

Valley News

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DEMAND FOR LOCALLY GROWN FOOD INCREASES

Pages 4-5

What to look for in an HVAC contractor

REPLACING YOUR heating, ventilation and cooling (HVAC) system can be a headache. But considering the fact that almost 50 percent of your energy bill comes from your HVAC system, it is definitely not something to be ignored.

Choosing the right contractor -- for determining unit type and size, explaining options and proper installation -- is probably the most critical step in the process. Consider the following tips before making your selection.

Ask around

What are the contractor's licenses and qualifications? Is the contractor a member of state and national contractor associations? Is he or she adequately insured?

Word of mouth provides a valuable resource, so ask neighbors and friends if they can recommend a good contractor or if there's someone you should avoid. And remember to check on what a prospective contractor guarantees and whether any follow-up services, such as a maintenance agreement, are offered.

What happens next

After you ask these questions, a good contractor should start by inspecting your home and old system and then explaining your options.

Be sure to get the estimated annual operating cost of the proposed HVAC system at different efficiency levels as recommended by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Energy Star program.

Air conditioners are measured by Seasonal Energy Efficiency Ratio (SEER) and Energy Efficiency Ratio (EER). SEER is calculated by dividing the amount of cooling provided during a normal year by energy used. The higher the SEER, the more efficient the unit. EER helps if you want to know how a system operates at a specific temperature. This will help you determine the total cost over its lifetime.

Written estimates

I would advise asking for three written estimates of the work: what is being done, what equipment is being provided, and when installation will begin and be completed.

Remember: The best value may not come



Wayne F. Miller
President & Chief Executive Officer

from the contractor offering the lowest price.

NATE certification

Finally, consider looking for someone who is NATE (North American Technician Excellence) certified.

NATE-certified contractors will have gone through the steps to prove they have the skills necessary for their job. It may offer some reassurance that the contractor's field competence has been tested.

Keep in mind, however, that NATE is a voluntary process, so even good contractors may not yet have these credentials.

Your heating and cooling system is an investment that may significantly improve the energy efficiency, comfort and value of your home. So be sure to do your homework when choosing the right contractor for the job.

Sources: U.S. Department of Energy, EPA and Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives

Cooperatively yours,

Wayne F. Miller
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PHOTO BY SUSAN PENNING

On the cover ...

Valley member and organic farmer Tony Ricci re-stocks produce at a farmers market. He and other local growers have seen a surge in business recently. For details, turn to Pages 4-5.

Saving money: no laughing matter

WE HAVE ALL HEARD the jokes that begin with: “How many _____ does it take to change a lightbulb?”

While the comedic value of the answer sometimes leaves a bit to be desired, the underlying principle -- that simple changes can needlessly get complicated -- rings true.

The average home contains 40 light fixtures, according to the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). Thanks to a series of staggered federal standards and more lighting choices than ever before, the average homeowner could save \$50 every year by using more energy-efficient lightbulbs.

This year, the first of several federal lightbulb efficiency standards kicked in, requiring manufacturers to stop making 100-watt incandescent bulbs in favor of ones using less electricity to produce the same amount of light (lumens). This doesn't mean the outmoded bulbs went away; you can still find old stock at many stores.

But keep in mind that, with those traditional incandescent bulbs, 90 percent of their lighting costs come from the unnecessary heat they produce.

More efficient options

If you don't want to stray too far from the bulbs you have grown accustomed to, consider halogen incandescent lightbulbs. Color options and dimming abilities mirror their time-tested predecessors, but they cut energy consumption by 25 per-



NEW LIGHTS: Philips and Sylvania offer LEDs to replace 60-watt incandescent bulbs. They cost between \$40 and \$60. Prices should drop as consumer demand for LEDs rises. *Source: Philips and Osram Sylvania*

cent and last three times longer.

Another style that has been championed for years is the compact fluorescent lamp (CFL). These swirly bulbs slash energy use by 75 percent compared to traditional incandescent bulbs and last up to 10 times longer.

