

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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From the President & CEO



Expanding services for our members

By Rich Bauer

HERE AT the cooperative, we are always trying to find new or better ways to serve the membership. The great thing about being a cooperative is that we are big enough to make things happen, but small enough to turn on a dime when there is a need from our membership.


One of the biggest challenges we have heard from the membership is that it is very difficult to find an electrician when you have an issue at your home. We are continually asked to recommend an electrician, and in the past, we have just provided a list of electricians from the phone book because the cooperative's responsibility stops at the meter. You are responsible from that point into your home. But we wanted to make the process easier for you. So, we expanded the services we provide by employing three qualified electricians to cover our service territory.

Valley REC can now give you a quote to perform any electrical repairs or upgrades you may have. Our employees are able to handle breaker panel and meter base replacements, water heater installations and replacement with free removal of your old water heater, generator hook-ups, hot tub or swimming pool wiring — just about anything that deals with electricity. Whatever you need, just give us a call and we'll stop by and give you an estimate.

An additional service we will be providing is the installation of Bosch high-efficiency heat pumps. These new units come with an 11-year warranty and have the capability to operate

down to below zero temperatures before switching to backup heat. Probably the best feature they have is a startup current of just 1 amp. Most heat pumps have a startup current that runs from 60-130 amps. This is the reason you may see your lights flicker when your heating or air conditioning kicks on. Besides being a nuisance, your breaker panel and your electric bill see that large inrush of current, even if it is only momentary. With the new Bosch unit pulling only 1 amp, those annoying flickers will be gone and the unit averages, at full run, around 9 amps. These units are very inexpensive, extremely efficient and they will save you and the cooperative money on power bills. If you have thought about updating a window unit or aging heat pump at your home, please keep us in mind. I promise you won't be disappointed in the cost, quality or comfort these units provide. On top of this, the cooperative will be offering a rebate to install one of these units.

We set the official announcement of these new services for the annual meeting on April 7. We are all geared up and ready to start providing this additional service with the same dedication and reliability you have come to expect from your cooperative. I hope you give us a try to prove this to you.

I am hopeful the snow is done and spring has sprung, so enjoy the beauty this time of year provides. As always, if you have any questions, comments or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact me anytime. Thank you and God bless. 

Medallion Home program promoted ‘full housepower’ in an age of low-cost electricity and novelty appliances

By Doug Roles
Vice President,
Member Services

REDISCOVERING history can lead to some interesting connections. Here’s one such example: What’s the connec-



tion between the late actor turned commander-in-chief, President Ronald Reagan, and a ranch-style house near Fannettsburg, Franklin County?

The answer comes in the form of a bronze medallion symbolizing an energy program that swept the country a generation or two ago before falling out of favor. A Valley REC line crew recently chanced upon one of the medallions and a pair of co-op members who helped give the “Medallion Home — Live Better Electrically” program of

such a program.” The “electric” house is located next door to the McCurdys’ house. Don, who is retired now but formerly operated McCurdy Construction, built the home in 1958 for his parents, Ken and Mae McCurdy. “Dad was the first one in the valley to have an all-electric house,” Don says.

The medallion

“We were there to repair a yard light,” says Journeyman Lineman Jonathan Shields about a stop at the home of Don and Peggy McCurdy in Metal Township, Franklin County.

Jonathan says while he and Crew Leader Kenny Sipes, both from Valley’s Shade Gap District, worked on the light, Don asked them to take a look at a medallion embedded into a patio block he keeps in his garage.

“They asked if we’d ever seen one of them before,” Jonathan says. “It was from the first all-electric house in the valley, on Valley Rural Electric lines.”

“I’d never seen one before,” Kenny says. “I was surprised to find out about

MEDAL WINNER: Don McCurdy, left, of Franklin County, holds a patio block containing a “Live Better Electrically” emblem. The medallion, below, was a symbol of a futuristic, all-electric home.



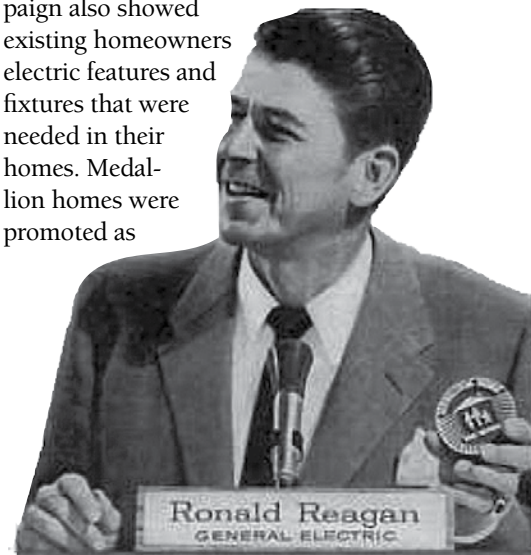
the house looks much like any other, but it was a product of what’s been called one of the greatest marketing efforts of all time.

The marketing campaign

In the years following World War II, utility companies had to meet increasing demands for electricity. But as more power plants were built, the relative cost of power decreased.

“To increase company profits, homeowners were encouraged to consume more power through the purchase of a variety of electric products,” Washington state’s Department of Archaeology & Historic Preservation website reports. “At this time, there was also a new market for electric heat.”

General Electric and Westinghouse corporations launched the multi-million-dollar Live Better Electrically (LBE) campaign in March 1956 to promote the sale of electric appliances and the benefits of electric power. To support the LBE effort, the National Electrical Manufacturers Association launched the “Medallion Homes” campaign in October 1957. The initial goal of the campaign, as reported by the department, was to sell 20,000 all-electric homes nationwide in a year. The campaign also showed existing homeowners electric features and fixtures that were needed in their homes. Medallion homes were promoted as





ELECTRIC AMENITIES: Several changes have been made over the years to the all-electric home built by Don McCurdy. The kitchen, above, still features an electric stove and microwave. Part of the home is now heated by fuel oil, though some of the electric baseboard heaters, such as the unit in the living room where Midgi the pup is posing, are still in use. Photo by Keyoung Gill.

futuristic and cleaner than homes still using coal or oil as fuel sources.

