

# Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

## SOMERSET REC

223 Industrial Park Road  
Somerset, PA 15501  
814-445-4106  
800-443-4255

Email: e-mail@somersetrec.com  
Website: www.somersetrec.com

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### President

Clarence B. Waltermire, District 5

### Vice President

Jerry L. Engle, District 4

### Secretary/Treasurer

Lowell L. Friedline, District 3

Floyd T. Lehman, District 1

Russ Hillegas, District 2

P. Timothy Vought, District 6

Carl A. Hay Jr., District 7

Joshua C. Sechler, District 8

Harvey W. Reckner Jr., District 9

Ruston Ogburn  
General Manager

## STAFF

Gary Gindlesperger

Manager of Information Technology

Douglas E. Glessner

Manager of Outside Operations

Jonathan Hillegas

Director of Finances

Emily Baer

Director of Marketing and Member Services

Phil Stern

Manager of Metering Services

Jessi Ditzler

Executive Assistant

## OFFICE HOURS

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

## EMERGENCY OUTAGE NUMBERS

814-445-4106  
800-443-4255

## Containing cost increases



**FROM THE GAS PUMP TO** the grocery store, we've all seen costs going up. Pandemic-driven supply chain disruptions and skyrocketing natural gas prices have fueled inflationary pressures and cost increases in just about every sector, including electric generation. As a result, energy bills are going up.

In this challenging economic climate, your cooperative remains committed to containing costs. We have had a remarkable record of stable and low-cost generation rates over

the past several years, but power costs are rising. While your generation rate recently increased, it will still be among the lowest in the region. That's because your not-for-profit cooperative has long made investments to help curb costs to our members.

This begins with running a streamlined operation. We currently have 43 employees handling all aspects of our business. This number has remained constant for decades despite adding hundreds of miles of new lines, thousands of additional members and HVAC technicians.

Many companies choose to save money by deferring maintenance or installing cheaper components. We consciously avoid that operating philosophy because the long-term value to our members overrides these short-sighted decisions.

Beyond our local operation, we team up with other cooperatives across the state and nation to streamline other aspects of our business. In 1946, it led to the creation of Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc. (Allegheny) by rural electric cooperatives in the state for that very purpose: taking care of our own power needs.

Today, Allegheny is the energy provider for 14 electric cooperatives in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, including Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative. Each cooperative has a seat on the Allegheny board of directors, whose decisions continue to be driven by the needs of our rural communities and their residents.

In the late 1970s, Allegheny made the decision to invest in a nuclear plant, becoming a part-owner in the Susquehanna Steam Electric Station (Susquehanna) in Luzerne County. Today, Allegheny's 10% share of the plant provides more than 50% of all the energy needs of all of Allegheny's member cooperatives.

Allegheny also owns the Raystown Hydroelectric Plant, a hydropower dam in Huntingdon County. In addition, cooperatives have been receiving generation since the 1960s through long-term hydropower agreements negotiated with the New York Power Authority.

Combined with Susquehanna's output, these investments have helped shield members from periods of intense market volatility. They represent roughly 65% of our power portfolio, requiring Allegheny to purchase only about 35% for our remaining needs. This portfolio has been a bulwark against recent rising energy costs.

The decision to raise rates is never taken lightly. It's made by a board of fellow cooperative members who understand what a cost increase will mean to you. If you have any questions about our work to keep your rates low, please call or stop by our office. I hope you and your family can enjoy the holidays together. Have a merry Christmas and a happy New Year. 🎄

**RUSTON OGBURN**  
GENERAL MANAGER

# Co-op family lights up Christmas spirit

**EMILY BAER**, DIRECTOR OF MARKETING AND MEMBER SERVICES

**THROUGHOUT THE HOLIDAY SEASON AND** the days leading up to Christmas, “it’s the most wonderful time of the year” can be interpreted in many ways. For the Zimmerman family, it means getting up from the dinner table, looking out the window of their home at 474 Barnett Road in Boswell and seeing a long line of cars enjoying their light display.

When cooperative member Scott Zimmerman was a kid, his father, Denny, had a display with animated props, which are essential because they add shape and form to the lights. In December 2014, Scott, and his middle daughter, Addison (then age 6), were watching a TV show about families who displayed large “blinky-flashy” Christmas light displays. Addison asked her dad if they could do something similar at their home. Scott remembered how he enjoyed helping his father with the display, and with some online research, he was ready to tackle the challenge.

