

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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Guest Column

Shining Light on Solar



EMILY BAER

THERE ARE MANY DIFFERENT REASONS why you might consider going solar. When it comes to incorporating solar panels, people are motivated by saving money, a concern for the environment, energy efficiency or maybe all three. Whatever the motivation may be, it's important to understand not all solar companies will have your best interest in mind.

However, at the co-op, we do have your best interest in mind when it comes to helping members make energy-efficient decisions while offering a helpful and honest opinion. Here are a few things to consider if you are interested in installing solar:

Energy consumption

Solar systems are sized based on the home's energy needs. The larger the system, the higher the cost. Before installing solar, make sure your home is as energy efficient as possible. Verify the efficiency of your lighting, HVAC systems and insulation.

Roofing

Consider the age, orientation and amount of shade your roof has. The best orientation for solar panels is south-facing to receive direct light throughout the day. A shaded roof helps keep your home cool in the summertime but reduces solar energy production.

Maintenance


A solar system doesn't last forever. Lifespans range from 25 to 30 years. As systems degrade over time, they produce less energy.

My Somerset REC electric bill and storage

Having solar panels does not mean you are "off the grid." Unless you plan to disconnect from your electric co-op, you will still receive a monthly bill and always pay, at minimum, the basic service charge. Solar panels only produce power when the sun is shining, and I think we can agree that Somerset County's sun doesn't compare to Florida's sun. If you want to ensure your home always has power, you need to be connected to your electric co-op or invest in a battery storage system that comes at an additional cost. During power outages, don't assume solar panels will supply you with power. Typical solar interconnections to the grid require the panels to shut down during a power outage.

Contact us

Solar contractors and installers often work in several utility service territories and may not be familiar with our co-op's offerings, rate structures, and interconnection agreements. Before signing an agreement, call the co-op office and ask to speak to me or Phil Stern, manager of technical services. We also recommend getting bids from three contractors to compare equipment and pricing.

Understanding these considerations before installing solar will ensure you meet your money-saving and environmental goals. For more information on interconnecting at the co-op, visit somersetrec.com, hover over "My Cooperative" at the top of the page, go to "Programs" and click on "Solar." 

EMILY BAER

DIRECTOR OF MARKETING AND MEMBER SERVICES

A Day I Will Never Forget

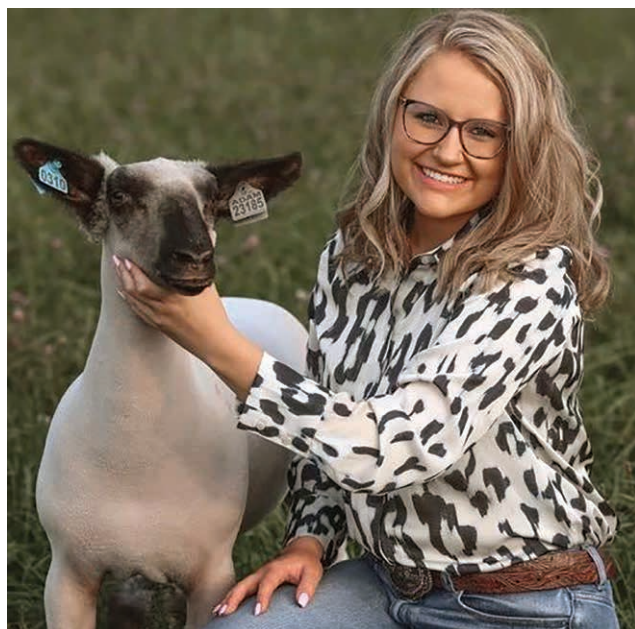
SAMANTHA JO HAYMAN, YOUTH TOUR STUDENT AND YOUTH LEADERSHIP COUNCIL DELEGATE

WHEN EMILY BAER, SOMERSET RURAL Electric Cooperative (REC) director of marketing and member services, and past Youth Tour students came to my school to promote and present an overview of Youth Tour, I knew right away I wanted to submit my application for a chance. After an interview and essay, I was proud to be selected to attend. Since each co-op can select Youth Leadership Council nominees, I was proud to be voted by my peers as one of two Somerset REC nominees, which meant I would interview once I got to Washington, D.C., for the representative position.

June 18 came around, and I packed up and made my way to Washington, D.C., with 10 other students for an unforgettable week. As soon as we arrived, the nerves hit as I knew I would be interviewing very soon. I remember waiting outside the interview room with Alyssa Richards, the other Somerset REC nominee, and David Kunselman, who was representing DuBois-based United Electric Cooperative. I was instantly calmed when I learned we were all 4-H kids and had something in common.

Later that night, they gathered all the kids from Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York to announce the results; New Jersey — Bethann Juhr; New York — Erin Copper-smith; and Pennsylvania — Sami Jo Hayman.

