

# 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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## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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### Vice President

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**Ruston Ogburn  
General Manager**

### Staff

**Gary Gindlesperger,**  
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**Douglas E. Glessner,**  
*Manager of Outside Operations*

**Jonathan Hillegas,**  
*Director of Finances*

**Emily Baer,**  
*Director of Marketing and Member Services*

**Elizabeth Morocco,**  
*Executive Assistant*

**Phil Stern,**  
*Manager of Metering*

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

**Emergency Outage Number**  
814-445-4106  
800-443-4255

## From the General Manager



## Earning thanks

By Ruston Ogburn

THE FALLING temperatures and changing leaves mark our entrance into the season of “thanksgiving.” Each year at this time, families and friends come together to give thanks for countless things in their lives. As a famous American once said on another topic, it is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this. Here at Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative, not only do we give thanks, but we also do our best to earn your thanks.

Reliability always ranks at the top of our priorities because it is the most important thing for our members. Outages over the past year have been lower than the last five years, but “blinks” have been unusually high. Drier weather has helped to reduce outages, but it appears that our focus on right-of-way clearing has also benefited reliability. Our crews and contractors cleared nearly 300 miles of lines over the last year. Each cleared mile of line pays dividends for years to come through better reliability to the members along those lines and lower costs for all members.

The number of power “blinks” this year has increased significantly from previous years. Tracking down these issues is one of the hardest parts of maintaining a power system. Our method for identifying areas impacted by an issue has traditionally involved flagging devices on the lines to identify the problem areas. Over the past several months, we have been working to more precisely find the blinks that occur based on the daily meter data that we have. The early results show

promise, and we will continue to refine this process until we can track these issues as proactively as possible.

Many members find these blinks to be more frustrating than outages at times because they tend to take longer to resolve, even though the actual time without power is much less. Nearly every blink is caused by a temporary problem (a falling branch, wild animals, lightning, etc.), which our control equipment recognizes. The equipment is used to stop the flow of power to prevent further damage, and will then reconnect the power to maintain service as much as possible. This design prevents larger outages, but the resulting power blinks can lead to digital clocks blinking and member frustration. As noted above, we have increased our focus in this area to mitigate this frustration.

High reliability and low cost can only be achieved over the long term by safe, well-trained employees. Safety always starts with the individual, but everyone here also has the responsibility of looking after their fellow employees, our members and their property, and the general public. We are fortunate to have a culture that understands the importance of general respect for those around us, which shows itself in the workmanship and pride in getting the job done right and safely.

As always, if you have any thoughts on better ways for us to earn your thanks, please call or stop by to let me know. Happy Thanksgiving. 

# Cooperative members honor the fallen

By Emily Baer

ON THE outskirts of the Flight 93 National Memorial along Route 30 in Somerset County is an emotionally moving, newly constructed, 10-acre memorial known as Patriot Park.

Patriot Park is a place to honor the sacrifices made by service men and women of the United States military, who fought in the Global War on Terror (GWOT).

One month after the acts of terrorism on Sept. 11, 2001, former President George W. Bush stated, “The attack took place on American soil, but it was an attack on the heart and soul of the civilized world. And the world has come together to fight a new and different war, the first, and we hope the only one, of the 21st century — a war against all those who seek to export terror, and a war against those governments that support or shelter them.”

Twenty years later, we are still fighting this war.

Since the initial Sept. 11, 2001 attack, millions of Americans have served in the military in the effort to rid the world of terrorism. Thousands



**FIELD OF HEROES:** This is one of many storyboards that detail the courage and sacrifice of local veterans who lost their lives while fighting in the Global War on Terror.



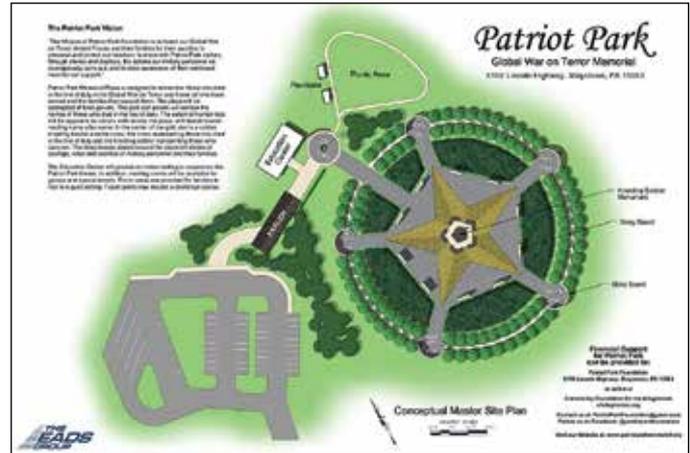
**AMERICAN FLAGS:** More than 7,000 American flags are on display to honor the American service men and women who died after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001.

have lost their lives, and many more have suffered severe and debilitating injuries. Patriot Park is designed as a place to remember those who served and to express our gratitude.

