

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

Wayne E. Sechler, 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

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



Getting back to normal

By Ruston Ogburn

AFTER THE strangeness of 2020, this past year allowed us to get back to normal in many ways. Several of our processes have changed, some for the better and some that are still being refined.

For example, our front office reopened to the public in May 2021, but nearly 15% more members are now using our automated pay options to avoid having to come into the office or mail a check. Additionally, nearly 2,000 members are using paperless billing, which saves the cooperative money on printing and postage. We plan to thank our members who currently use paperless billing and any new members who sign up for this service by applying a \$5 credit to each paperless account in early 2022.

In October, the board of directors discussed our capital credits retirement plan and decided to return nearly \$400,000 to our members this year. This retirement, which applies to members who had electric service in 1997 and 1998, continues our long tradition of returning capital credits to our members each year.

Operationally, we have been fortunate. We avoided significant disruptions from COVID-19 on our employees and weather-related issues that cause widespread outages. Our lineworkers tracked down many issues causing “blinks” this year. I’m happy to report they also found the bad piece of equipment that was causing the unusually high number of “blinks” in the Clay Run area.

The number of substations, the length of our lines, and the countless trees in the vicinity of our lines define our focus on continuous maintenance and rebuilding. The past year has allowed us to get back to normal on this work. We know that major storms will come to our area at some point, and we have prepared for these disruptions by taking steps to ensure we have sufficient materials available despite the significant supply-chain disruptions we continue to experience.

Even though we have seen price increases for materials that were unimaginable a few years ago, we plan to keep rates steady through 2022. However, as we monitor the impact of inflation in 2022, I will keep you updated with our financial forecasts for the coming years through this column.

Finally, thank you to the cooperative employees for their tireless work over the past year. Getting back to normal starts with each of them. I feel honored to work with such a committed group of men and women who understand why we come to work each day. Through long hours and in all conditions, our employees remain focused on providing safe, reliable and efficient service to our members.

As always, please give me a call or stop by the office if you have anything you’d like to discuss. I hope you and your family can enjoy the holidays together. Have a merry Christmas and a happy New Year. ❁

Cooperative provides tuition assistance for higher education

By Emily Baer

TWELVE years ago, the Somerset County Foundation for Higher Education (SCFHE) was established to support and encourage higher education for county residents. The SCFHE has remained strong in providing scholarships to residents interested in pursuing a post-secondary education.

While Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) has been participating in post-secondary education assistance for many years, the foundation took over distributing the money and reviewing scholarship applications in 2016.

Suzanne Funa is the executive director of SCFHE.

“At a time of unprecedented interruptions for all schools, including colleges,” she says, “the education system has persevered and adapted to keep programs intact and as consistent as possible.”

The foundation board, comprised of 16 members and Funa, meets bimonthly to discuss assisting students financially. These students have the option to attend Clarion University’s Associate of Science in Nursing Program, Allegany College of Maryland’s Early College Program



CO-OP ASSISTANCE: These students are recipients of financial assistance for the fall semester. Front row, from left: Allison King, Abigail Younkin, Cassie Fisher and Brenda Miller. Back row, from left: Melissa Mardis, Courtney Smith, Jenna Fleegle, Julie Cochran, Keri Pritts, Coleman Whipkey and Mary Jane Hudson.

in local high schools, the Somerset County Technology Center, and Pennsylvania Highlands Community College.

Cooperative members who are enrolled in one of these programs may be eligible for tuition assistance. Eligibility requirements include:

- ▶ Students applying for a Somerset REC tuition assistance scholarship should be a full- or part-time student.
- ▶ Students must live in the cooperative’s service area or be

a dependent (pursuant to IRS guidelines) of a parent or guardian who is served by Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

- ▶ All scholarship recipients must have at least a 2.0 GPA to receive a scholarship.
- ▶ Applicants do not need to prove financial need.
- ▶ Applicants must be enrolled in post-secondary education at a college or university at the Somerset County Education Center (includes Pennsylvania Highlands Community College – Somerset and Clarion University – Somerset) and Somerset County Technology Center (excludes early college courses).

