/432-0680. 



**OFF THE CHOPPING BLOCK:** Zeigler Chevrolet in Claysburg received word in June that the dealership would be spared in a round of cuts by General Motors (GM). In an effort to get government loans, GM told Congress it intended to cut about 1,700 dealers by 2012.

# Weathering the storm

## Local dealerships survive despite severe sales slump

BY SUSAN R. PENNING  
*Director of Member Services*

**BY ALMOST ALL ACCOUNTS,** 2009 was among the toughest years ever faced by car dealerships in this country. Sales reports showed up to a 38 percent drop compared to 2007 numbers. Last year alone, about 6 million fewer new cars and lightweight trucks were sold. In fact, sales over the past two years proved the worst in nearly three decades.

In spite of the sagging market, two local dealerships served by Valley Rural Electric Cooperative continue to forge ahead, making adjustments in what they call a “new normal” for the automotive industry.

### Survival

“This has been the first, and hopefully the last, major downturn that I have or will ever experience,” says sales consultant Keith Zeigler of Zeigler Chevrolet in Claysburg, Blair County. “In June, we waited every day for the FedEx package to come that would tell us whether General Motors would be closing our doors. It was a really scary time for us.”

Fortunately, when the letter did arrive,



it brought good news. The fourth generation, family-owned dealership had survived the chopping block. Keith framed the letter and proudly displays it in a showroom office.

The folks at Price Motors in Cassville, Huntingdon County, also recall when they received their letter.

“As happy as we were to hear from Chrysler (LLC) that we were safe, we knew of other local folks — friends of ours — that didn’t fare as well,” says Sue Price, general manager at Price. The business remains the sole Chrysler/Dodge/Jeep dealership in Fulton and Huntingdon counties.

### Strategy

When asked what they believe saved their shirts, both dealerships cited their commitment to customers and their long-standing reputation in their respective rural communities.

“Our business is no better than our

**PREPARING INVENTORY:** Zeigler Chevrolet Detailer Sean Myers readies a car for the lot.





**ABOVE:** Fred and Sue Price of Price Motors are pleased that their family dealership was spared in a round of cuts from Chrysler LLC. In operation since 1943, Price Motors currently employs eight full-time and three part-time workers.

**LEFT:** Service technician Bobby Witters of Price Motors works on an exhaust system. The service department at the dealership has seen a recent surge in business, which has helped the organization weather the current economic storm.

customers and the people who work for us," says Fred Price, co-owner of Price Motors. "We've been fortunate to have loyal customers and even more loyal employees."

"Because we're in a small town, we don't have the luxury of a large volume of customers," Keith stresses. "That means we must really focus on taking care of the customers we get."

"The fact that we're smaller has allowed us to make adjustments quickly," Fred says. "Unfortunately, we did need to lay off two full-time employees. And we had to train others to fill in the gaps."

"We also took a long, hard look at our budget, cut some advertising and really focused on keeping our current customers," Sue adds.

"With this particular economic situation, there are a lot of forces outside our control," Fred admits. "But we still operate with honesty, integrity and godly principles. I believe that foundation is what has kept us strong."

## Service

Interestingly, the service departments at both Price and Zeigler have surged in spite of economic conditions, probably

due to the closing of so many other dealerships. This has offered the businesses a bit of saving grace and has helped make up for some of the sales slump.

"Our service department is the busiest we've seen in a long time," Sue says. "In fact, we've been able to hire back some support folks and we need to hire another service technician. Our biggest fear right now is making sure we can handle all the work."

"Fortunately, we haven't had to lay anyone off yet," Keith says. "Our service department has been instrumental in that."

As the dealers move forward into uncertain waters, they hold on to the hope

that things will continue to improve — as more recent statistics have suggested.

"We're seeing some business, some signs of life," Keith says.

"It will take awhile to recover, but it looks like things are moving in the right direction," Sue agrees.

