

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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Jessi Ditzler

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OFFICE HOURS

Monday through Friday
7:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.

EMERGENCY OUTAGE NUMBERS

814-445-4106
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Guest Column

Bright Lights and Warm Hearts – We Are Thankful



EMILY BAER

AS THE DAYS GROW SHORTER and the air turns crisp, November invites us to pause and reflect on the things for which we are thankful. At Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative (REC), that list always begins with you, our members. Every time you flip a switch, pay a bill, or attend a co-op event, you help power more than homes and businesses — you help sustain a community built on cooperation, trust, and shared purpose.

Electric cooperatives were founded on a simple but powerful idea: When people work together, they can achieve what no one can do alone. More than 86 years ago, farmers and their

neighbors came together to bring electricity to rural areas when no one else would. That same spirit of teamwork and service guides us today.

We don't just deliver power; we deliver on a promise to serve our members. During this time of year, it's important to express gratitude to everyone who makes that possible.

To our members: Thank you for being more than consumers. You are owners of this cooperative. Your participation and support allow us to reinvest directly into the communities we call home. Whether it's funding local scholarships, supporting youth programs, or helping with community events, Somerset REC is proud to give back because of your involvement. Every connection, every dollar and every decision comes back to benefit the people we serve — you.

To our directors and employees: Your dedication is the heartbeat of this organization. From the lineworkers who brave storms and harsh weather to restore power, to the member service representatives who assist with questions and billing, to the operations team who plans, maintains, and modernizes our electric systems, and to our board of directors who meet monthly to set policies and make decisions — your commitment keeps our cooperative strong. Each day, we're reminded of your reliability, skill and care for our members.

To our community partners: Thank you for joining us in strengthening this region. Cooperation among cooperatives and local organizations is one of our guiding principles — and we see its impact in every shared project and partnership. Whether it's working with volunteer fire departments, hosting a blood drive or opening our community room for organizations to use at no charge for meetings, that is what it truly means to serve together.

As we head into the holiday season, we remain committed to keeping your lights on and your trust strong. Our focus remains on providing reliable, affordable electricity while investing in improvements that prepare our system for the future. From new technologies to stronger infrastructure, every decision we make is rooted in the goal of better serving our members.

In this season of gratitude, I hope you feel proud to be part of a cooperative that belongs to you — one built by and for the community. Thank you for allowing us to power your homes, your farms, your businesses and your lives. 🙏

EMILY BAER

DIRECTOR OF MARKETING & MEMBER SERVICES

Local Taxidermist Preserves Nature Through Art

EMILY BAER, DIRECTOR OF MARKETING & MEMBER SERVICES

WHEN RAEANN GLESSNER WALKED AWAY from a job that no longer fulfilled her, she wasn't entirely sure what the future would hold. What she did know, however, was that her lifelong dream of pursuing taxidermy was calling — and it was time to answer.

"I've always enjoyed the outdoors, hunting and trapping," Raeann explains. "When you mix that with my love for art and photography, taxidermy just made sense. I love being able to put life back into something — preserving it as close as I can to its living state while using my creative abilities."

That blend of science, skill and artistry is what makes taxidermy such a unique profession. Raeann graduated in May from the Northwood Institute of Taxidermy in Friedens. In an effort to improve her skills and techniques, she commits to continuing education by attending taxidermy seminars and training sessions to be the best taxidermist she can be.

The skill behind the mount

While many assume taxidermy is as simple as stretching a hide over a form, the reality is much more complex.

"The basic steps are skinning the animal, tanning, prepping the hide to the right thickness, prepping and altering the form, mounting, drying, and finally, doing

finish work like airbrushing and grooming," Raeann says.

The work requires a mix of materials — foam forms, glue, clay, paint, artificial eyes and teeth, and plenty of patience. Depending on the size of the animal and the amount of time available, a mount can take a week to several months to complete.

Perhaps the hardest part, she admits, is knowing when to stop.

"I can hyper-focus on the minor details for so long," she says. "The animal is never going to look exactly how God created it. You can get close, but knowing when it's good enough is hard for me."

For Raeann, reference photos and anatomy knowledge are beneficial to ensure accuracy.

"It's important to pay attention to the animal once it's been skinned out," she explains. "You can see all the muscle groups under the fur and that helps tremendously. The forms are also a helpful guide, but not completely correct. The best way to get good movement in your work is by watching and understanding the animal itself and how it moves when it is living. I also follow other taxidermists for inspiration."

A mix of science and art

For Raeann, taxidermy is a mix of science and art. On one hand, there's science and precision involved in tanning hides, mixing foams, and controlling pH levels. On the other, there's the clay modeling, painting and creative vision required to bring a mount to life.

"I have as much creative freedom as my customers will allow," she says. "Most are happy to let me take the lead."

Though she hasn't yet created non-traditional mounts, Raeann is open to exploring more creative or unusual projects.