Scott, his wife, Elisha, and their three children set up the props, and it takes a lot of patience and coordination to get everything working on cue. One of the biggest challenges is programming the light sequences on the computer. It’s comparable to choreographing a dance recital and is the artistic part of the process. Each prop has its own timing. This can be as broad as placing



**CHRISTMAS SPIRIT:** The Zimmerman family enjoys helping the community get into the holiday spirit by setting up a large musical light show at their home in Boswell.

**“We never get tired of hearing the songs and sharing a little Christmas spirit with our community.”**

an effect on a whole prop or as detailed as commanding each individual LED light. Music for the light show is broadcast on a low-power FM transmitter, which visitors can tune into at 100.1 on their car radio.

Another challenge is simply finding the time to do everything. It takes between eight to 10 hours to program a typical two-and-a-half-minute song, depending on how much Scott can borrow from a shared sequence or repeat portions of the same sequence, like a chorus in a song.

“It takes two or three days to set up and typically one or two days to tear down, depending on how many friends and family members come to help and depending on the weather,” Scott says. “There have been plenty of pinched fingers and sore backs, but thankfully no one has been

seriously hurt.”

Included in the display are approximately 14,000 pixels, the name used for the lights in the displays, and dozens of extension cords. Each pixel is individually controlled and has a red, blue, and green combination LED in it that can produce 16 million different colors.

The pixels are in strings and are fed in such a way that each one passes data down the line to the next pixel. Sometimes, a pixel does not relay the data and that causes a whole string to go out. However, unlike regular Christmas lights, you can’t just go and pull a light out of the strand to replace it. It requires cutting the pixel from the strand and soldering/splicing in a new one. Replacing pixels is a tedious task involving a soldering iron, solder, hand tools and heat shrink. This is especially true if the bad pixel is in a hard-to-reach location, like the roof. In this case, it is easier to bring the whole strand down on the ground to make repairs, rather than doing it there.

Plastic clips that come with the lights are typically used to hang the light strands. This year, Scott will be using 3-D printed clips to attach PVC pipes loaded with lights to the downspouts of the house.

“All our props have been built by us,” Scott says. “Most of them use a wood frame with a piece of heavy-gauge



**PIXELS COMING TOGETHER:** Somerset REC member Scott Zimmerman, far left, sets up the largest prop for the family's annual Christmas light show, a 25-foot mega tree, at left. Above, the finished display dazzles visitors. The entire light show is on a 22-minute loop that repeats throughout the evening.

Zimmerman family as they celebrate the ninth year of their holiday light display, which opened Dec. 1 and runs through Jan. 1, depending on weather and equipment. The current show schedule is 5 to 10 p.m. Sunday to Thursday and 5 to 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday. Peak nightly traffic is between 7 and 9 p.m.

plastic sheeting. The sheeting is drilled with thoughtfully placed holes that hold the pixels. Others, like the mega tree, use plastic strips held tight with bungee cords to hold the pixels."

The largest prop is the 25-foot mega tree, which has a base made from a discarded trampoline hoop. Each of the 32 strips has 100 pixels in it for a total count of 3,200. The star on top of the tree is 36 inches wide and has 270 pixels in it. The pixel board on the front of the house is the second largest at 8-by-16-feet and has 4,608 pixels.

Candy cane props and other items purchased from box stores are also included in the light display. Each one contains a custom-designed circuit board. Some of the control boards were bought pre-assembled, but quite a few were designed and built by Scott based on patterns shared by other Christmas light enthusiasts. All props are controlled by one computer over wired and wireless networks. The software used to choreograph and run the show is called xLights Sequences.

With so many lights, you may be wondering about the display's impact on the family's December electric bill, but Scott doesn't notice much of a difference.

"Maybe an additional \$20," he says, "but 99% of the lights in the show are LEDs and use very little power compared to older incandescent lamps. If all the lights were turned on at the same time, the power used would be equivalent to that of a small water heater, approximately 3,000 watts."

Kick off the holiday season with the

Also, there is more traffic on the weekends and the week leading up to Christmas. The display consists of a loop of songs that runs about 22 minutes, then repeats. There is no charge for visitors, and the family does not accept donations.

"We love to go out and watch the show with visitors while our kids hand out candy canes," Elisha says. "Scott has been known to sit outside on the porch and watch folks enjoy our work. We never get tired of hearing the songs and sharing a little Christmas spirit with our community."

