

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
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800-443-4255

Email: e-mail@somersetrec.com
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Phil Stern,

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Office Hours

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

Emergency Outage Number

814-445-4106
800-443-4255

Guest Column



We remember

By Emily Baer

MANY OF you have heard the song, “Where Were You (When the World Stopped Turning)” by Alan Jackson, written just two months after the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001. As each year passes, fewer and fewer people seem to know what happened that day. On the 20th anniversary of that horrific and heroic day, some Somerset Rural Electric employees remember where they were and what they were doing at that moment, while others can’t because they were only a few years old.

The story of Flight 93 is an example of the cooperative spirit. Passengers and crew came together to take back control of the plane. The group came up with a plan, voted on it and then acted upon their plan. By working together toward a common goal, they saved countless lives.

On the morning of Sept. 11, 2001, Somerset REC crews were some of the first on the scene at the Flight 93 crash site. When the plane went down, it took out a three-phase power line that served eight residential homes, four seasonal cabins and one three-phase commercial building. Power was restored to residential members that evening. Your cooperative was later involved with hooking up temporary service to trailers housing personnel from the FBI, Pennsylvania State Police, state Department of Environmental Protection, Salvation Army and United Airlines. Approximately 10 days later, the co-op was allowed to go in and fix the original downed wire and restore power.

Throughout Jackson’s heartfelt song,

he expresses his own experience and emotions surrounding the attacks in New York City, Washington D.C., and Shanksville, Pa. Jackson focuses on where people were when the tragedy happened and how they may have reacted that day by asking a series of questions: “Did you go to a church and hold hands with some strangers ... stand in line to give your own blood? Did you just stay home and cling tight to your family? Thank God you had somebody to love.”

Fifteen of the current 42 full-time employees were working here at the time of the crash and are still serving you. Of the remaining 27 employees, some were still attending school or employed at other jobs, and some were only a few years old and in day care. Wherever these employees were 20 years ago, most remember the moment. They remember where they were. And they remember how they felt. The cooperative spirit continues by employing a group of strangers, working toward a common goal, to serve our membership.

It’s hard to believe 20 years have gone by since that fateful day. It is important to remember not only the passengers and crew who were on the plane, but also the many other individuals and organizations who helped in the aftermath. Their respect and compassion should also not be forgotten.

I, along with some of my co-workers, would like to reflect on what we were doing when the world stopped turning that September day (continued on page 12b). ☀

We remember: Employees reflect on September 11, 2001

By Emily Baer

I was a sixth-grade student at Shanksville-Stonycreek, where I was attending gym class and running the mile for the Presidential Fitness Test. It includes five events that measure muscular strength/endurance, cardiorespiratory endurance, speed, agility and flexibility.

While running laps around the outside of the basketball court, we heard a loud explosion, which sounded like it happened on the roof of the school.

Our gym teacher went to the high school office next door to report the issue. After reporting it, he told us that maintenance employees would check it out, and we could get back to completing our physical test. The bell rang, and it was time to go to art class.

Once I got into the art classroom, the teacher had the TV on, and we watched what was unfolding at the twin towers in New York City. It wasn't long before it was announced that a plane had crashed near Lambertsville, and as with all small towns, the word traveled fast.

I remember parents coming into the school without notice to get their children, while other students waited in the library for their moms or dads. After my mom picked up my brother and me, she was emotional, and I remember her saying how things could have been different.

If you are familiar with the original Flight 93 Memorial entrance off Buckstown Road/Skyline Drive, at the end of Skyline Drive, the road turned into a dirt road and opened into an old strip mine. Two and a half hours earlier, my school bus had turned around a few hundred yards from the crash site.

It was that tragic event that put Shanksville on the map. For months following the event, students at Shanksville received stuffed animals, cards, homemade knickknacks and more from other school districts across the United States, letting us know that others were thinking of us. My personal favorite keepsake is a heart-shaped pin that is handpainted with the American flag.

As with any major event that has happened in our lives, it's hard to forget how we felt in that moment. Employees at the cooperative reflect on their experience that day.

