

# 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

**Kevin States**  
Vice Chairman

**Cindy Bigelow**  
Secretary

**Robert Holmes**  
Treasurer

**Leroy Barnes**  
PREA Director

**Gregory Henry**  
**Randall Huntsman**  
**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

## Guest Column



# Everyday workers make the magic of electricity happen

By Doug Roles, *Vice President of Member Services*

ELECTRICITY has always had an excitement and mystery about it, in real life and in the movies. Electricity has been a newsmaker from Ben Franklin's experiments with his kite, through the 1880s feud between Thomas Edison and Nikola Tesla (over direct current, alternating current, and which was more dangerous), to today's rise of miniature electronics, wind turbines, and solar power.

In the movies, it was a bolt of lightning that reanimated Dr. Frankenstein's monster, and later the monster's bride. Another bolt sent Marty McFly and a DeLorean vehicle into the 1950s in the 1980s movie "Back to the Future." And how many movies have you seen that featured some type of electrically generated death ray?

I don't understand the Hollywood technology, but I'd bet no one in Star Trek could do any "beaming up" if the starship Enterprise experienced a power outage.

As storied as its past has been, in real life or on the big screen, the future of electricity is just as — pardon the pun — electrifying. It seems like there's a new development every time you check the news. This is an age of flexible and stretchable batteries, light-emitting diodes (LEDs), and wireless charging of small electronic devices. Ambient sound is even being harnessed for power; androidpit.com reports that a few years ago a university in South Korea developed a way for users to charge their cellphones by yelling at them! Exposing them to traffic noise works, too, because it's the acoustic vibration

of zinc oxide cables between two electrodes that creates the charge.

On a much larger scale, the U.S. Navy this spring launched a power-beaming satellite into space. The launch followed years of research into transmitting power over distances using lasers or microwaves. In theory, a space-based solar array could transmit nearly limitless power to receivers on the Earth's surface.

It's hard to tell where all the new technology is taking us. One thing that's certain is that it's also difficult to overstate the importance of reliable electric service in our modern experience.

As newsworthy and exciting as the new technologies are, it's the everyday effort of electrical industry workers, like Valley REC's team of employees, that keeps the power flowing. Ensuring our 24/7 service entails everything from tree trimming and line construction to bookkeeping, vehicle maintenance, and IT services. It's a huge effort. Maybe it's not as glamorous as the movies — certainly the names of the "actors" aren't well-known outside of the co-op — but it's important work because it meets our commitment to our members. As a member-owned, not-for-profit utility, our goal is to provide safe, reliable and affordable power.


So, whether it's generated at a nuclear, fossil fuel, or hydropower plant — or beamed down from space — we'll do all we can to keep the magic of electricity available to our members. We trust you won't use it to jumpstart any more members of the Frankenstein family or to go for a spin in the 1950s. 



PHOTO BY LISA CARPER

**Gator grant:** Co-op's \$1,000 donation aids emergency management agency

**GRANT FUNDS:** Huntingdon County Emergency Management Agency recently used a \$1,000 grant from Valley Rural Electric Cooperative to conduct maintenance on two utility vehicles to keep them available for community events and emergency response. Pausing for a photo with the John Deere Gators – while practicing social distancing – are, from left: Doug Roles, Valley REC vice president of member services; Katie Unger (a VREC member), EMA operations and training officer; Joe Thompson, EMA director; and Chris Gresko (also a VREC member), director of employment and training with Center for Community Action, the grant applicant.

By Doug Roles

Vice President of Member Services

VALLEY REC's Community Service Grant Program recently assisted the Huntingdon County Emergency Management Agency (EMA) with maintenance work that kept the agency's two utility vehicles in service. Completion of much-needed repairs and service ensured the John Deere Gators are available for medevac missions and other emergency preparedness calls at community events.

EMA officials said the vehicles required extensive service, including repair of a transmission leak. The work was estimated at a little more than \$1,000.

In April, the Huntingdon-based Center for Community Action submitted a grant application on behalf of the EMA to Valley Rural Electric Cooperative's Community Service Grant Program (CSG). In June, Valley REC's grant committee approved a grant of \$1,000, the maximum amount in the Civic & Community Programs category.

"We're glad that our grant program was able to assist the county emergency management agency," said Valley REC President & CEO Rich Bauer. "This is exactly the type of community need we want our program to address."

Valley REC has awarded more than \$208,000 in CSG funds since the pro-

*"This is exactly the type of community need we want our program to address."*

**Rich Bauer**  
Valley REC President & CEO

gram's inception in 2015. Valley's grant program is funded through unclaimed member patronage capital returns. It assists members with bill payments, supports civic projects and provides classroom supplies to teachers.