I vividly remember Alyssa grabbing me and screaming and looking over to see the biggest smile on Emily's face. This meant I would attend the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) Annual Meeting in San Antonio, Texas, in March 2024. After Youth Tour, I had to start preparing for my trip to Texas, writing a speech, planning a community service project and attending Zoom meetings.



After a few months, the long-awaited week in Texas arrived and was filled with new people, public-speaking events, and touring. I was blessed to share this experience with the delegates from the other participating states. In Texas, I had the opportunity to speak in front of thousands of people, introducing myself and speakers, and help keep the conference running as smoothly as possible. When we weren't at the convention center, we got to tour and shop in the amazing weather, and I can't forget about the Josh Turner concert!

As my first Youth Tour journey came to an end, I participated in Youth Tour one more time this past June as a junior chaperone. I was honored and excited to spend yet another week in Washington, D.C., with a new group of outstanding youth who are inspired to lead.

None of this would have been possible had I not chosen to be a leader every day and try new things. It's fitting — the theme of NRECA's annual meeting was "Time to Lead," so I'd like to share the speech I wrote after becoming the Pennsylvania Youth Leadership Council delegate.

* * *

Time, as the saying goes, waits for no one. Our world is in constant motion, and the challenges we face are evolving at an unprecedented pace. In this rapidly changing world, leadership becomes more important than ever. We can no longer afford to be passive spectators — it is our responsibility to drive positive change, lead by example and inspire those around us.

I recently participated at an event where the theme was "Time to Lead." But what does it mean to lead? This question may be a difficult one to answer, mainly because leadership is not limited to the terms of a certain title or position. It is about taking a stand for what is right, even when it's not easy. It's about making difficult decisions and setting a course for the future, even during uncertain or unprecedented times. Leadership is all about influence, inspiration and impact.

So, let's start with influence. I have been beyond blessed to be surrounded by many influential people in my life, whether it be my parents encouraging me to try new things and take risks, my friends supporting and cheering me on, or my big brother Lucas, the angel by my side. In July 2021, my world was completely turned upside down. Finding out that my brother had passed away due to a vehicle accident changed my view of how I wanted to live

4-H KID: Samantha "Sami" Jo Hayman represented Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative during the 2023 Youth Tour and represented Pennsylvania on the Youth Leadership Council (YLC) in 2024. While waiting to interview for the YLC, she bonded with other Youth Tour students over shared involvement in local 4-H programs.

my life. I dream of being the positive influence he was. Now, without him, I strive to be the best influence I can be to those around me. It could be teaching younger 4-H members about their livestock projects, helping other cheerleaders learn cheers or helping new rifle members set up their station to shoot. No matter what I am doing, I try to be a good influence any way I can.

Along with being an influence on others, why not become an inspiration to others as well?

Even though my brother may not be here with me, he is still my biggest inspiration. Anyone who knew Lucas would describe him as charismatic, humorous and maybe a little bit ornery. As my big brother, he was my biggest supporter and my greatest rival. Being the little sister of someone like Lucas has inspired me to take advantage of every God-given opportunity, inspired me to never back down from a challenge and to find the joy in all the small things in life. Through this inspiration, I try every day to inspire others by doing small things to brighten someone's day. Not only can it inspire others but it can also leave a lasting impact on their life.

Making an impact means doing something that creates a noticeable and important change. It's like throwing a pebble into a pond and watching the ripples spread out — it's about doing or saying something that affects people in a meaningful way. Whether it's helping others, standing up for what's right, or creating something new, making an impact means leaving a positive mark on the world around you. For me, my brother made the biggest impact on my life, and I strive to be like Lucas to take leadership to the next level and make an impact on those around me. It's about making that positive impact on others that will last a lifetime. Making an impact only works when we do, and we all take our turn at being a leader.

Along with influence, inspiration and impact, at the core of leadership is vision. A vision of a world where progress and sustainability guide our actions. A vision where we manage the global challenges of our time — from climate change to social inequality — with urgency and purpose. To lead means to align our actions with this vision, to set a course that benefits not just us as young people, but future generations of our planet.

Around this room, I see people from various fields and backgrounds. Each one of you has the power to be a leader in your own way. Whether it be business, medicine, education, volunteering or any other field, you have the ability to make a positive impact. So, don't be afraid to ask a question, don't be afraid to speak up, don't be afraid to take a risk. Your actions, decisions and visions can absolutely shape the course of history.

In this busy world, take the time to meet new people and connect with old friends. I encourage you to step outside your comfort zone and volunteer or engage in opportunities as they present themselves.



UNFORGETTABLE MEMORIES: Samantha "Sami" Jo Hayman speaks at the Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting about her trip to Washington, D.C., for Youth Tour. Hayman returned to Youth Tour this year as a junior chaperone.