From a vision that started more than six years ago, Patriot Park has evolved into a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that was established on Sept. 14, 2015. The park opened to the public and started welcoming visitors on Sept. 3, 2021. Because of its proximity, Patriot Park is a great additional stop when visiting the

Flight 93 National Memorial.

As you walk the short, manicured trail through the woods into the park, you will start to see some flags. The Field of Heroes holds more than 7,000 American flags, each representing an American service man or woman who died serving during the last 20 years, including the 13 souls recently taken in Kabul. Storyboards stand in front of the Field of Heroes, sharing the stories of local veterans and giving some background and detail about just a few



**PATRIOT PARK DIRECTORS:** The Patriot Park Foundation Board of Directors is a group of co-op members, retired military personnel and business owners in the community. The group makes decisions that pay tribute to the service members who lost their lives in the ongoing Global War on Terror.

**VISION:** Patriot Park’s future site plan includes an education center, a kneeling soldier monument in a five-star memorial, and a picnic area with pavilions.

of the lives the flags behind the boards represent.

According to U.S. Department of Defense figures, more than 7,000 lives have been lost and more than 50,000 service members have been injured in the war on terror.

“I think it is very moving and important to realize that each flag represents a service man or woman lost by the U.S. military,” says cooperative member Randall Musser, founder and president of the Patriot Park Foundation.

The foundation consists of a board of directors whose members make decisions about Patriot Park. These directors are cooperative members, retired military personnel and business

owners in our community.

As specified in its bylaws, the Patriot Park Foundation’s specific purpose is to achieve the following:

- ▶ **HONOR** those who gave the ultimate sacrifice, as well as all veterans of the global war on terror.
- ▶ **INSPIRE** patriotism through stories and military displays.
- ▶ **EDUCATE** visitors about the GWOT and the sacrifices service personnel and their families have made and continue to make.
- ▶ **SUPPORT** the unique needs of the GWOT veterans and their families by partnering with other organizations that provide support services.
- ▶ **ENHANCE** the experience for

the large number of people who visit the nearby Flight 93 National Memorial.

“We hope that we inspire all who visit the park to honor our fallen and their families through patriotism and by helping us continue to share their bravery and stories with the world,” says Katlin Rodriguez, the park’s media advisor.

In the coming years, the Patriot Park Foundation plans to expand and build a more permanent memorial where visitors can pay their respects. These plans include a Gold Star Plaza, made from bricks engraved with the name of each fallen service member during the war on terrorism, an education center, and a picnic area. Currently, the foundation is also seeking partnerships with businesses, other foundations, and service organizations, such as the American Legion, Eagles, Lions clubs, and VFW posts.

Patriot Park will be closing in mid-November for the winter and will reopen in late April or early May 2022. Normal operating hours are 9 a.m. to dusk. If interested in visiting, please go their website, patriotparkfoundation.org, or their social media pages, Facebook — Patriot Park Foundation and Instagram patriotpark\_foundation, for current operating hours.

A short video about Patriot Park can also be found on YouTube at [youtu.be/\\_MpuNIC6J18](https://youtu.be/_MpuNIC6J18).





**HELPING HAND:** Emily Baer, left, Somerset REC's director of marketing and member services, stands with Pat Schmidt, a well-known helping hand in the community of Friendsville. Somerset REC delivered and donated food items received during Member Appreciation Day to First Christian Church and the city hall in Friendsville. Another truck load of food was donated to the St. Francis Sharing and Caring Food Pantry in Hollsopple, Pa.



**DONATION:** Cooperative member Gary Jenkins, right, helps Somerset REC's Emily Baer with food organization and distribution in his community.

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

For the past few years, the cooperative has invited members to donate a new, unwrapped toy that would then be donated to local school districts and organizations in our community. This year, the focus of the Co-op Cheer program will be providing children with a *sense of warmth and security*. For many families, a new blanket and stuffed animal is a luxury. The cooperative is asking for donations of new blankets and new stuffed animals. Donated items will be dispersed to children in communities we serve.

**Starting now until December 10th, all donations can be dropped off at the cooperative office.**

**Donating members will be entered to win 1 of 5 \$25 electric bill credits.**

*Thanks for participating in spreading the cheer this holiday season!*

