

# 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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### Office Hours

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

### Emergency Outage Number

814-445-4106  
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## From the General Manager



## Summer season of preparation and cooperation

By Ruston Ogburn

THE DRY summer we had — until the remnants of Hurricane Ida drenched our area — allowed us to have a productive construction season. While service crews spent a lot of time tracking down blinks, the construction crews were able to strengthen difficult-to-reach areas without having to contend with mud or snow. Beyond this work, several crews also helped other cooperatives with storm restoration.

Our dry summer months were not shared by our neighboring electric cooperatives in northern Pennsylvania, where a steady stream of storms swept through from June to August. Crews from Somerset helped respond to two of the larger storms in that time. Helping these cooperatives is not only the right thing to do, but it also strengthens our connections with these cooperatives and ensures our requests for help will be met when future storms hit our area.


Sharing of crews during large storms significantly improves system restoration. It is common to double the number of crews through this process. As I write this, electric cooperatives in Louisiana have hundreds of lineworkers from neighboring cooperatives helping to rebuild their systems after Hurricane Ida. Their rebuild will take weeks but without the additional help, it would have taken months.

This cooperation among cooperatives, which is one of the seven cooperative principles, extends beyond storm response. The nearly 900 electric distribution cooperatives in the

U.S. all share the common goal of providing our members with safe, reliable and efficient electric service. I have been fortunate to develop relationships with dozens of other cooperative employees across the country. I often discuss new ideas with other cooperative employees in the state and across the country to get their input. Because we are more like teammates than competitors, these discussions have proven to be invaluable for us to find the best solutions for our members.

Somerset also benefits from state and national cooperatives. Most significantly, we pool together with 12 other cooperatives in Pennsylvania and one in New Jersey to own generation resources and purchase electricity through the PJM Interconnection market. This purchasing power helps to keep our rates low even though our number of members per mile is a small fraction of large utilities. Additionally, we use technical and financial software and tools provided by cooperatives focused on electric cooperatives. These tools align with our business model to provide member-focused solutions without having to “reinvent the wheel.”

We pull these parts together to provide the best possible service to our members as efficiently as we can. As the rains of Ida reminded us, we must continually prepare for what comes next. The nationwide resources behind your cooperative help us to do this.

As always, please let me know of any questions about our preparation or anything else. 

## Practicing wellness for people, animals and the planet

By Emily Baer

ON THE outskirts of Friendsville, Md., on Humberson Road, live cooperative members Jason Donahue and Alea McClintock-Donahue, along with their two children, Irelynn and Rooney. Jason and Alea have a hobby farm, known as Yorkie Acres Farm, where they have been bringing their ideas and dreams to life for the last seven years.

At Yorkie Acres Farm, you will find not only two observation beehives, a pollinator garden and a variety of animals but also an unusual looking structure known as a yurt. A yurt is a round, tent-like structure that was traditionally used as the portable dwelling of nomadic cultures of Central Asia. The yurt located at Yorkie Acres Farm is available for overnight stays. The couple also take guests on farm tours and are working on opening a farm store and apothecary herb shop.

“Jason and I both love to do farm education and discuss sustainable living,”



**PEACE GARDEN:** Bricks are strategically placed in the shape of a peace sign in the pollinator garden, where Alea can be found harvesting wildflowers, sunflowers and herbs, such as cornflower and calendula, shown above.



**FARMHOUSE:** Jason Donahue and Alea McClintock-Donahue pose with their son, Rooney, and daughter, Irelynn, near the Peace Garden in front of their home. The couple's biggest goal is to promote wellness for people, animals and the planet.

Alea says. “We are getting a lot of people from the Pittsburgh, Baltimore and Washington, D.C., areas. People who live in cities often don’t have much exposure to this type of lifestyle, and they enjoy seeing where our products come from, how our animals are raised and, more important, that small farms are vital to our local communities. We encourage buying from farmers’ markets, farm-share co-ops or directly from the farmers to support these hard-working families.”

If you’re looking for a unique overnight stay, their yurt is just that. The 20-foot structure is equipped with a king-sized bed, futon, coffee/tea bar, water cooler with hot water, air conditioning for hot nights and space heaters for cold nights, a table with four chairs, and a front-door view of the sunrise and pastures. A photo from 1934 hangs on the wall and depicts baptisms taking place in the stream behind the yurt.

There is also a pavilion available that features a kitchenette with a mini-convection oven and a refrigerator as well as a fireplace with nearby lounge chairs that are just right for fireside evenings.

Sticks for roasting marshmallows are also kept on hand. The bath house has a vanity for hand-washing, a composting toilet and a rain-water shower.

After explaining about the yurt and the photo of the baptisms, Alea notes that “there are a lot of people in the area who have a connection to this property. We love opening our farm up to people and by doing that, we get to hear all these wonderful stories. It’s interesting for us to still appreciate the past, while we continue to do what we’re doing now and planning for the future. [We’re] connecting the past, present and future. It’s been really special.”