But for folks who don't like the pigtail CFL shape or who worry about the minute amount of mercury in these bulbs, another, brighter option looms on the horizon: light-emitting diodes (LEDs).

These solid-state products have been used in electronics since the 1960s, and manufacturers are ramping up efforts to transform them into the perfect replacement bulb.

LEDs require 75-80 percent less energy than traditional incandescent bulbs and can last 25 times longer -- by far the longest lifespan of any bulb yet.

DOE estimates it will take more than six years for a \$40, 800-lumen (60-watt equivalent) LED to pay for itself. But investments in manufacturing and increased demand should help drive down costs. By 2021, LED prices are expected to drop by a factor of 10, and that's good news for anyone who enjoys the thought of only changing a lightbulb once every 20 years or so.

Stricter standards

In January 2013, a new set of lightbulb efficiency standards will fall into place, this time halting production of inefficient 75-watt incandescent bulbs.

In 2014, household lightbulbs using between 40-100 watts must consume at least 28 percent less energy than classic bulbs. This should save Americans an estimated \$6-10 billion in lighting costs annually.

So what's the punch line? Every time you change a lightbulb, consider buying a more efficient replacement. No matter which kind you opt for, you'll save money every time you flip a light switch -- and that's something that should make you smile.

Learn more at EnergySavers.gov/Lighting. *Information courtesy of LightingFacts.com and EnergySavers.gov.*

Don't

SWEAT

Summer Electric

BILLS

As temperatures rise, there's plenty of things you can do to save energy and trim your electric bill.

Raise your thermostat a couple of degrees—78° is the most efficient setting. Ceiling fans are a great way to move air around the house, and you can shade your electric bill by planting trees on the south side of your home.

Don't sweat summer electric bills—check out www.EnergySavers.gov for more ways to save!

Brought to you by America's Electric Cooperatives

Local markets surge as concerned consumers demand fresher food

BY SUSAN R. PENNING
Director of Member Services

THE DEMAND FOR locally grown produce has exploded in recent years, causing a surge in business at farmers markets and produce stands throughout the country. One major cause for this shift toward buying local seems to be an increase in consumer concern about food production and distribution methods.

Documentaries such as “Food Inc.,” “Food Matters,” “Forks over Knives” and “Fast Food Nation,” as well as books like Michael Pollan’s “The Omnivore’s Dilemma,” have shed new light on food industry problems and compelled consumers to make healthier and more informed food choices. And local farmers and growers are reaping the benefits.

Local impact

All the sellers at the Huntingdon Farmers Market, held weekly throughout the summer at Huntingdon’s Portstown Park, say

they have experienced an uptick in produce sales in recent years. In fact, Valley REC consumers Ralph and Debbie Rispoli of Williamsburg, Blair County, have needed to plant more and supplement their supply with local auction produce to keep up with demand. They own a food stand along Route 22 near Yellow Springs and also sell food at the Hollidaysburg and Huntingdon farmers markets.

“Everything’s been growing,” Ralph muses.

Valley member Tony Ricci, owner of Green Heron Farm in Three Springs, Huntingdon County, believes there are a few key factors contributing to the larger crowds.

First of all, farmers markets are getting more sophisticated, he notes.

“We’ve made it easier for customers to pay using a variety of methods. Plus our market is now well established, so people know where to find us,” he adds. “Most importantly, consumers want to eat fresher foods. They are becoming more health-con-



PLOWSHARE PRODUCE: Valley consumer Micah Spicher Schonberg and his wife manage an organic, community-supported agricultural farm near McAlevy’s Fort, Huntingdon County. The couple’s business has continued to increase in popularity over the past four years.

scious and taking their food choices more seriously. They can trust us. They feel good knowing exactly where their food is coming from and they keep coming back.”

Growers in co-op territory aren’t the only ones noticing an increase in sales. The Department of Agriculture noted in its 2011 National Farmers Market Directory that more farmers are marketing their products directly to consumers than ever before. The guide lists 7,175 markets in 2011, a 53 percent increase from 4,685 in 2008. More than 1,000 new markets opened in 2011 alone.