Currently, cooperative students who are eligible for our tuition assistance program receive \$150 per credit for the first four credits taken during the fall and spring semesters. In 2021, Somerset REC awarded \$8,050 in post-secondary tuition assistance and \$20,250 over the last six years. These tuition assistance scholarships are funded by the cooperative’s unclaimed capital credits, or escheat, fund.

In 2002, Somerset REC directors amended the bylaws to allow these unclaimed funds to remain with

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!



the cooperative and to be used for special cooperative purposes. A new bylaw provision provides that if the cooperative makes two attempts to deliver patronage capital refunds — once by mail to the last known address and the second by publication in either a newspaper or *Penn Lines* — and the funds remain unclaimed, they are then deemed a donation to the cooperative, which can use them for community development purposes, such as scholarships. Escheat money is also used to fund cooperative programs, such as Youth Tour, and to provide \$1,000 scholarships to high school seniors.

When asked for comment on the program, Funa replies with a smile: “We are so grateful for the ongoing support to area students in our community from Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative.” ❁



BOARD TOUR: Five Somerset REC directors take a break while touring the cooperative's service territory with Rus Ogburn, general manager, and Doug Glessner, operations manager, in October. The group visited three sites. The first stop was the Fort Hill substation to view the current setup, which faces a potential load increase from the Listonburg solar farm. Next, the directors stopped at a Columbia Gas site near Salisbury, which is a single-phase system that may be converted to a three-phase system. The round trip ended at Mountain Ridge Trails near Reels Corner, where new connections are being added for future campsites. Shown, from left, are Lowell Friedline, Ben Waltermire, Doug Glessner, Harvey Reckner, Joshua C. Sechler, Rus Ogburn and Russ Hillegas.



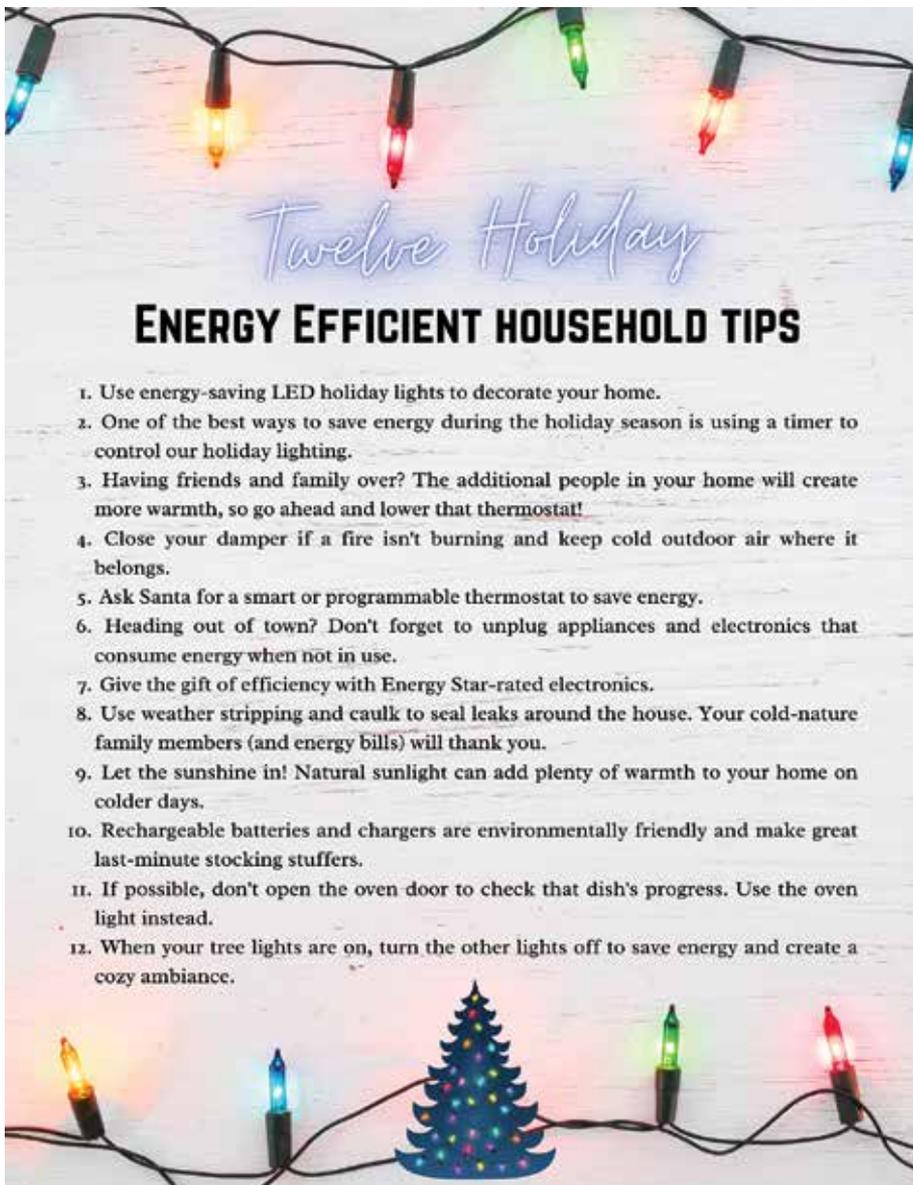
Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays from your local rural electric cooperative.

