

Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

SOMERSET REC

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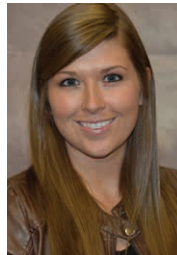
Monday through Friday
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EMERGENCY OUTAGE NUMBERS

814-445-4106
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Guest Column

Your Super Bowl Cooperative Coach



EMILY BAER

BLUE, FORTY-TWO, HUT HUT.

If you are a football player or an avid football fan, you probably understand what this cadence means and the moments after a huddle leading up to a play. Up until a few years ago, this was a foreign language to me — like ordering a drink at Starbucks.

In the beginning of my co-op career, then co-worker and now retired Director of Marketing & Member Services Carline Mitchell always stressed the importance of annual meetings, our Member Appreciation Day, Youth Tour, *Penn Lines*, and other cooperative events. She often compared them to the biggest football game of the year, the Super Bowl. I never understood this comparison until I was in her cleats planning these events myself.

As a coach for my daughter's fifth- and sixth-grade basketball team, I find myself preparing for practices and games much like I do for cooperative events. I guess you could call me your cooperative coach. For example, planning for Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative's (REC) Annual Meeting begins seven to eight months before the event by securing a date and venue, creating an agenda and annual report, gathering gifts, and more.

The next big game on my lineup is Youth Tour. This begins by discussing the opportunity with students at local school districts as early as November. Navigating the application and selection process and finishing the final touches happen until the trip begins the third week of June. Member Appreciation Day is later in the year and takes a few months to plan by selecting a date and ordering food and gifts. And finally, your local *Penn Lines* content, which is tailored to Somerset REC members, takes a few months to plan, too.

Each member event is planned with attention to fine detail. What is the hardest thing about planning a "cooperative Super Bowl" you may ask? The gifts! With multiple generations of memberships, I might stress myself out *just a little* when trying to decide on a gender-neutral, well-received gift. I always want our members to know they are valued and their attendance at the "game" is appreciated.

As we are halfway through the first quarter, it's time to prepare for the rest of the games this year. Our members are the heart of the co-op, and I look forward to planning your cooperative Super Bowl events throughout this year. In the meantime, if you do plan to watch the *real* Super Bowl, I hope the team you are rooting for comes out with a win. Win or lose, know your cooperative team is always rooting for you, the consumer-member.

As for me, I look forward to the halftime show while snacking on Buffalo chicken dip and barbecue li'l smokies wrapped in bacon. Go team! 🏈

EMILY BAER

DIRECTOR OF MARKETING AND MEMBER SERVICES

Five More Minutes

BRANDON HURLEY, PENNSYLVANIA'S 2024 YOUTH LEADERSHIP COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE

Brandon attended the 2024 Youth Tour with Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative in June. He was selected by his peers to represent Pennsylvania on the Youth Leadership Council. Brandon gave the following speech at the 2024 PREA/Allegheny Annual Meeting this past November.

TAKE A MOMENT AND IMAGINE THIS: It's the middle of the summer, about mid-evening. The sun is setting behind the mountains, there's a cool breeze in your hair and country music is playing on the radio. You've just had a long day hanging around the lake, enjoying time with your friends.

This was the scene for me roughly two years ago, where I constantly felt myself asking, wishing I could continue to experience this day again and again. It was at this moment when I heard an unfamiliar song start playing.

"We yelled, 'Five more minutes.'"

It felt fitting — the perfect day, not wanting it to end — at that moment as Scotty McCreery sang, "I wish I had me a pause button."

Looking back, listening to the lyrics of McCreery's song "Five More Minutes" as a senior at North Star High School, I've now begun to realize what he meant.



CRAZY, RIGHT?: Brandon Hurley, Pennsylvania's 2024 Youth Leadership Council representative, flies a drone. Hurley attended Youth Tour with Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative in June 2024.

Growing up

I would say my childhood was the best time of my life. No homework, unlimited naps and no college applications. But, for some reason, I always wanted to grow up. I think that's the thought process for most of my peers. We all have similar reasons for wanting to go back, but we all want "a few more drops of the good stuff, the good times."

When I was 15 — right when you are making a transition from a little kid into a young adult — my world was shaken to its core. Right before my sophomore year of high school, my parents had a falling out.

"They'll make up soon," I thought. "This is just one little roadblock."

But as the weeks turned into months, I knew this wasn't just going to be a quick or easy process, so I tried to work around all of this. I tried distracting myself with school-work, sports and band. That worked about as well as you think it would.

It didn't.