That number is expected to continue to increase. And most of the growth is occurring in states other than New York and California, which have traditionally boasted the largest numbers of fresh food markets.

Regulatory obstacles

Although locally grown and distributed food can be a win-win situation for both farmers and consumers, there are regulatory obstacles. Some growers are even claiming these challenges are thwarting and, in some cases, killing the expansion and sustainability of many small-scale farming operations.

In the United States, the growth of the regulatory state emerged out of industrialization



PICKING VEGGIES: Shoppers at the Huntingdon Farmers Market purchase organic produce from Tony Ricci (right), owner of the Green Heron Farm in Three Springs. Tony says consumers are becoming more health-conscious and taking food choices seriously.



and its abuses in the early part of the 20th century. Legislative action regulating the market was accomplished after the New Deal, with the federal government creating 17 new agencies between 1930 and 1940 and another 55 new agencies between 1960 and the mid-1980s.

Beginning with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, several cornerstone pieces of legislation were passed into law during the following decades, including the Endangered Species Act; the Toxic Substance Control Act; the Safe Drinking Water Act; the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act; and the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act. As federal legislation and cor-

ABOVE: Valley member and farmer Ralph Rispoli of Williamsburg says his family has needed to plant more vegetables to keep up with consumer demand.

RIGHT: Valley member Laura White of Donation, Huntingdon County, reminds market shoppers they can pay by credit, debit or Electronic Benefit Transfer card. They may also buy and use “market bucks,” which allow them to buy food at a discount.

responding regulations intensified, state and local legislation and regulation began to proliferate as well, according to a paper published in the Western New England Law Review on the challenges for small and emerging sustainable businesses.

The paper noted that “top-down” or centralized legislation and regulation continue to be the norm. The problem is that many politicians craft policies aimed at the behavior of the largest players, with little or no regard for how these laws affect small businesses.

The direct and indirect costs to businesses for compliance with state and local regulation are substantial. Direct costs include things like fees for licenses, permits, inspections and document filings. Indirect costs can include attorneys' fees incurred in regulatory compliance, management time responding to regulators' inquiries and supplying documentation, and delays in production or innovation due to slow regulatory responses. These direct and indirect costs can seriously affect the bottom line of a small business.

From licensing to regulation, significant barriers to land use, alternative energy, street vendors and grey water systems continue to hinder the efforts of small sustainable businesses to establish themselves and thrive. Despite these obstacles, however, local growers are determined and willing to go the distance to ensure local food remains available to the general public.

“It’s going to require ongoing education on both ends,” Tony says.

Farmers must be held accountable and be knowledgeable in the safest methods for growing and handling food for distribution to consumers. And regulators must have a thorough understanding of the small business operations they affect and be willing to work with and draft policy that doesn’t hurt the “little guys.”



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Real Estate

Juniata Co. - Secluded home on 20.6 wooded acres w/ stream. 2-3 BR, 1-½ BA, pine interior, oversized 2-car garage, shed, outhouse. Many unique features, \$209,000. Call 717/734-0170.

Cabin for sale on Aughwick Rd., 3 miles south of Cowan's Gap Lake. 717/294-3463.

67+ acres of land in Greenwood Twp., Clearfield Co. Approx. 15 acres of cleared land; rest is wooded. Riding trails on property for 4-wheelers, tree stands for hunting. Property receives 300,000 cubic ft. of natural gas free per year (surface gas only; do not own mineral rights). Small pond. Property is "clean & green." Common sightings of deer, bear, coyotes, turkeys & more. 35' camping trailer also on property. Perfect place to set up hunting camp or build mtn. getaway. Asking price is \$95,000. If interested, call Bonny at 717/367-8565. If leaving message, leave name, number & reason for calling.

Autos/Trucks

Exhaust System for 2011 Dodge Challenger RT. 5.7 liter, V-8, orig. equip., \$250. 814/832-2801.