Directors

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

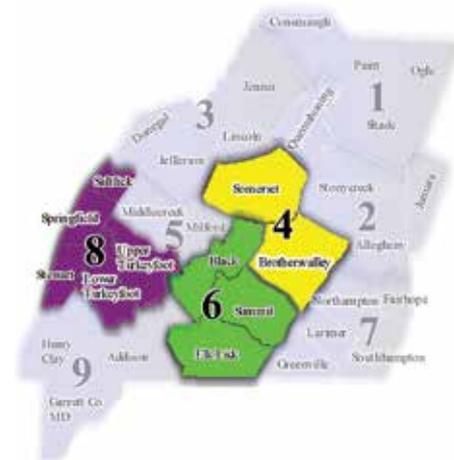
Employees

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



Twelve Holiday
ENERGY EFFICIENT HOUSEHOLD TIPS

1. Use energy-saving LED holiday lights to decorate your home.
2. One of the best ways to save energy during the holiday season is using a timer to control our holiday lighting.
3. Having friends and family over? The additional people in your home will create more warmth, so go ahead and lower that thermostat!
4. Close your damper if a fire isn't burning and keep cold outdoor air where it belongs.
5. Ask Santa for a smart or programmable thermostat to save energy.
6. Heading out of town? Don't forget to unplug appliances and electronics that consume energy when not in use.
7. Give the gift of efficiency with Energy Star-rated electronics.
8. Use weather stripping and caulk to seal leaks around the house. Your cold-nature family members (and energy bills) will thank you.
9. Let the sunshine in! Natural sunlight can add plenty of warmth to your home on colder days.
10. Rechargeable batteries and chargers are environmentally friendly and make great last-minute stocking stuffers.
11. If possible, don't open the oven door to check that dish's progress. Use the oven light instead.
12. When your tree lights are on, turn the other lights off to save energy and create a cozy ambiance.



2022 director districts up for election

THE 83RD ANNUAL meeting of members of Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative (REC), Inc., is scheduled for Thursday, May 26, 2022. The drive-thru event will be held at the Somerset REC main office.

Somerset REC is proud to have a board comprised 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 2022 at the annual meeting. Directors elected are required to serve a three-year term. The following districts are up for election:

- ▶ District 4: Brothersvalley and Somerset
- ▶ District 6: Black, Elk Lick and Summit
- ▶ District 8: Lower Turkeyfoot, Saltlick, Springfield, Stewart and Upper Turkeyfoot

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 to the cooperative, in writing, your request for the specific district no later than Feb. 1, 2022. ❁



Merry Christmas to our members!
Wishing you a bright holiday season
filled with family and friends.

The office will be closed
Friday, December 24th and Monday, December 27th.

We also look forward to spending another year of serving you.
Happy New Year...cheers to a healthy year!

THE OFFICE WILL BE CLOSED ON NEW YEARS EVE
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 31.
THE OFFICE WILL REOPEN ON
MONDAY, JANUARY 3, 2022.