The medallion served as a recognized symbol of electrical excellence in new home construction. Medallion homes featured electric appliances already in place as part of the cost of the home.

The LBE/Medallion initiative was advertised through magazine and newspaper ads as well as through TV and radio. Ronald Reagan, who hosted “General Electric Theater,” was the main campaign spokesperson. His tag line: “You get ‘full housepower.’ This means enough power, wiring, circuits, switches and outlets to handle all the appliances you want to use.”

To earn a medallion, the house had to be heated and powered by electricity and 150-amp service was required, as was a specified number of outlets per linear foot of wall space. The house had to have an electric range or built-in oven, an electric refrigerator/freezer, an electric water heater and at least one more major appliance selected by the builder from an approved list. Popular options were an air conditioner, a dishwasher or a clothes dryer — still novelties in the 1950s.

CELEBRITY SPOKESMAN: Ronald Regan, left, appears in an October 1958 issue of *Better Homes and Gardens* magazine to promote the “Live Better Electrically” campaign. He is holding an LBE medallion.



Additional amenities included electric curtain rods and task lighting under a woman’s dressing table for pedicures.

The 3-inch brass plaque was usually mounted near the front door. Nationwide, 300 electric utilities (including Valley REC) and 180 electrical manufacturers supported the program.

Builders across the nation got swept up in the movement. The department says an estimated 1 million LBE homes were built.

“That studding was heavier than the normal 2-by-4,” recalls Don of the all-electric house he built. It was 2-by-6. It was a thicker wall. It was heavily insulated. I put the medallion in the center of the patio.”

Don and his parents eventually removed the patio, but Don kept the paver with the medallion.

The LBE/Medallion program was marketed into the 1970s. Valley REC’s participation included an “all-electric” rate for members. As the energy crisis of the 1970s loomed, consumption went out of vogue, and U.S. energy policy shifted to promote efficiency.

Don built homes for his son and daughter and the house he and Peg live in now. He also supervised a portion of the McConnellsburg High School renovation and did a lot of work in the Greencastle area.

“I was a brick layer,” Don says. “I did stone work, too. I was lying in bed the other night counting up the homes I either built or worked on. I counted 44, and different styles, too.”

But the all-electric house will always stand out, because of its novelty and because it was convenient for Don’s parents to be close by as they grew older.

So, did Don’s parents get that “full housepower” promised by Reagan? Don believes they did.

“I don’t think they ever had any trouble,” Don says.

Editor’s note: Southwest Museum of Engineering, Communications and Computation in Glendale, Ariz., provided information for this article. Have an interesting piece of history for the museum? Contact curator Ed Sharpe at 623-435-1522. 🌞



GOLD MEDAL HOME: The March 1960 issue of *Valley News*, above, the co-op’s long-running newsletter, features the home built by Don McCurdy at a time when the program was growing in popularity. The exterior of the house, below, remains largely unchanged.



Co-op's 2017 golf tourney will benefit two infants



TOURNEY TO BENEFIT INFANTS: Dirk Leidy, left, with parents Robert and Kerri, and Kendra Gibson, with parents Chris and Tisa, have congenital heart defects that will require several surgeries as they grow older. The Leidys are from Mount Union. The Gibsons are Huntingdon residents. Both families make frequent hospital trips and have mounting medical expenses.

The 2017 Valley Rural Electric Golf Outing will benefit two area infants with congenital heart conditions: Dirk Leidy and Kendra Gibson.

The event will be held June 29 at Huntingdon Country Club, rain or shine.

The event is the sixth golf tournament organized by Valley REC's Health

and Wellness Committee, which has raised more than \$83,000 for charities since 2010.

Tea times for the tournament, a four-player scramble, are set for 8 a.m. and 1 p.m. Registration is 6:30-8 a.m. and 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. Lunch will be provided, and a putting contest will take place all day. A buffet dinner will be served at 5:30 p.m.

Donations of prizes or food items are welcome, and teams are still forming. Those wishing to enter the event



should contact Travis Kuhstos by phone at 814-386-3815 or by email at tkuhostos@valleyrec.com. To make a donation, contact Lisa Carper at lcarper@valleyrec.com or call 800-432-0680.

Co-op launches new energy services program

Valley Rural Electric Cooperative's suite of energy services can help you save energy and make your home more comfortable.

Electrical work

Need a service panel wired, a new service drop installed or other upgrades? Valley's skilled electricians can help.

Marathon water heaters

It's the last water heater you'll ever buy because it comes with a lifetime guarantee! Co-op members who participate in our demand response program qualify for a \$2-\$3 per gallon rebate (in addition to the \$100 bill credit offered by the program).

LED lightbulbs

They cost a little more up front but use a fraction of the electricity and they'll last for years. That's why Valley REC is happy to offer LEDs to our members. We stock the most common sizes.



BOSCH

Invented for life

Bosch heat pumps

We're proud to announce that we now carry Bosch air-source heat pumps. These units operate efficiently down to minus 5 F and they draw just one amp on start-up, helping the co-op better manage power costs. Our Bosch-trained technicians offer installation.

You may be eligible for a \$500 rebate.



Offered by Valley Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

- Electrical service work
- Bosch heat pump sales & service
- Marathon water heater sales & installation
- Demand response program bill credits & rebates
- Home energy audits
- LED lightbulbs
- Smart surge protector strips
- ProTran generator switches

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