Vacation Rentals

Blue Knob Resort Condo. 2 BR, 2 BA, full kitchen w/ pots, plates, utensils, etc. Includes dishwasher, fireplace & sleeper sofa. Resort has hot tubs, sauna, indoor & outdoor pools, bike trails, golfing & tennis courts. Great off-season rates. Call 814/943-1284 or visit our website at blueknoblodging.com

South Myrtle Beach year-round vacation rental. 2 BR, 2 BA condo at oceanfront resort. Fully furnished including linens, towels, cable w/ HBO, wireless Internet, AC, 6 pools including lazy river, lighted tennis courts, saunas, jacuzzis & more. \$400-\$1,000 weekly. Monthly rates avail. Call 717/263-2717.

House rental at Lake Raystown. Sleeps 11. Large great room w/ fireplace. 4 BR, dining table for 12, central AC, 2 satellite TVs, 2 full BA, 2 half BA, large rec. room, fully equipped kitchen & laundry rooms, screened-in porch. 1 mile from lake (Snyder's Run boat launch), large parking area. Think Labor Day, family reunion or long weekend getaway. Linens & towels provided. For more info., visit lauerwoodsretreat.com or call Dianne at 814/931-6562.

Wanted

Hunting land/permission. Small group of professional retired/former police/military seeks some acreage to hunt on in Franklin, Fulton or nearby counties. We are only looking to hunt during first week of rifle season. Please call Pat at 301/474-8048 or email pmcandrew62@yahoo.com with information.

Tools/Equipment

1987 Ford F350 dump truck. 2000 New Alexander trailer. 1997 Dae-woo DSL601 skid-loader used only 1,376 hrs., attachments include: Bradco 408 backhoe, Bobcat post hole auger, \$15,000 OBO. 814/599-7494.

Early 1950s Oliver 770 gas tractor. New rear rubber, pony wheel, good cond. Good restoration project, \$2,500 OBO. 814/667-2373.

White 458, 5' chisel plow w/ 3-pt. hitch. Flat hay wagon. 814/447-3735.

3-pt. cut-off saw frame, \$30. 30" cut-off saw blade, \$50. 8N belt pulley, \$40. 18" exhaust fan, \$100. Call 717/987-3619 after 6 p.m.

Livestock

Bunnies. \$8 each. 814/259-0054.

Draft horse stocks, good cond. Bob sled (new bed), forecart w/ shafts (rubber wheels). Leather spotted draft horse harness, bridles, lines. Good cond. 814/832-3454.

Restored courting buggy. More than 100 yrs. old, collapsing top complete w/ shafts. Wagon w/ wooden spoke rims on rubber, 5th-wheel turn tongue included. 4 wooden bows/cover to use as covered wagon. Call 814/832-3454.

Miscellaneous

Various lengths of used lumber boards. 2x4, 100+, some 2x6, mostly oak. Approx. 2,000. Get all for \$400. 814/447-3698.

Sauerkraut crocks. 1-8 gal., \$20. 1-6 gal., \$15. 1 stomper, \$10. 1-gal. crock jug, \$10. 814/695-9556.

Hudson Bay Point Blanket. 100% wool, 4-pt. blanket, full-sized, wild cranberry w/ fudge bar pattern, 72"x90", 6 lbs., \$25. 814/832-2801.

2 CS35 community speakers. 15" woofers. Good for any use, \$125 each. 814/239-2570.

White cookstove, \$400. 4-8" I-beam columns, 8' long, \$40 ea. 11 concrete, 2-hole posts, \$20 ea. Used tin, 8 sheets, 7'x10', \$75. 27 sheets, 9' long, \$225. 11 galvanized posts, rails & caps, all for \$75. Call after 6 p.m. 717/987-3619.

Collection of 78 & 45 RPM records and Victorian-era record players for sale. Prices neg. Call 814/542-4727 or 599-9313.

Six dolls. Nice Christmas gifts or to sell on ebay. Cash only. 814/627-1496.

