



Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative News

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



Frederick, Warren and Clarke counties and City of Winchester –
Congregational Community Action Project (CCAP)
112 S. Kent St.
Winchester, VA 22601

Rockingham County –
Harrisonburg-Rockingham County Salvation Army
185 Ashby Ave.
Harrisonburg, VA 22802

Highland County –
Highland County Evangelistic Association
P.O. Box 143
Monterey, VA 24465

Page County –
Page One
42 W. Main St.
Luray, VA 22835

Shenandoah County –
St. John Bosco Catholic Outreach (SJBCO)
315 N Main St.
Woodstock, VA 22664

Augusta County –
Staunton-West Augusta County Salvation Army
1700 West Beverley St.
Staunton, VA 24401

Support SVEC Energy Assistance and Help Members in Need

Winter is a trying time of year. Cold, wet weather drives people inside their homes. This also tends to drive up consumer energy bills.

Individuals having a difficult time paying utility bills tend to have an even harder time during the winter, and now they face an added challenge with the higher cost of energy. The utilities are essential in providing warmth, comfort and a quality standard of living. Those experiencing difficulty may be in need of assistance.

The purpose of the SVEC Energy Assistance Program is to aid individuals and families experiencing financial stress in paying their winter energy bills.

Individuals receiving SVEC Energy Assistance funds must be consumers of SVEC, but this does not mean the Energy Assistance will be only for electric bills; it will assist with any type of energy bill (i.e., electric, oil, gas or wood). However, the funds

will not be available for use as utility deposits.

SVEC's Energy Assistance Programs are administered by a number of outside organizations, listed at left.

Anyone wishing to contribute to the fund may voluntarily add \$1, \$2, \$5, \$10 or more to their electric bill payment in excess of the amount due, or they may make a separate check payable to SVEC Energy Assistance. Contributions are accepted from Oct. 1, 2016, through March 31, 2017.

Member-owners requesting assistance should contact one of the organizations listed at left in their county. Acceptance of applications for Energy Assistance and the distribution of funds will begin Jan. 4, 2017.

Please help support SVEC Energy Assistance and those less fortunate than yourself; remember, it is member-owners helping member-owners.

SHENANDOAH VALLEY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

P.O. Box 236
147 Dinkel Avenue – Hwy. 257
Mt. Crawford, VA 22841-0236
800-234-SVEC (7832)
Office Hours: M-F, 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
www.svec.coop

President and CEO
Michael W. Hastings

Board Chair
Robbie F. Marchant

Local Pages Editor
J. Michael Aulgur

Writers
Cammie Tutwiler
Preston Knight

For all questions concerning advertising, contact Cooperative Living at 804-346-3344.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer. SVEC supports our armed services and veterans in employment opportunities.

Attention SVEC members!

Do you decorate with interesting (or tacky) lights for the holiday season? Share your pictures with us, and we will publish as many as space allows in our February *Cooperative Living* local pages. Deadline for photos is Dec. 16.

To send in your digital picture (the higher quality the better) email to: ctutwiler@svec.coop. To mail a picture, send to: SVEC, Attn: Cammie Tutwiler, P.O. Box 236, Mt. Crawford, VA 22841. You will get your picture returned!

Holiday Office Closings

SVEC offices will close at noon on Wednesday, Nov. 23, and will be closed all day Thursday, Nov. 24, and Friday, Nov. 25, for the Thanksgiving holiday. Offices will reopen Monday, Nov. 28.

SVEC offices will be closed all day Friday, Dec. 23, and Monday, Dec. 26, for the Christmas holiday. Offices will reopen Tuesday, Dec. 27.

SVEC offices will be closed all day Monday, Jan. 2, for the New Year's holiday. Offices will reopen Tuesday, Jan. 3.

SVEC Breaks Ground on New Office Facility in Rockingham

Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative (SVEC) continues to make progress toward the construction of its new Rockingham Office Facility, which is to be located on a portion of 18 acres of land purchased north of Mount Crawford.

The week of Oct. 9th SVEC broke ground on the facility, with a goal-completion date of late 2017. The building will combine the Dayton office, which is located on Mosby Road, and the headquarters office, which is located on Dinkel Avenue in Mount Crawford. The current Headquarters building has been purchased by Blue Ridge Christian School.