In Pennsylvania, taxidermists are regulated by and must register with the state Department of Agriculture. They also pay an annual \$100 fee to practice their profession. When working with Raeann at her business, A HuntHers Taxidermy, which is along Glades Pike on the outskirts of Berlin, you must provide a current hunting license and tagged animal, depending on the species, to move forward with a processed mount.

Most animals Raeann works on are brought in by customers who harvested them while hunting or trapping. She has also practiced with fresh roadkill — something that requires a permit from the state Game Commission.

"It's a great way to practice and not let the animal go to waste," she says.



FARMERS MARKET: Raeann Glessner and her children spend a Saturday morning at the Somerset County Farmers Market showcasing recently completed animal mounts.

Memorable work and a growing community

When asked about her most unusual project so far, Raeann laughs. “Definitely a full-body skunk mount,” she says. “Let’s just say it left a certain smelly impression.”

Her proudest moment wasn’t about a specific animal mount; it was about creating a space to grow her new career.

“Buying my shop was huge for me,” she says. “It’s half a mile from my house, perfectly suits my needs, and represents the leaps of faith I’ve taken — quitting my job, purchasing a building, and starting down a new path. I am grateful for all these experiences and the many blessings I have received on this journey.”

The taxidermy field has changed significantly over the years with improved forms, more realistic techniques and a community that is far more willing to share knowledge than it was in the past. Raeann is an active member of the Pennsylvania and Ohio Taxidermy Associations, where she has learned from others, participated in competitions and even taught kids.

At the Pennsylvania State Show, Raeann entered the professional division and earned a third-place ribbon with a fox mount she created in taxidermy school. She also earned a second-place ribbon for her first full-body skunk mount. She then gave a demonstration at the Mountain Field and Stream Club on Youth Day, teaching kids about her profession.

As taxidermy continues to evolve, Raeann sees the future heading toward even more realism in forms and mounts. For anyone considering the profession, her advice is simple: Don’t wait.

“If you’re interested, don’t hesitate to do it,” she says. “I waited and wished I would have started sooner.”

Perhaps most important, Raeann wants to correct the biggest misconception about taxidermy: that it’s cruel.

“A lot of people think it’s inhumane, gross or just putting a skin on a form,” she says, “but the truth is, if I don’t preserve it, the animal will just waste away. This way, it’s honored and remembered.”

Raeann and her husband, Matthew, have been members of Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative for more than a decade. Aside from being a full-time business owner, she is also a mother to three daughters who have pursued a love for the outdoors as much as their mom.

To follow Raeann’s taxidermy journey, follow A HuntHers Taxidermy on Facebook. 📺



PRESERVING MEMORIES: Taxidermist Raeann Glessner takes a moment to reflect on her new business with her husband, Matthew, and daughters Clara, Verna, and Waelynn.

BACK TO LIFE: Raeann Glessner molds a bass replica while her youngest daughter, Waelynn, adds smiles to the workplace.



Directors Meet for Line Tour

EMILY BAER, DIRECTOR OF MARKETING & MEMBER SERVICES

MEMBERS OF SOMERSET RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE'S (REC) Board of Directors met outside the four walls of their meeting room to participate in a day-long line tour Sept. 25.

Highlights included visiting Archery Estates to look at direct-buried underground electric service and discuss the impact this type of service has on outage restoration. Directors then traveled to State Game Lands 82 to examine additional direct-buried underground service, which they are considering converting to overhead service.

Recently, the cooperative purchased a drone to help with pole top inspections. Cooperative employee Emily Parks is a certified drone pilot and demonstrated the drone's ability to inspect poles and rights of way.

After lunch, directors visited the Markleton substation, where they met with Linemen Phil Martz and Sam Shober to learn about the use of phase-identifier tools. Next, they stopped by the residence of a nearby member who has asked the co-op to replace their underground line with overhead service.

Directors rounded out their day by reviewing a cooperative



EMILY PARKS

A NEW PERSPECTIVE: Directors and staff recently took a tour of co-op lines and were photographed by its new drone. Shown, from left, are: General Manager Ruston Ogburn, Directors Joshua Sechler, Tim Vought, Jim Harrold, Lowell Friedline, Russ Hillegas, Jerry Engle, and Jason Huston Manager of Outside Operations Andrew Phillippi.

right of way in the Markleton area and seeing an RF gateway — a device that communicates with members' meters to collect readings, power blinks and outage information. 📶

LIHEAP FUNDING DELAYED

At press time, we learned that due to the federal government shutdown, the opening date of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) has been delayed from **Nov. 3 until at least Dec. 3**. As a result, the state Department of Human Services will not be accepting applications for regular LIHEAP cash or crisis grants until the season opens. As always, we will keep our members informed as updates become available. For more information, please call the cooperative office.



**THE OFFICE WILL BE CLOSED
THANKSGIVING DAY, NOV. 27.**

*Wishing you a happy and festive holiday
spent with family and friends.*