October 2022, I lost it. I didn't know what to do at all. This was all new to me. I just wanted to have my parents back under one roof. Back in the same family. I wanted my childhood back. Eventually, with the help and support of my friends, I have since begun to work through this. But still, I wish I just had five more minutes with the complete family I used to have.

Everyday life now

Flash forward two years; it's my senior year. Crazy right? How does time travel that fast? I'm sure we all can remember some impulsive decision we all made — sneaking out, staying up too late, pranking teachers and many other things that classify our senior year. My impulsive decision? Playing football.

Did I think I was going to enjoy it? Not as much as I did, but it had become something I loved with all my heart. I, unfortunately, played my last home game at the end of October, and — after we lost 18-9 — it really began to hit me how much I would miss this game; it was that "next time to get in here, I'll have to buy a ticket" feeling. The lessons I've learned, the friendships I've made and the people I've hit have all shown me that there is more to

football than just a Friday night game. It's a group of guys that you win with, lose with, celebrate with and mourn with. I just wish I could get "Five. More. Minutes."

Now, being a student-athlete, I just wanted the athlete part. But, as it goes, you must also have the student part. High school is something that I, for most of the time, was waiting to be done with. It just felt like such a drag, such a hassle. Like, who really wants to wake up at 6:30 a.m. and learn for seven hours?

In retrospect, some of my greatest friendships and opportunities were given to me in high school. If I hadn't found the people I connected with the most, I would be insanely different to what I am today. The help through numerous life events from teachers, administrators and friends would not have come without high school. I (sometimes) wish I could give myself five more minutes in that building that I (sometimes) enjoyed.

Reflecting

Looking back on these moments — my family's struggles, football games under the Friday night lights and the friendships I found in high school — I've realized they were more than just experiences. They were lessons. Through it all, I learned the importance of leaning on the people around me and showing up for them, too.

I wish I could pause time and soak in the moments when friends, teachers and teammates lifted me up.

Life, just like football, is built on teamwork. It's about supporting each other through the wins and losses and being there when someone needs you most. I've come to see that those small moments — an encouraging word, a helping hand or a shared laugh — mean so much more than we realize at the time. If I could hit pause, just for "five more minutes," I'd take the time to appreciate those lessons and experiences, and never let go.

But sometimes, in the end, we can ask for five more minutes — for relationships, friendships or experiences — as much as we want, but if we live like that, we'll always be stuck in the past. We can cherish the moments we had while continuing forward. Sometimes, that five minutes is all we need to understand what truly matters, yet it's also just enough to remind us that some chapters must close. Real growth comes from honoring those moments and still choosing to turn the page. Who knows? Maybe better things may come from moving on. Like Scotty says, "The clock don't stop." 🎵

Brandon will represent Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative and Pennsylvania electric cooperatives at the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's PowerXchange in Atlanta, Ga., in March. He has been an excellent role model to youth in our service territory and will continue the cooperative spirit after his Youth Tour endeavors. His plan is to attend Penn State University and major in cybersecurity.



RISING STAR: Brandon Hurley, center, Pennsylvania's 2024 Youth Leadership Council representative, poses with Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative General Manager Rus Ogburn and Emily Baer, director of marketing and member services, after giving his speech at the PREA/Allegheny Annual Meeting last November. The high-schooler represented Somerset County on the 2024 Youth Tour.

SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITY

Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) has \$1,000 scholarships available for local high school students. Funding for this program comes from unclaimed capital credits that previously had to be turned over to the state. Thanks to the efforts of our political advocates, we can now invest those funds in our communities.

Eligibility requirements

The applicant must be:

- ▶ a graduating high school senior whose parents' or legal guardians' primary residence is served by Somerset REC.
- ▶ a student attending public, private, parochial or home school.
- ▶ enrolled or planning to enroll full-time in an accredited post-secondary institution for the 2025-2026 academic year.


How to apply

Visit somersetrec.com, click "My Cooperative" and select "Scholarships" from the drop-down menu for a fillable PDF scholarship application. Applications are also available at the Somerset REC main office at 223 Industrial Park Road and in the guidance offices of most Somerset County high schools.

Application deadline

Applications and all required information must be delivered to the Somerset REC office or postmarked by April 10. Scholarship selections will be made in mid-April, and award recipients will be notified in early May.

Please direct questions to ebaer@somersetrec.com or call 814-445-4106. 📞




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MINI-SPLITS AT A GLANCE

Mini-split systems, also known as ductless air-source heat pumps, heat/cool a home through an outdoor unit that connects to one or more individual indoor air handlers, which are typically mounted on a wall. Depending on the size of your home and personal preferences, a mini-split system is worth considering when you need to replace or upgrade your heating/cooling system.

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