“With good weather and no complications, we look forward to offering this facility improvement for our member-owners by the end of next year,” President and CEO Michael Hastings said. “With all of the careful planning that has taken place, we can only hope for cooperation from Mother Nature. We are pleased to offer a new building, with new services, to our member-owners.”

Additional space provided by the new Headquarters will allow the Cooperative to add needed service, and allow departments to provide enhancements to member-owners for everything from paying bills to upgrading infrastructure throughout the system to improve reliability. Specific improvements planned include video-enabled, bank-style, drive-through lanes for making payments, kiosks for member-owner service in the lobby, and greater privacy for face-to-face interaction with member services staff.

Land for the new facility is situated on the northwest corner of Oakwood Drive and U.S. 11 (South Valley Pike). After an extensive effort between Board members and SVEC staff members spanning the last year and a half, and following careful consideration of a needs assessment, the Board voted unanimously to move forward with plans to construct a new facility.

The Dayton facility opened to member-owners in about 1937, and the Cooperative Headquarters office has been operational in Mount Crawford for about 30 years. Since the construction of its current



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Headquarters, the Cooperative has nearly tripled its membership.

The facility in Dayton is not adequate for today's Cooperative, due in part to advancing technology: Poles used to be set mainly by hand, but today many of the line and bucket trucks being used — measuring nearly 30 feet in length and almost 14 feet tall — will not fit into the Cooperative's garage to perform maintenance. For example, storage for a mobile substation requires that a tarp be placed over the end, and that will not fit beneath the current storage area available.

The Headquarters office has exceeded capacity, with some employees working out of closets, doubling up in offices as needed, and modifying meeting areas to add cubicles. Additionally, travel to other SVEC locations is often necessary, in order to find space to accommodate meetings.

In June 2010, SVEC added parts of Clarke, Frederick, Highland, Page and Warren counties and the entire city of

Winchester in an acquisition of Allegheny Power's Virginia territory. This acquisition increased the number of member-owner accounts from 37,000 to 90,000. Today, SVEC serves more than 93,000 accounts throughout its service territory.

The current Headquarters building was constructed far ahead of any thoughts of acquisition, and no one could have anticipated current membership levels or the staffing levels and operational space that is needed to properly serve the membership. Expanding the Headquarters building is not an option due to limited availability of adjacent real estate.

“The timing of this project worked out well, not only from a functionality standpoint, but 2016 marks the 80th year of service for Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative to our member-owners,” Hastings said. “We will continue working toward many more years of outstanding service to our member-owners.”

Local Veteran Brings Healing Out West

The Bar X Project, a Non-Profit Organization, Helps Wounded Veterans Reunite with Old Friends

by Preston Knight

A visitor's first impression of the Sweet Grass Chamber of Commerce's website is a little shock and awe at the beautiful landscape and mighty mountains of Big Timber, Montana.

The images that rotate on the front page paint a perfect picture of a free and inviting land, a place where one could most certainly envision losing him- or herself amid the endless possibilities of the surroundings.

It's postcard-worthy America, the type of scenery that would make one want to fight to protect it.

Through the help of a decorated veteran in Shenandoah County, "Big Sky Country" of Montana is giving right back to those very individuals.

Friends All Over Again

Woodstock resident Wade Zirkle served in the U.S. Marine Corps as an infantry officer from 2000 to 2005, twice deployed to Iraq. On the second tour, in 2004, he was badly burned in a deadly attack on his convoy, for which he received the Purple Heart.

As he recovered from his injuries and settled back into life in the United States, he became a vocal proponent for wounded warriors returning home from duty.

"One thing the military does really well is that it trains warriors as a team and sends Marines into battle as a team," Zirkle said. "One thing the military does poorly is reintegrate these people back into society. They're sent back to their hometowns alone. That is extremely difficult after the experiences that we've had."

In 2011, a new opportunity to assist his comrades presented itself. Zirkle and a former Marine-turned-business partner, James Moran of Camden County, New Jersey, heard from a business associate of theirs, Rob Lowe in Billings, Montana, who expressed interest in helping wounded veterans.