In the pastures of Yorkie Acres Farm, you will find several types of heritage-breed animals. Heritage breeds are traditional livestock breeds that were raised by our forefathers. They were generally raised in a particular place for a certain purpose. Many of these breeds are in danger of becoming extinct.

The animals at Yorkie Acres Farm include Jacob and Scottish Blackface sheep, a mixed herd of goats, Scottish Highland cows, various chickens, and guineas. Arguably the most important

non-human on the farm is Bowie, an 8-month-old English shepherd. Bowie is like a hired farmhand when it comes to rounding up the other animals. Just give a whistle, and she's there to do the job.

While the animals mostly graze on non-certified organic hay and pasture, the Donahues supplement their livestock feed with spent beer grains from Laurel Highlands Brewing in Uniontown. It offers better nutritional absorption than most feed, and the couple believes the grains enhance the flavor of their lamb. In the coming year, they hope to offer retail cuts of lamb in their farm store.

"I grew up in Uniontown, and Alea grew up around Ohiopyle and has always lived near the woods, but neither of us ever had a farm or animals so we just jumped in," Jason says. "It's a great experience for us, and even better to share it with our children."

Alea practiced primary care as a family nurse practitioner in Garrett County, Md., for eight years before taking a leap of faith to follow her true passion. Last year when their son was born, she made the decision to stay at home and focus on the farm and future herb shop. She also has a doctorate and has received certifications in herbalism.

"My passion has always been in

herbalism and holistic and natural health. I love the farm, and I'm very passionate about the animals, planet health, helping the bees and making a good environment for pollinators," Alea says. "I think this has been really fun for me to figure out all these ways to combine my passions and still help people, animals, and the environment."

Next to the pasture is a beautiful pollinator garden named the Peace Garden. This pollinator-friendly space is one of her favorite spots on the farm. Earlier this year, she planted pollinator-friendly plants that are multi-use, meaning they are not only great for pollination, but also great for medicinal use. Along with medicinal herbs, such as calendula, there are wildflowers, sunflowers and other herbs, including chamomile, lemon balm and yarrow, in the Peace Garden.

Alea states that while natural remedies can be effective, in some cases, pharmaceutical medicine is necessary. She enjoys educating people that both methods can be used. It doesn't have to be strictly one or the other.

"With my medical background and experience, it makes me more aware that there does need to be a balance," she explains. "One of my long-term hopes is to create a space where people



**YORKIE ACRES FARM:** The farm in Friendsville, Md., is home to numerous animals, including goats, Scottish Highland cows and Bowie, an English shepherd. Solar panels can also be found on the rooftop of the barn, a southern-facing structure that is an ideal location for their placement.

can come and talk to me about more natural ways to do things. They can then take this information back to their primary care provider and discuss options. Everybody is different, and it's important to recognize what is safe for each situation."

In addition to natural health and wellness for people, she is also exploring natural health for animals.

"I think Jason and I make a great team," she says. "He understands numbers and the business side of things, and I am good at marketing and coming up with the ideas. I'm also realizing that I have to be gentler on myself. I've never stopped learning and am always setting deadlines for myself. Living on the farm, we've had the opportunity to slow down, enjoy our family and create our own business at our own pace while we watch our dreams come to life."

Side note: In November 2017, the couple installed a 7.9-kilowatt solar setup. They generate surplus five to six months out of the year and can say they are somewhat energy self-sufficient by having their own solar interconnection with the cooperative.

If you'd like to reserve an overnight stay in the yurt, you can check availability at [airbnb.com](https://www.airbnb.com) by searching for Yurt @ Yorkie Acres Farm. You can also follow the vision and grand opening of the herb shop, Herbal Earth Apothecary, on Facebook or book a farm tour. 🌿



**HERB SHOP:** Alea McClintock-Donahue, owner of Herbal Earth Apothecary, showcases a loose-leaf herbal tea blend. Other products include a variety of herbal salves, honey, wool dryer balls and more.

**Red White and Breakfast**

Are you interested in keeping the voice of electric cooperatives alive in the political process for topics such as broadband, solar and future elections? If so, we'd love for you to join us for a brief discussion and breakfast!

**When: Monday, October 11, 2021**  
**Time: 8:30 AM - 10:00 AM**  
**Where: Somerset Rural Electric Community Room**  
 223 Industrial Park Rd, Somerset, PA 15501

Please RSVP by calling 814-445-4106 by October 7 if you plan to attend.

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\*Federal law requires us to use our best efforts to collect and report the name, mailing address, occupation and name of employer of individuals whose contributions exceed \$200.



SUMMER CREW: Throughout the summer months, interns Preston Foor, left, Nathan Smith, center, and Cole Blubaugh helped to maintain the cooperative's rights-of-way.

## Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Old, uninsulated and improperly installed exterior doors can waste energy and money.

Shut the door on wasted energy by weather stripping and sealing all exterior doors. If you have an old exterior door, consider replacing it with a newer, energy efficient model.

Source: [energy.gov](http://energy.gov)