Service

Forestry consultant - Timber sales, appraisals & management. B.S. Forest Management, Penn State 1964. 40-plus yrs. forestry exp. Mark Kane, consulting forester. 814/667-2282.

A1-Foamer Carpet Cleaners - We clean carpets, area rugs & upholstery. We foam; we don't soak your carpet. Quality workmanship. Call 814/542-4727 or 599-9313 for appt.

Kenneth W. Reigh Carpentry & Masonry - Decks, landscaping blocks, siding, additions, kitchens & baths, screened-in porches. Natural stone, brick, block & concrete. Fully insured, 35 yrs. exp. For estimates, call 814/658-9998.

TLC Powerwash - Residential, commercial, auto detailing. Free est. Call 814/644-1173 or 643-4367.

Book Construction - Excavation, clearing, roads, ponds, septic systems, foundations, prep. sites for bldg. Check our prices. Fully insured, free estimates. 814/448-0186 or 599-6262.

Peter's Excavating - Providing quality excavating services for over 30 yrs. We offer site development, foundations, septic, land clearing, roads, ponds, grading & excavating along w/ trucking shale & limestone. 814/667-2240.

Pressure washing, painting, blacktop sealcoating, deck staining. Call 717/372-7300 or visit oakmanspowerwash.com

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Dublin Electric, LLC - No job is too small! We provide a wide variety of electrical services to Fort Littleton & surrounding areas. Fully insured & free estimates. Call Jeff Croft at 717/491-0676.

Bee Unique Hair Boutique - Now offering Rusk color & products. Add shine & luster to your hair. Also, Bee Unique now offers manicures & pedicures. Get your toes & hands done this summer. Spa pedicures for \$24 or get a manicure/pedicure package deal for \$35. Call 814/448-4914 to schedule. Located at 17759 Beavertown Rd., Todd.

"STUFF" Unique Antiques - 401 Bedford Street, Hollidaysburg. Open Wednesdays-Fridays noon-6 p.m. & Saturdays 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Our quaint antique shop offers antiques & collectibles, shabby chic, garden items, pottery, architectural salvage pieces & furniture. 814/934-3715.

Work-at-home business - Moms looking to work from home: Join our expanding team specializing in helping families since 1999! No selling, no inventory, no risk. You will receive your own web site & on-the-job training. No experience needed. For more info, call 814/599-1554 or visit www.mom-sloveworkingathome.com

Sarah States Cleaning - Residential/business. Free estimates. Fully insured. Serving the Huntingdon area. 814/599-7013.

Country Stone - Professional installation of pre-cast stone veneer & thin brick. Call for free estimates. 814/695-8693.

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"The Valley Picker" - Looking to get rid of junk laying in your garage, attic or barn collecting dust? Just want to sell a few things for some extra cash? I will come out, see what you have & pay you cash on the spot & haul it away. You pay nothing; I pay you. Nothing too big or too small for me to haul. Call "The Valley Picker" today & make an appt. 814/542-3191.

Yard work wanted. 814/259-3634.

Miss Mollies Soft Serve, Etc. - Soft-serve ice cream, milkshakes, sundaes, banana splits, ice cream sandwiches, scoopys, Philadelphia water ice. Rt. 26 next to Full Performance Marine. 814/423-2255. Open Wednesdays-Sundays 11:30 a.m.-9:30 p.m.

Tiny Tots Childcare Summer Sizzle promo. - \$100 back to parents each month. Book now as limited spaces are avail. for promo. Licensed, trained staff, Keystone STARS participant, nutritious meals & snacks, fun & educational activities, full & part-time care avail. We accept private & subsidized children. Call Dawn for details. MU office 814/542-3211, Shade Gap office 259-3125.

Get free, budget-friendly decorating, organizing & home improvement tips at livingrichonless.com

Events

National Alpaca Farm Days at Terrace Mountain Alpacas. Sept. 29-30, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Everyone welcome. Open house Nov. 3-4, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. For more info., call 814/643-2854.

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