Lowe offered his family's 300-acre ranch, called Bar X, as a setting, with the idea of offering veterans a free weekend of fly fishing in the beautiful West.

"That was definitely the catalyst," Zirkle said. "Without their initiative and their generosity, it would not be possible."



Support was widespread from local people in Montana who donated boats, time as guides, a van and more. For the first two years, veterans from the Marine Corps' Wounded Warrior Regiment were recruited to attend what became known as the Bar X Project, a non-profit organization.

By the third year, Zirkle said the project's founders refined their approach, making it more formal and raising money to cover airfare, meals and other costs. The weekend became not just a fly-fishing and bonding trip, but one featuring educational components, teaching veterans about financial management, how to sift through the Department of Veterans Affairs, and how to transition from the military lifestyle back to being a civilian.

Another change involved the invite list, as the program's leaders switched to a rotation in which one of them would be tasked with inviting Marines from his own unit for a given trip.

"It's reuniting old friends," said Zirkle, who was in charge of inviting Marines from his platoon for the most recent trip, near the end of September. "There's more healing power when you reunite old battle buddies."

According to the Bar X website, 22 veterans a day are "feeling so hopeless that they are choosing to take their own life rather than face normal life in America."

"The lost potential of these veterans can never be measured," the site states. "It is our belief ... that reestablishing the special bond forged in combat overseas is an untapped avenue to combatting PTSD and helping Marines return to normal life."

A 'Life Saver'

The testimonials posted on the site prove that the Bar X plan is working.

"I haven't talked or hung out with anyone since I got out of the Marines. All my friends back home, I am sort of distanced with since they are just on a different path than me," wrote Lee Poziviak, of Pittsburgh. "Getting to hang out with guys that were with me through one of the biggest life-changing experiences I probably will ever have was so great. You know that no one will fully understand what we go through or experience except for those few guys that were right beside you when you were there doing it."

Matthew R. Bailey, a Marine from Medford, New Jersey, wrote that he had suicidal thoughts that got him as close as contemplating pulling the trigger on his gun at times. He once appeared on "Dr. Phil" to discuss his struggles and get him off of the medications he was on at the time.

Moran, who was Bailey's executive officer in Afghanistan, later invited him to Bar X in 2013.

“We were able to realize we weren’t the only ones dealing with combat-related issues,” Bailey wrote. “This trip was a life-saver. Every Marine returning from combat should have this opportunity. It was a time to reflect and grow together. A time to motivate each other and counsel each other over the course of a few days in God’s Country, Big Sky Country ... Montana.”

As many as eight Marines can attend a trip. Bar X holds two excursions a year — one in July and one in September — at a cost of \$10,000 per weekend, Zirkle said.

As more money has been raised over time, the project has paid for more of the services in Montana, so it does not take advantage of the generosity of the people there, he said.

“There are a lot of veterans charities out there, and a lot of them are really big and really bloated,” Zirkle said. “We decided to run our charity on a much smaller level. Every penny goes to getting wounded warriors to Montana. We’re very proud to run a very lean, efficient, and effective organization.”

The goal for organizers is to continue

offering the trips as long as possible. Zirkle said it’s “like a new experience every time” since most visiting Marines have never been to that part of the country.

But there’s certainly another motivation to keep Bar X running strong that’s as deep as the Montana sky is high.

“It helps me as much as it helps these Marines,” Zirkle said.

For more information, including on how to donate to Bar X, visit www.barxproject.com, or you can mail a check to the Bar X Project at 415 S. Main St., Woodstock, VA 22664.

Woodstock veteran **Wade Zirkle** (center) reunited with four of his former Marines during the most recent trip to Montana sponsored by his organization, Bar X Project. His comrades are (from left to right):

Corporal Bret McCauley served as a fire team leader with the Second Battalion First Marine Regiment (2/1) in Fallujah, Iraq. He was wounded by enemy small arms fire in April 2004. Cpl. McCauley remained in Iraq for rehabilitation and returned to action and was later wounded again by a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device in September 2004. He is the recipient of two Purple Hearts. He lives in Denver.