When in San Antonio at the NRECA annual meeting, country music artist Josh Turner performed my brother's favorite song, "Would You Go with Me." I will always remember him blaring this song in the shower and putting on his own concert for the whole house.

The song, "Would You Go with Me," is about everlasting love and faith. Faith. Throughout this song, Josh Turner gives listeners reasons to have faith in true love, the questions asked throughout the song can also be reflective of questions God asks his "children," as Christians are called. With meaningful, almost biblical wording such as "streets of fire" and "the edge of the sea," we can sense how Josh feels about a girl he likes following him through life in every aspect.

But these questions are also like questions we are asked throughout the Bible. God is constantly wanting us to take his hand and, in doing so, we make him the happiest. He is truly happy with every Christian that takes his hand and follows him through every part of life. No, I don't mean literally taking God's hand and walking around your daily life with him next to you in-person. Christians figuratively take God's hand and follow him through life and aspire to be good people and have a strong faith and relationship with God. "Would You Go with Me" is a great reflection of the questions we, the audience, ask those we love and the questions our faith poses for us as well.

I am so blessed to be able to share my experience with you. My goal for everyone in life is to live with an ignited sense of purpose and a vision for a better world. Tomorrow is never promised, so make the best of each day.

And so, I leave you with one final thought: Would you go with me? To become a leader that influences, inspires and has a positive impact on others?

Good leaders can make a difference. You can be a leader. So, when should you start?

Stand with me and choose to be a leader now. 📌

85th Annual Meeting Highlights Student Achievements

THE 85TH SOMERSET RURAL ELECTRIC Cooperative (REC) Annual Meeting was held May 23 at the Somerset Area High School Auditorium. The co-op had a slightly lower-than-anticipated turnout with 407 attendees and 300 registered members.

Upon arrival, members formed two lines for registration. Each registered member received a combination carbon monoxide/smoke detector. After registration, members proceeded to the cafeteria for refreshments and cookies and to enter for a chance to win one of the numerous grand prizes, including a grill, shop vac, patio set, Smart TV, pop-up canopy, an air fryer, and \$50 electric bill credits.

When entering the auditorium, members received an annual report that included the 2024 director nominees, members' 2023 financial report, scholarship recipient information, a member satisfaction survey and details about the SmartHub app, a convenient way to manage your Somerset REC account. Copies of the annual meeting report are also available upon request.

During the meeting, 10 recipients of the \$1,000 Somerset REC scholarship were recognized, and Samantha Jo Hayman, a former Youth Tour student and Pennsylvania Youth Leadership Council delegate, was the guest speaker. She spoke about the importance of being involved in the community and how Youth Tour has made a difference in her life. There was no entertainment this year.

As the meeting was ending, employees collected the member satisfaction surveys. The cooperative uses the survey results to improve member services. Questions covered a number of topics, including member satisfaction and expectations, payment preferences, Somerset REC programs, annual meeting format preferences, social media engagement and new services, including text-message notifications.

Re-elected directors were Floyd Lehman for District 1 and Harvey Reckner Jr. for District 9, while Jim Harrold claimed the director position in District 5 in a contested election. During the board reorganization meeting, the following officers were elected: Jerry Engle, president; Lehman, vice president; and Lowell Friedline, secretary/treasurer. 📍



MEET YOUR DIRECTORS: Rus Ogburn, Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative general manager, right, joins new and returning directors to the board following the elections at the cooperative's annual meeting. Shown, from left, are: Harvey Reckner Jr., who has served on the board since 2012; James "Jim" Harrold Sr., elected for the first time at the annual meeting; and newly elected Vice President Floyd Lehman, who has been on the board since 2012. Lehman also represents the cooperative on the board of its wholesale energy supplier, Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc. in Harrisburg.



COOPERATIVE PARTNERS: Members of Coope Alfaroruiz, Somerset REC's sister cooperative in Costa Rica, attend the annual meeting. Shown, from left, are: Coope Alfaroruiz General Manager Paulo Blanco, Somerset REC Directors Russ Hillegas and Jason Huston, Coope Alfaroruiz Board Director Marvin Corella, and Somerset REC Director Joshua Sechler, who also represents the cooperative on the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association's board.

Thanks, Landowners

Co-op crews extend a big THANKS to the landowners who allowed herbicide application this year.

Crews want you to know...

"We appreciate you working with us. It helps us provide you with better service and quicker outage restoration times."



FUTURE SCHOLARS: Recipients of the \$1,000 Somerset REC scholarship were recognized during the cooperative's annual meeting. Shown, from left, are: Isaac Jamison, Tanner Wassilchalk, Joshua Wagner, Elizabeth Haer, Alexa Lintz, Samantha Jo Hayman, Tori Shaffer, Emily Conn and Kiley Emerick. Not shown is Lily Schrock.