

Valley Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

Valley Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.  
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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**James Stauffer**  
Chairman

**Robert Holmes**  
Vice Chairman

**Kevin States**  
Secretary

**Cindy Bigelow**  
Treasurer

**Leroy Barnes**  
PREA Director

**Robert Holmes**  
Allegheny Director

**Mervin Brumbaugh**  
**Gregory Henry**  
**Linda McMath**  
**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

FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO  
**Safety is our priority**



by Rich Bauer  
President & CEO

**EACH MAY**, cooperatives around the United States celebrate Electrical Safety Month. Though we follow safe work practices all year, in May we highlight safety topics to discuss to our employees and members.

For this year, the first topic I would like to discuss is home generator hookups. Please have a qualified electrician install a transfer

switch for your home generator. Many people believe that it is safe to plug their generator into their clothes dryer outlet, but I want to let you know that it is not only unsafe, but against the law.

Generator installations must have a visual disconnect from the utility power source. If you plug into your dryer outlet, you can actually energize our outside overhead lines and injure one of our workers who thinks the line is de-energized. On the flip side, if you are not properly disconnected from our service with your generator and we re-energize, our power source is bigger than your power source, and it will destroy your generator. To make things simple, please remember to have a transfer switch installed for your home generation needs. Please take the time to consider the safety of your family along with the safety of our workers when installing a generator. You can't put a price on safety.


Staying with this topic, of the 931 confirmed generator-related deaths in the past 14 years, 85 percent were caused by carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning. CO is an invisible killer, and portable gas generators emit a lot of CO. Generators should be used outside at least 20 feet from the home, away from windows and vents, to allow for proper ventilation. Many deaths have been caused by people running their generator in their attached garage, even with a

window open. The gas will seep indoors, through any crack or crevice that it can find. Unfortunately, many people have learned this much too late.

For safety's sake, please install a CO monitor in your home and remember to replace the batteries twice a year, the same time as you replace your smoke detector batteries.

The second safety topic is storm preparation. During this time of year, severe thunderstorms and even an occasional tornado are the usual culprits of power outages. Have a plan in place that you have discussed with your family in the event of an emergency. Depending on the severity of the storm, this plan could be as simple as setting a designated meeting place for family members in the event they become separated. With the popularity of cellphones these days, staying in contact with one another is at your fingertips, and having the cooperative's outage number stored in your phone, along with your account information, is critical to get your outage reported quickly. It is also important to remember to have an emergency storm kit available. General items to include in the kit are: flashlight(s), batteries, matches, basic medications, bottled water and a first aid kit. Generally, power outages do not last that long, but it is always better to be safe than sorry.

I hope you understand why safety remains a top priority at Valley Rural Electric. Working around electricity could be a life-or-death situation. So we must live safely 24/7. There aren't many second chances with high voltage, so we work very hard to instill a culture of safety that our employees live not only at work, but also at home.

As always, if you have any questions, comments or concerns, please feel free to contact me any time. Please be safe and remember, safety isn't a 9-to-5 job; it is a lifetime commitment. Take care and God bless. 

# Valley REC members elect three directors during annual meeting

BY DOUG ROLES

*Manager of Member Services*

**VALLEY** Rural Electric Cooperative members elected a new director and two incumbents to the co-op board Friday evening during the annual meeting. Additionally, President & CEO Rich Bauer unveiled a grant program that will benefit cooperative members and community service agencies alike. Valley REC Board Chairman James Stauffer of McVeytown, Mifflin County, presided over the meeting and announced a change the electric distribution cooperative has made to its traditional model of funding line construction and other operations.

The business meeting drew a crowd of more than 900 members and guests to the Huntingdon Area High School auditorium. The 447 voting members in attendance cast ballots to fill three seats on the nine-person board of directors that represents the utility's nearly 22,000 consumers.

In February, nominating meetings were held in three of the co-op's nine director districts. One member was nominated in each of those meetings and stood for election during the annual meeting. Those elected to three-year terms on the board are: Stauffer, the District 2 incumbent; Leroy Barnes of Portage, Cambria County, the District 6 incumbent; and Joanne Whitsel of Mapleton Depot, Huntingdon County, a member from District 4 who also ran unopposed.

Stauffer informed members that the co-op board decided recently to have the Cooperative Finance Corporation — a cooperative that serves other cooperatives by providing financing — buy out Valley's federal Rural Utilities Service loan package. He said the move will save Valley \$7 million in interest and cut the repayment period from 35 years to 22, with little change to annual debt service. Stauffer said the change is noteworthy financially and from a historical perspective.

"Members won't notice this move in their day-to-day experience, but this decision will help safeguard the financial



**DIRECTOR ELECTION:** Valley Rural Electric Cooperative President & CEO Rich Bauer, right, offers congratulations to elected directors, from left, James Stauffer, Joanne Whitsel and Leroy Barnes, during the co-op's annual meeting held April 10 at Huntingdon Area High School. The directors were elected to three-year terms on the co-op's board. Barnes and Stauffer are incumbents while Whitsel was elected to a first term. Stauffer serves as board chairman.

health of the co-op in the years to come," Stauffer said. "Twenty-five years ago, the business world we operated in was more consistent. In today's marketplace, we need to be more flexible. The move to CFC makes sense for us at this time."

During his presentation, Bauer announced the launch of Valley REC's Community Service Grant Program (see story on Page 12c). The new program makes grants available in three categories: energy assistance, education and civic/community programs. Grants of \$500 to \$1,000 are available.