HN3 Joe Dan “Doc” Worely served as a Corpsman with the Second Battalion First Marine Regiment (2/1) in Fallujah, Iraq. Doc Worely fought in the First Battle of Fallujah in April 2004. In September 2004 he was wounded in action in a coordinated ambush, while running to the aid of his wounded fellow Marines. He is a recipient of the Purple Heart. He works for America’s VetDogs, and lives with his wife and children in Villa Rica, Georgia.

Corporal Adam Fisel served as a fire team leader with the Second Battalion First Marine Regiment (2/1) in Iraq during the 2003 invasion, and on a second deployment to Fallujah in 2004. Cpl. Fisel was wounded by enemy small arms fire in April 2004. He remained in Iraq for rehabilitation and returned to action to finish his deployment. He is the recipient of the Purple Heart. He lives in Wolcottville, Indiana, and is engaged to be married.

Lance Corporal Ben Gonzalez served as a squad automatic weapon gunner with the Second Battalion First Marine Regiment (2/1) in Fallujah, Iraq, in 2004. In May of 2004 he was wounded in a grenade attack in Anbar Province. LCpl. Gonzalez rolled onto the Marine next to him, and absorbed the grenade blast, shielding his fellow Marine from injury. He was awarded the Silver Star for his actions and is also a recipient of the Purple Heart. He lives in El Paso, Texas, with his wife and children.



PHOTO COURTESY OF WADE ZIRKLE

The Following Rates Apply to All Member-Owners of Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative

Listed below are the schedules of monthly rates and availability clauses for the three predominant rates currently in effect for consumers of Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative (SVEC). They include Residential, Seasonal Residential, and General Service rates. Rates not shown below include Large Power, Security Lighting, Churches, and Peak Control (PC-3 and PC-4). For information concerning these or any other rates, please contact your nearest SVEC office, or view them on our website, www.svec.coop.

These are the rates for our consumers receiving total electric service — both distribution (delivery) and generation (electric supply) from SVEC. The major costs in these categories are itemized on the monthly statement for electric service.

The Cooperative asks that you pay particular attention to the availability clause for each rate. Then compare the information for availability to your own uses to be sure you are being billed under the proper rate. Each electric bill the consumer receives states whether the account is considered residential, seasonal, or general service by the heading “Current Charges.” This is located on the consumer portion of the bill in the upper left-hand side.

RESIDENTIAL (Schedule A-11)

Availability

Available to consumers for normal uses in full-time, permanent, single-family residences and residential farms, where such residential structure is occupied on a full-time basis as the principal place of residence for at least nine (9) months per year. All subject to the established rules and regulations of the Cooperative.

Type of Service

Single-phase, 60 cycles at available voltage.
Multi-phase, 60 cycles at available voltage.

Monthly Rate

- A. Distribution Charge
1. Basic Consumer Charge: \$13.76 per billing month single-phase;
\$16.76 multi-phase.
 2. Variable Distribution Charges
First 300 kWh @ 2.850 cents per kWh
Excess over 300 kWh @ 2.734 cents per kWh.
- B. Power Supply Charges
1. All kWh/month @ 7.336 cents per kWh
 2. The above charges are subject to adjustment for changes in Wholesale Power Costs as per the Cooperative's Wholesale Power Cost Adjustment Clause, Schedule WPA-5 until replaced by schedule PCA-1.

SEASONAL RESIDENTIAL (Schedule S-6)

Availability

Available to consumers for normal uses in single-family, non full-time occupied residences. All subject to the established rules and regulations of the Cooperative. Not available for Commercial use.

Type of Service

Single-phase, 60 cycles at available voltage.
Multi-phase, 60 cycles at available voltage.

Monthly Rate

- A. Distribution Charge
1. Basic Consumer Charge: \$16.26 per billing month single-phase;
\$19.26 multi-phase.
 2. Variable Distribution Charges
First 300 kWh @ 11.585 cents per kWh
Excess over 300 kWh @ 2.588 cents per kWh.
- B. Power Supply Charges
1. All kWh/month @ 6.681 cents per kWh
 2. The above charges are subject to adjustment for changes in Wholesale Power Costs as per the Cooperative's Wholesale Power Cost Adjustment Clause, Schedule WPA-5 until replaced by schedule PCA-1.