"This business changes so fast, sometimes daily," Keith says. "A lot of what we do here depends on what they do in Detroit. We come here every day and try to take care of the customer the best way we know how. We're going to keep getting better at doing that. That's all we can do for now."

For more information on Zeigler Chevrolet, visit [www.zeiglerchevy.com](http://www.zeiglerchevy.com) or call 800/243-8966. For more information on Price Motors, visit [www.pricemotor-sales.com](http://www.pricemotor-sales.com) or call 877/305-6582. ☀

**CARRYING ON:** Keith Zeigler is part of the fourth generation of Zeiglers. He carries on his family's 91-year legacy of selling cars in Claysburg. The dealership currently employs 30 full-time and two part-time workers.





# Meet your employees

BY SUSAN R. PENNING

Director of Member Services

Highlighted in this column is a recent addition to the Valley REC team, Travis Kuhstos. Travis came to the cooperative in June 2009, hired as an energy specialist in the member services department at Valley's corporate headquarters outside Huntingdon.

As an energy specialist, one of his main responsibilities is to help members make wise energy choices.

"I perform residential energy audits, which means I go into members' homes and show them how they can better manage their energy use and ultimately save money on their electric bills," Travis explains. "I also test meters, install demand response units, help resolve high bill complaints and answer various technical questions relating to energy use."

In addition, Travis helps members apply for energy resources conservation loans so they can get the funds they need to make energy-efficient upgrades to their homes.

Travis' previous work experience includes nearly eight years with Allied Mechanicals, Inc., where he worked as a service technician, HVAC equipment installer/crew leader and quality control representative.

He spent three and a half years at S&A Homes' corporate office in State College, drafting and designing the mechanical systems that went into each



Travis Kuhstos

home. He also worked with subcontractors in the field, ensuring correct placement of all plumbing, electrical and mechanical equipment. In addition, he made sure the homes met energy compliance standards.

A native of Calvin, Huntingdon County, Travis is a 1996 graduate of Belleville Mennonite School. He completed basic and advanced residential wiring coursework through the Central Pennsylvania Institute of Science and Technology. He also became certified as a basic oil heat technician through the Pennsylvania Petroleum Association. In addition, he earned certification as an air conditioning/refrigeration technician and completed additional HVAC and computer coursework at the Huntingdon County Career and Technology Center.

Travis and his wife, Erin, have two children, Deacon, 5, and Kya, 4. They reside in

Calvin, in a home that Travis built himself, with the help of family members.

Travis' father, Lonny Kuhstos, lives in Calvin. His mother, Christine (Hocker) Kuhstos is deceased. Travis has one sister, Leslie Kuhstos, who lives in State College.

When Travis isn't assisting members at Valley, he enjoys coaching and playing volleyball and softball.

"I'm a sports fanatic," he says.

He also coaches his son's T-ball and basketball teams.

In addition, he spends a lot of time giving back to the community. He has helped build three homes for Habitat for Humanity, and has volunteered at several other charity organizations such as the American Red Cross and Beavertown Bible Church in Todd, Huntingdon County, where he is a member.

As far as his job at Valley, Travis says he couldn't be enjoying himself more.

"There is nothing about my job that I dislike," he stresses. "I'm doing all the things I've been trained for. I work for an organization whose sole mission is to provide service for rural people. I believe in this place 100 percent. The people here are good people."

One of Travis' professional goals is to become a state-certified energy auditor.

"I want the co-op to be able to offer the most professional energy audit available out there," he says.

He is scheduled to complete the rigorous coursework necessary for that certification by the end of 2010.

Travis' fellow employees at the cooperative appreciate his positive attitude and willingness to take on new challenges. They look forward to working with him for a long time. Travis is one of the people you can count on. ☀

## STATEMENT OF NONDISCRIMINATION

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When writing checks or reporting meter readings to the co-op, please be sure to use **black or dark blue ink pens** (no gel pens or pencils) so that our electronic equipment can pick up the markings. Thank you.