To check the status and operating schedule of the light display, search "Zimmerman Family Lights" on Facebook. If you do plan to attend, please be courteous of other visitors by turning off your headlights when parked. Also, be respectful of neighboring properties by refraining from pulling into driveways or onto lawns. 🚫

**Donate to our Co-op Cheer program!**

For the last several years, members of the co-op have generously donated new, unwrapped toys, stuffed animals and blankets that would then be donated to local school districts, nursing homes and organizations in our community.

After reaching out to local nursing homes, the focus of the Co-op Cheer program this year will be to collect items for nursing home residents. Please see below a list of items requested:

- Zip-up sweatshirt
- Thin sweater
- Lap blanket
- Body wash
- After shave
- Tissues
- Shampoo
- Chapstick
- Hand lotion
- Puzzles
- Deck of cards
- Word search book
- Holiday decorative items
- Candy variety
- Snack items
- Slippers
- Socks with rubber grips
- Flannel/fleece pants

*Thanks for participating in spreading the cheer this holiday season! Donated items will be dispersed to nursing homes served by the co-op and other nursing homes in our community.*

Donations accepted through January 11th. All donations can be dropped off at the cooperative office.

As a thank-you for participating, members that donate items will be entered to win 1 of 5 \$50 bill credits available.

# New face to welcome co-op members

**DANIELE ANDERSON JOINED THE CO-OP** family on Oct. 17 as an office assistant. She was previously employed as a customer service representative at Citizens National Bank in Meyersdale, and more recently, as a dental hygienist since 2016.

Her responsibilities include greeting members who enter the co-op office, answering the phone, processing mail payments and helping members with over-the-counter sales.

She is a 2010 graduate of Meyersdale Area High School. In 2014, she graduated from Allegheny College of Maryland (ACM), where she earned her first associate degree in business administration. Then, in 2016, she graduated with her second



associate degree in dental hygiene from ACM.

She lives in Meyersdale with her

husband, Tyler. In her spare time, Daniele is a Pampered Chef consultant and enjoys spending time with friends and family, especially her nephews, Landon and Jackson.

“As a dental hygienist, I enjoyed meeting new people,” she says. “I feel this will be another opportunity that will allow me to meet new people and get to know the cooperative members.

“My grandfather is Wayne Sechler. He was elected to the cooperative board and served as a director for 30 years,” she adds. “I’ve always heard him talk positively about the co-op, and I look forward to serving the membership.”

We’re glad to have you, too. Best of luck, Daniele! 🍀

## DIRECTOR ELECTIONS

The 84th annual meeting of members of Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative (REC), Inc., will be held Thursday, May 25, 2023.

Somerset REC is proud to have a board of committed and knowledgeable directors who play a vital role in the decision-making process at the cooperative.

Listed below are the three director positions open for election in 2023 at the annual meeting. Directors elected are required to serve a three-year term. The districts up for election are:

- ▶ District 2: Allegheny, Juniata, Quemahoning and Stonycreek townships
- ▶ District 3: Donegal, Jefferson, Jenner and Lincoln townships
- ▶ District 7: Fairhope, Greenville, Larimer, Northampton and Southampton townships

If you are interested in running for one of these positions, your primary residence must be in one of these areas and you must be a member in good standing. Please submit your specific district request to the cooperative, in writing, no later than Feb. 1, 2023.

## Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays from your local rural electric cooperative.

### Directors

Jerry L. Engle	Russ A. Hillegas	Joshua C. Sechler
Lowell L. Friedline	Floyd T. Lehman	P. Timothy Vought
Carl A. Hay Jr.	Harvey W. Reckner Jr.	C. Ben Waltermire

### Employees

Daniele Anderson	Dave Dudak	Jessica Maurer	Roger Shroyer
Kathy Armstrong	Wendy Durica	Alex Mazanowski	Tanner Smith
Emily Baer	Carter Engleka	Andy Nicklow	Kara Specht
Adam Barnes	Gary Gindlesperger	Ruston Ogburn	Tim St. Clair
Roy Bittner	Doug Glessner	Andrew Phillippi	Phil Stern
Drew Boyer	Glenn Gross	Zack Pritts	Steve Tataleba
Jeff Brant	Jonathan Hillegas	Casey Pyle	Garrett Thomas
Kristi Burkett	John Hochard	Phil Read	Ken Walker
Don Cober	Mindy Huzsek	Tony Retassie	Rick Yoder
Brock Crawford	Brian Marker	Bryan Schrock	Tawnya Zorn
Jessi Ditzler	Phil Martz Jr.	Sam Shoher	

The office will be closed Dec. 23 and 26 for Christmas and Jan. 2 for New Years.