GENERAL SERVICE (Schedule B-11)

Availability

Available to consumers for general service, commercial, industrial, single- or multi-phase service, and all other non-residential service for all uses subject to the established rules and regulations of the Cooperative.

Type of Service

Single- and/or multi-phase, 60 cycles, at available secondary voltage. Motors having a rated capacity equal to or in excess of ten horsepower (10 hp) must be three-phase.

Monthly Rate

- A. Distribution Charge
1. Basic Consumer Charge: \$15.41 per billing month single-phase; \$18.41 per billing month multi-phase.
 2. Variable Distribution Charges
(a) Demand Charge:
First 20 kilowatts of billing demand – \$1.00 per kW
All kilowatts of billing demand in excess of 20 – \$6.71 per kW
(b) Plus RKVA @ \$0.56 per RKVA
(c) Plus Energy Charge:
First 500 kWh @ 5.830 cents per kWh
Next 3,700 kWh @ 1.329 cents per kWh
Excess over 4,200 kWh @ 0.457 cents per kWh.

B. Power Supply Charges

1. All kWh/month @ 6.937 cents per kWh
2. The above charges are subject to adjustment for changes in Wholesale Power Costs as per the Cooperative's Wholesale Power Cost Adjustment Clause, Schedule WPA-5 until replaced by schedule PCA-1.

Note: the above Distribution Charges and Power Supply Charges apply to those Consumers who have the Cooperative as their energy service provider. Only the Distribution charges apply to those Consumers who have an Electricity Supplier other than the Cooperative as their energy provider.

C. Minimum Distribution Charge

The minimum distribution charge per month or fraction thereof shall be the highest of the following:

1. The Basic Consumer Charge; or
2. The Billing Demand Charge in 2.(a) above for (a) 50 percent of the highest monthly billing demand established during the preceding calendar year, or (b) 50 percent of the consumer's requested capacity; or
3. The minimum specified in the contract for service.

Billing Demand

The billing demand shall be the maximum average kilowatt load for any period of fifteen (15) consecutive minutes during the month, as indicated or recorded by a demand meter.

Determination of RKVA Demand

The Cooperative reserves the right to measure and bill for RKVA. The RKVA demand shall be the maximum RKVA demand measure in any fifteen (15) minute period during the month for which the bill is rendered.

Temporary Service

Temporary service shall be supplied in accordance with the foregoing rate except that the Consumer shall pay in addition to the foregoing charges, the total cost of installing and removing the service, less the value of materials returned to stock. A deposit, in advance, may be required of the full amount of the estimated bill for service, including the cost of installation and removal.

Service at Primary Voltage

If primary service is furnished between 2KV to 25KV, a discount of \$0.25 per kW of Distribution Billing Demand shall apply to the distribution charges. If primary service is furnished above 25KV, a discount of \$0.50 per kW of Distribution Billing Demand shall apply to the distribution charges.

**In Addition to the Rates Listed on Previous Page, Schedule TMR-Q
Applies to Member-Owners who joined the Cooperative
as a result of the Acquisition in 2010**

SCHEDULE TMR-Q TRANSITION MIGRATION RIDER

APPLICABLE TO TRANSITIONING CONSUMERS ON
SCHEDULES A-11, B-11 AND C-11

ADJUSTMENT TO MITIGATE THE EFFECT OF
MIGRATING TO SCHEDULE B-11

Effective July 5, 2016, the bills to Transitioning Consumers shall be decreased by the applicable credits and discounts as listed in the table below. The billing factors shall be adjusted annually in accordance with the Migration Plan as approved by the Commission in Case No. PUE-2013-00132. Schedule TMR-Q shall expire no later than June 30, 2017.

The applicable Transition Migration Rider factor will be applied each month while in effect until changed, as prescribed by procedures approved by the Virginia State Corporation Commission.

This credit shall be applied against any minimum charge set out in the applicable rate schedule and is credited to the Consumer's bill

before any tax surcharge is levied against the Consumer's total bill.

Transitioning Consumers are consumers of the Cooperative who receive service within the territory acquired by Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative as approved in Case No. PUE-2009-000101.