The EMA had purchased the two machines in 2004-05 using federal funding available through the Department of Homeland Security. The utility vehicles can be used to carry emergency supplies

and to evacuate an injured or ill person. "Operationally, they're like new now," says Joe Thompson, EMA director. "Replacing them would have been very expensive. The co-op helping us is actually helping the taxpayers, too."

Thompson explained that the agency does receive funding through the auspices of the Huntingdon County Commissioners' office but also seeks financial support through the community at large. However, since EMA is not a non-profit agency, it cannot apply directly for certain types of aid. That's where Center for Community Action (CCA) comes in. CCA is a human services agency serving Bedford, Fulton, Huntingdon, Juniata and Mifflin counties.

"We help people with housing, rental assistance and utility assistance, according to our eligibility guidelines," says Chris Gresko (a VREC member), CCA's director of employment and training. "We can also offer day care assistance, too."

One of the UTV machines has a "med  
(continues on next page)

# Valley Rural Electric Cooperative awards 15 \$1,000 scholarships to local students

VALLEY Rural Electric Cooperative recently awarded 15 \$1,000 scholarships to high school seniors, as well as students already enrolled in post-secondary institutions, for the 2020-21 academic year.

The co-op's Brighter Future Scholarship Program was established in 2010 to assist eligible students who are cooperative members or their dependents. To date, Valley has conferred nearly \$225,000 in scholarship grants. Selection criteria include academic achievement, school activities and community service.

The money to finance this initiative comes from unclaimed capital credits refunds that previously had to be turned over to the state treasury. But thanks to the efforts of the cooperative's political advocates, these resources can now be kept in co-op communities and used to assist consumers facing financial hardships, to support civic organizations, and to fund educational programs.

The following 14 public high school seniors received scholarships from Valley REC:

**Bedford County:** Tussey Mountain High School – Matthew J. Leonard of James Creek, son of Dave and Christy Leonard, attending Shippensburg University.

**Blair County:** Central High School – Austin J. Bridenbaugh of Martinsburg, son



of Grant and Alicia Bridenbaugh, attending University of Philadelphia; and Victoria L. Longenecker of Williamsburg, daughter of Douglas and Yvette Longenecker, attending Penn State University; Claysburg-Kimmel High School – Mackenzie R. Clemens of Claysburg, daughter of Adam and Kimberly Clemens, attending Conemaugh School of Radiologic Technology; Williamsburg High School – Joseph D. Kunsman of Williamsburg, son of Edward and Vicki Kunsman, attending Shippensburg University; and Adam L. Uplinger, also of Williamsburg, son of Aaron and Julie Uplinger, attending Geneva College.

**Fulton County:** Southern Fulton Junior/Senior High School – Lindsey A. Hollenshead of Needmore, daughter of Joseph and Heather Hollenshead, attending Dickinson College; and Grace M. Mosemann of Warfordsburg, daughter of Mark and Lauren Mosemann, attending Shippensburg University.

**Huntingdon County:** Huntingdon Area High School – Sofia N. Dinardi of Huntingdon, daughter of Sandra and Joseph Dinardi, attending Penn State University; and Elizabeth M. K. Speck, also of Hunting-

don, daughter of Art and Tammy Speck, attending Hillsdale College; Juniata Valley High School – Brooke E. Boonie of Petersburg, daughter of Troy and Erica Boonie, attending

Shippensburg University; Mount Union Area High School – Konnor C. Getz of Mapleton Depot, son of Terry and Heidi Getz, attending Stevens Institute of Technology; Southern Huntingdon County High School – Sarah A. Cisney of Mapleton Depot, daughter of Jeff and Dana Cisney, attending Indiana University of Pennsylvania; and Jarred S. Covert of Three Springs, son of Roger and Barbara Covert, attending Penn State University.

One high school graduate from a previous year also received a scholarship from Valley REC: Grace K. Baker of Martinsburg, daughter of Brent and Betsy Baker and a 2018 graduate of Central High School, attending Penn State University.

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. For more information about Valley Rural Electric Cooperative's Brighter Future Scholarship Program, call 1-800-432-0680 or visit valleyrec.com and follow the Programs and Services link to the Scholarships section. ☀

## Gator


bed," an area for a patient to either recline against a seat or be strapped onto a gurney during transport. The EMA has a trailer for hauling the machines. The UTVs and EMA staff are available to support a variety of community

events, such as the county firemen's convention, the annual Creation Festival and Cassville Octoberfest.

"We want them to be available to the community," Thompson says.