The program offers funds to members experiencing financial hardship, to service organizations such as fire and ambulance companies, and to educators who need support materials to teach blocks of instruction related to electricity or the cooperative business model.

The initiative is funded through unclaimed capital credits, margins from the not-for-profit business that can't be returned to members and former members due to death or relocation. Applications are available at all co-op locations or on the co-op's website, [www.valleyrec.com](http://www.valleyrec.com).

Bauer also encouraged members to consider participating in the co-op's demand response program, which lessens the amount of electricity members use at times of peak demand when the price the co-op pays for wholesale power is the greatest. Demand response units work by temporarily disconnecting power to water heaters to shed load while the insulated appliance maintains water temperature. Nearly 4,000 co-op members participate in the program.

Distinguished guests in attendance included state Sen. John Eichelberger; state Reps. Rich Irvin and Judy Ward; Huntingdon County Commissioners Dean Fluke, Gary O'Korn and Jeff Thomas; Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association Public Affairs & Member Services Specialist Stephanie Okuniewski and Peter Fitzgerald, editor of PRA's *Penn Lines* magazine.

High school seniors Taylor Boonie and Melissa States, who participated in the 2014 Youth Tour to Washington, D.C., talked about their experiences on the visit to the nation's capital. Each year, Valley REC sponsors up to 18 students on the

weeklong trip that enables students to meet lawmakers and learn about the cooperative business model.

Children who attended the annual meeting enjoyed “The Lego Movie,” refreshments, balloons and a presentation by 2015 Huntingdon County Dairy Princess Emily Davis of Huntingdon.

Four members — John Bush, Janice

Hoover, Dorothy Berry, and Beatrice Wisner — each won a \$75 co-op gift certificate, and Cindy Comer received a \$250 co-op gift certificate. Members in attendance received a \$15 credit on their electric bills and a folding bag chair.

In addition, meeting attendees who brought with them spent compact fluorescent lightbulbs had cooperative staff prop-

erly dispose of them.

Valley Rural Electric 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. Incorporated in November 1938, Valley REC energized its first lines on Nov. 27, 1939. ☀

## Valley REC launches Community Service Grant Program

**VALLEY** Rural Electric Cooperative debuted its Community Service Grant Program at the co-op’s annual business meeting. The new initiative offers funds to co-op members experiencing financial hardship, to service organizations such as fire and ambulance companies, and to educators who need support materials to teach blocks of instruction related to electricity or the cooperative business model.

Individuals or groups filling out applications will select one of three categories: energy assistance, education or civic/community programs. Grants of \$500 to \$1,000 are available.

Valley President & CEO Rich Bauer announced the launch of the program during the co-op’s annual meeting, held April 10 at Huntingdon Area High School.

“Our new grant program provides another way for the co-op to be involved in our local communities,” Bauer said. “The initiative makes good use of monies that cannot, by law, be used for construction or maintenance operations, but can be used by the co-op for community outreach instead of being turned over to the state as unclaimed property.”

The “Energy Assistance” category of the grant program is for co-op members who are experiencing a hardship created by a death, divorce, fire, hospitalization or other event. A grant of \$500 is available; however, a larger grant amount may be awarded to qualifying members requesting funds for repairs to deteriorated secondary service equipment (including a home’s weatherhead and meter base).

Organizations or entities that serve Valley REC members — such as fire and ambulance companies, emergency management units, charitable groups, and others — are eligible to apply through the



**NEW GRANT PROGRAM:** Valley Rural Electric Cooperative staffer Nancy Rife, left, shares information about the co-op’s Community Service Grant Program with Nancy MacNamara of Todd Township, Huntingdon County, during the co-op’s annual meeting held April 10 at Huntingdon Area High School. The program offers grants of up to \$1,000 to members, as well as to agencies that serve the local community. MacNamara is participating in a fundraising effort for a playground in Cassville and plans to apply for a grant in the civic/community programs category of the new initiative.

“Civic and Community Programs” category. Grants of up to \$1,000 are available. The application must be for a specific equipment or project need, and not for regular budget expenses.

Educators who want to develop support materials for blocks of instruction on electricity or the cooperative business model may apply to the program. A grant of up to \$1,000 is available. The “Education” category also includes funding for the co-op’s Brighter Future Scholarship program, which for five years has provided \$1,000 scholarships to co-op members or dependents who are high school seniors or adult learners.

In addition to the new Community Service Grant Program, Valley REC continues to offer its Members Helping Members Program. This long-standing program provides assistance to co-op members who are struggling to pay their electric bills due to financial hardships. A grant of up to \$250 is available and is applied directly to the member’s electric account.

The Members Helping Members Program is funded, in part, through the donation of members who elect to have the amount of their monthly bill rounded up to the nearest whole dollar amount or make a one-time or recurring donation through payment of their electric bill. ☀

# Valley REC members enjoy Annual Meeting 2015



**LEFT:** Valley REC President & CEO Rich Bauer (at podium) and Valley REC Board Chairman James Stauffer update members about co-op events over the past year.

**BELOW:** John Denver tribute artist Chris Collins takes the crowd for a walk down memory lane.



Huntingdon County Dairy Princess Emily Davis offers a snack to member Howard Allen of Entriken.



Valley REC staffer Michelle Dreibelbis gets acquainted with two of the younger visitors to the annual meeting.



**ABOVE:** Winners of \$75 gift certificates are, from left: John Bush, Janice Hoover, Dorothy Berry and Beatrice Wiser. Cindy Comer, right, won the \$250 prize.

**RIGHT:** District Managers Mark Booher, left, and Randy Boonie collect ballots with help from Kim Kane, the co-op's executive secretary.