Schedule	Credit Factor			Unit
Schedule B-11 Consumers formerly served on Schedule CQ	Basic Consumer Charge First 500 kWh	Multi-Phase 0.465 cents	\$3.00	per account per kWh
Schedule B-11 Consumers formerly served on Schedule GQ	Basic Consumer Charge	Multi-Phase	\$1.50	per account per kWh

SVEC August Major Outages

Aug. 1 Clearbrook area
1,500 members out for 3 hours
Tree off right-of-way fell on power line

Aug. 1 Clearbrook area
600 members out for 6 hours
Tree off right-of-way fell on power line

Aug. 9 Staunton area
1,100 members out for 20 minutes
Device on sensitive setting to protect workers

Aug. 12 Barterbrook area
1,000 members for 5.5 hours
Substation equipment failure

Aug. 14 Crimora and Barterbrook areas
1,200 members for 1.5 hours
Equipment failure

Aug. 15 Columbia Furnace area
1,300 members for 1 hour
Unknown cause of outage

Aug. 17 Bergton area
1,200 members for 2 hours
Thunderstorms in area

Aug. 22 Staunton area
1,100 members out for 20 minutes
Device on sensitive setting to protect workers

Aug. 22 West Winchester area
1,100 members for 45 minutes
Equipment failure

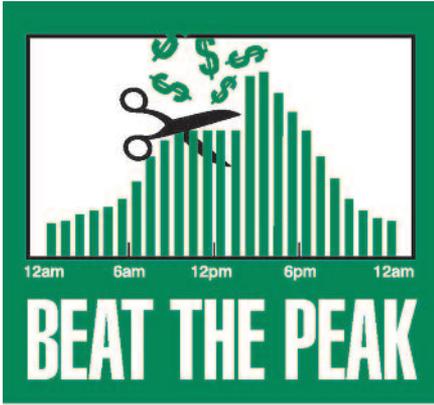
Aug. 24 North River and Spring Hill areas
1,800 members for 1 hour
Device on sensitive setting to protect workers

Aug. 29 Bergton area
1,200 members for 2 hours
Vehicle accident

Aug. 29 Bergton area
200 members for 3.5 hours
Vehicle accident

Aug. 31 Staunton area
1,100 members out for 20 minutes
Device on sensitive setting to protect workers

Sign Up to 'Beat the Peak' This Winter



In June, Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative (SVEC) launched Beat the Peak, a free and completely voluntary program to help hold down electricity costs. During periods of the very highest electricity usage across the Cooperative, Beat the Peak participants receive alerts by a text message or email asking them to try to reduce consumption for the designated peak hours. These alerts will typically only occur on the very hottest or coldest days of the year.

With the winter season fast approaching, it's important that member-owners keep energy efficiency in mind. By participating in Beat the Peak this winter, you will be taking individual measures to conserve energy while also being a part of a collective effort of member-owners to help keep rates down at the wholesale level.

Anything you do that reduces your use of electricity during peak periods helps Beat the Peak. If you haven't signed up yet or would like more information, please visit www.SVECBatThePeak.coop.

Give an Electric Gift Certificate This Holiday Season

Christmas is right around the corner. Are you having a difficult time deciding what to give to Uncle Joe, Aunt Sally, or your neighbor down the road? Consider giving a Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative (SVEC) gift certificate. It makes the ideal gift for any SVEC member-owner.

Electric gift certificates are available in even-dollar amounts of \$5 or more. You decide the amount you want to give. In return, we'll credit the recipient's account and prepare a certificate that we'll either mail to the gift recipient or send directly to you for personal giving. The certificate tells the recipient the exact amount to expect as a credit on his/her electric bill.

The electric bills mailed to member-owners in November will contain an insert for use in ordering gift certificates. You can



then send that form, pick one up at your local office, or fill in the one below, plus a check or money order (payable to Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative) to: Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative, Attn: Electric Gift Certificates, P.O. Box 236, Mt. Crawford, VA 22841.

****Please DO NOT mail with bill payment.**

Orders for SVEC gift certificates must be received in our offices by Dec. 23, 2016.

This year, give the gift of light, an SVEC gift certificate. It's a great way to get into the true spirit of the holiday season.