County-level emergency manage-

ment agencies work closely with local fire departments. The agency is responsible for the mitigation of all types of emergencies and potential emergencies and can assist with hazardous materials mitigation. ☀



**Offered by Valley Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.**

**Electrical service upgrades and repair**

**Lighting and LED upgrades**

**Emergency back-up power**

**Water heater installation**

*We specialize in small jobs in a hurry and offer prompt and free quotes.*

**Call us today!**  
**(800) 432-0680**

## District manager hopes for travel-filled retirement

A LONGTIME Valley REC employee hopes to fill his well-deserved retirement with travel and time with family after COVID-19 restrictions initially clamped down on his newfound freedom. Mark Booher of Shade Gap, Huntingdon County, retired in April from his position as manager of Valley's Shade Gap District.

Mark worked at Valley REC for 30 years. Like many lineworkers, he says his most memorable times at the co-op came during outage restoration.

"Seeing the lights come back on in the valley, that was always an accomplishment," he says.

Mark began his co-op career in July 1990. He had worked as a lineman with Henkels & McCoy for a dozen years, mostly on the road. When Valley REC had an opening in his local area, he jumped at the opportunity.

"It was time to come home," Mark recalls, noting that he and his wife, Jodi, had a 17-month-old girl, Morgan, and Jodi was seven months pregnant with their son, Logan.

Mark started at what was then Valley REC's Hustontown District office, in Fulton County. After a few months, he moved to the Shade Gap office.

"I hit every rank there was coming up through," he says.

Mark took over as the district supervisor for Shade Gap when longtime employee Harry O'Donnell retired from the position in 2010. VREC has since rolled the supervisor position into the district manager position.

"The district supervisor scheduled all the jobs and handed out the daily work to the crews," Mark recalls, adding that district managers at that time oversaw tree trimming within the district and handled other managerial and administrative tasks.

"It was the supervisor who worked with the guys," Mark says.

He says it's the interaction with the crews and the family environment of the co-op that he'll miss most.

"You were with the guys there more than you were home," he adds.

Mark echoes other recent VREC retirees when asked about the biggest change during their careers. The use of computers has proliferated at the co-op over the past several decades. Today, lineworkers and other technicians use ruggedized tablet computers to get up-to-the-moment information in the field. Valley REC's offices are also becoming increasingly paperless. Mark says learning to operate the new tools was challenging for employees who had worked for Valley for years without them.

Mark worked as district supervisor for five years and then took over as the district manager. He succeeded retiring district manager Rick Poleck in 2015.

"I've seen a lot of people come and go," Mark recalls, noting he saw all the current Shade Gap employees join the co-op.

As much as Mark enjoyed time with his co-workers, he says what he won't miss is working in extreme hot and cold conditions.

"You got to be tough to be a lineman," he says.

Logan is carrying on the family tradition. He now has eight years with the co-op and works in the Shade Gap District as a journeyman lineman. Formerly, he had worked in the Huntingdon District.

Mark and Jodi, who is retired from the medical field, enjoy traveling and had hoped to start out his retirement with several trips, including a trip to Europe with Morgan, an obstetrician who was finishing a pelvic surgery fellowship in Atlanta before beginning work as a surgeon in Philadelphia.

COVID-19-related travel restrictions changed their plans, but Mark and Jodi say they'll be all the more anxious to hit the road when restrictions ease.

"We want to travel everywhere," Mark says. "We're used to taking a week and going."

In the past five years, Mark and Jodi have been to Maine, Texas, Louisiana, and Nevada. They went to Myrtle Beach in February, and Mark and Logan went fishing in Alaska in July.

"When we couldn't go anywhere when he retired, we did a lot of work around the house together," Jodi says, noting that they stained their decks and completed some woodworking crafts.

Mark recalls that his first day of retirement was a little unsettling. He had grown accustomed to his routine of being the first one in the office and getting the coffee on. Then he found himself with a wide-open schedule and counties that were in red phase. Fortunately, the next day the state Fish & Boat Commission unexpectedly moved up the opening day for the 2020 trout season to reduce streamside crowding.

"The first day, I felt a little out of place," Mark recalls. "But I never looked back after the second day, when fishing season started."

The Boothers look forward to spending more time with their grandkids. Logan and his wife, Cortney, have a 4-year-old daughter, Bentleigh — who is involved in T-ball and showing her 4-H lamb — and a 2-year-old daughter, Harper.

Whether he's traveling or enjoying time with family around the backyard fire pit and patio, we wish Mark a very happy retirement and thank him for his many years of keeping the lights on. 🌞



PHOTO BY LOGAN BOOHER

**KEEPER:** Mark Booher, Valley REC's former Shade Gap District manager, shows off his catch during a July fishing trip to Alaska. Mark retired from Valley REC in April with 30 years of service.