SVEC ELECTRIC GIFT CERTIFICATE

PLEASE PRINT

Recipient's Name _____ Your Name _____

Address _____ Address _____

City, State, Zip _____ City, State, Zip _____

Amount of Gift _____ Phone No. _____ Account No. If Known _____

Signature _____

_____ Mail certificate to me _____ Mail certificate to recipient _____ I wish to remain anonymous

Make check or money order payable to Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative — PLEASE DO NOT SEND WITH BILL PAYMENT.

Roll Call: Unsung Virginian Approaching 100

by Preston Knight

From her front-row seat, Mereta Landes fully expected to congratulate her oldest son, Hugh, on an award commemorating his decades of service to rural electric cooperatives.

“That’s what they told me,” she said.

Landes soon realized she was not a spectator at the ceremony, but the reason for the spectacle. She now keeps the evidence of the greatest prank ever pulled on her on a wall in her room at Bridgewater Retirement Community: A framed 1990 Unsung Virginian Award from the Virginia, Maryland & Delaware Association of Electric Cooperatives.

“It was a nice surprise,” she recalled on a recent September afternoon. “I couldn’t think of anything to say. I was so scared.”

As her 100th birthday approaches on Jan. 6, Landes is again the subject of a concerted effort by family members to recognize her. This time, though, it’s less of a surprise and more of a community invitation: For the 100 days preceding Landes’ big day, people are encouraged to sign up online to pick one day to give her a call to help celebrate the milestone with her.

“She’s lived a full life,” said Hugh Landes, an employee at Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative in the 1960s who later became general manager of neighboring BARC Electric Cooperative in Millboro.

‘Kind and Caring’

Reaching 100 years of age is certainly an accomplishment. If you’re looking to get there, Mereta Landes said she has no particular advice, but staying active mentally and physically has served her well. Today, she still walks to therapy sessions and regularly takes trips offered by the retirement community, plus she is an avid bingo player.

A Rockingham County native, Landes sold Avon products for more than 60 years, and, despite having little knowledge on the inventory, sold cars for Broadway Motor Co.

“I don’t know one car from the other,” she said, “but I’d tell you if we have a good one.”

In 1990, it was everything else that Landes did with her time that garnered recognition through the Unsung Virginian Award. According to its description, the



PRESTON KNIGHT PHOTO

award recognizes “dedicated Virginians for services rendered to the Commonwealth in the public or private sector without thought of personal gain and without their having sought or received public recognition.” Landes, as her award details, fit the criteria perfectly, in large part because of the rummage sales she coordinated through her church, First United Methodist Church in Broadway. She lived by herself at the time and had a double-car garage that she didn’t park a vehicle in, she said.

“People dropped off stuff they didn’t need,” Landes said.

In her nearly 40 years of collecting and distributing clothing for her church, she helped provide more than \$170,000 to fill a variety of needs for United Methodist and less-fortunate families, preserving their pride and helping them avoid seeking charity, the award states. She would add to that total over the next 19 years, before coming to the retirement community.

Landes “inspired, gladdened, and enriched the lives of all with whom she has come in contact,” it reads, before adding that she is a “kind and caring lay worker who has fed the hungry, housed the homeless, clothed the needy, and shared fully in the joys and sorrows of others.”

Landes has six children, two of whom preceded her in death. Hugh Landes is the only child who still lives locally, and he

Call List Filling Up

visits his mother every day from his home nearby in Bridgewater.

A Broadway High School graduate, he was recognized in 2004 with the state association’s Leadership Award. In other words, 14 years after his mother was led to believe he would be honored.

“She took it pretty well,” he said of his mother’s reaction in 1990. “She said, ‘Thank you,’ and sat down.”

At this remark, Mereta Landes restates her position.

“When they told me I had won, I was too scared to say anything,” she said.

Her son adds, “She still is.”

For previous landmark birthdays, such as Mereta Landes’ 90th, her family held card showers. This time, family members elected to try an online sign-up sheet for phone calls.

At the end of September, when the 100 days of calls began, more than half of the dates were already taken.

“She would enjoy hearing from you!” the website says.

And, this time, she won’t be too scared to respond.

For more information on how to sign up to call Mereta, contact this story’s author, Preston Knight, at 540-574-7277, or pknight@svec.coop.

If you’re interested in nominating someone for the Unsung Virginian Award, visit www.vmdac.com/content/awards for more information.