"I was working as a bank teller at First National Bank and took the day off because it was my son's birthday. I stepped outside to take things out to the car, and I heard an explosion. I thought my neighbors were setting off firecrackers, but knew it had to be something bigger. I live 22 miles from the Flight 93 National Memorial and heard the impact." — Elizabeth Morocco, Administrative Assistant

"I was a fourth-grade student at Meyersdale sitting in math class. I remember a lot of parents coming to pick their children up, but I stayed at the school because my mom is a nurse, and she couldn't leave the hospital." — Tanner Smith, Lineman

"Gus Kern, Barb Gindlesperger, and Bernice Dunmyer, who are retired co-op employees, and I were traveling by car to St. Louis, Mo., to attend a computer training seminar. I was really enjoying our conversation because I had only been working at the co-op for seven months, and now had the opportunity to get to know my co-workers on a different level. After a few hours of traveling, one of the ladies suggested turning the radio on, and that's when we heard about the attacks. At that time, only Gus had a cellphone. A few moments after we turned on the radio, we received a call from the general manager, telling us to turn around because no one knew what was going to happen next." — Wendy Durica, Work Order Clerk

"I was only a year and 11 months old when the attacks happened. Unfortunately, I don't remember anything, but my

grandfather worked as the operations manager at the co-op at the time, and my parents and I have talked about those few weeks after the attack." — Carter Engleka, Lineman

"I was at my previous job working in IT (information technology) at Berlin School District, and I had to go to Somerset Computer to purchase a power supply cord. I was listening to the radio and Howard Stern, who at the time was based in New York City. On the way to Somerset, they were reporting on the attacks while watching out their window. When the first tower was hit, everyone thought it was an accident and tragedy. I continued to listen, and they announced that a second plane hit and realized that this was intentional and not an accident. It was so interesting to hear the live broadcast. On my way back to the school, I noticed fire truck after fire truck leaving Somerset and heading east on Route 31. I was within a few minutes of the school when Howard Stern announced that somewhere near Shanksville another plane had crashed. When I got back to the school, it was chaos and panic. Kids were trying to leave, teachers were trying to keep everyone calm, and parents were calling in left and right. Cellphones weren't working, and we assumed it was because there were a lot of people trying to make calls to get in touch with loved ones. Later, I came to find out that they intentionally shut down the cell towers because they wanted to stop communication in case the terrorists were still trying to communicate. I remember the day very vividly." — Gary Gindlesperger, IT Manager

“I was a fourth-grade student at Shanksville. I felt the rumble sitting in class when the school shook. My dad was also a part of the Shanksville Fire Department at the time, so I remember him being involved there a lot.” — Sam Shoher, Lineman

“It was my first day at Highland Tank (near Shanksville) as a file organizer. I remember the phones went down, and everyone had the TV on and was watching it. My parents were trying to get through to me, but couldn’t. My grandparents finally got through and asked me to come home. I ended up staying, and they were very worried. The guys in the shop had stepped outside and saw the plane turn upside down right before the impact.” — Jessica Maurer, Billing Representative

“That day, I had worked for a little over a month at the Somerset USSCO Credit Union. We didn’t have a TV or any capabilities in the office to keep us up to date on what was going on that morning, so as the members would stop by, they would keep the tellers updated as to what was happening in New York City. A lady I worked with was from the Shanksville area, and she told us that her husband called and said a plane just crashed. The bank ended up closing at 2 p.m. that day so we could go home.” — Mindy Luteri, Office Assistant

“I was working in Lavale, Md., building a new Highland Harley Davidson shop when my boss received a phone call that a plane went down near Somerset.” — Jeff Brant, Meter Technician

“I was employed by Somerset Rural Electric on the right-of-way crew. My crew was trimming trees in the Markleton area when the operations manager at the time announced over the radio that a plane had just crashed near Shanksville. We were told to head back to the shop.” — Jonathan Hillegas, Finance Director

“I was mowing the fairway at hole No. 7 at the Indian Lake private golf course. My initial thought when I felt the shake and heard a loud noise was a boat crash on the lake. My supervisor came out of the clubhouse and told us what had happened and to go home to our families.” — Adam Barnes, Lineman

“September 11, 2001, started out just like any other day. Because several of the office staff were on their way to St. Louis, Mo., for training on our computer systems, there were only a few of us left in the office. I remember answering the phone and hearing the caller state that his power just went out and that he heard a noise so loud it sounded like an airplane had crashed. Many times, when we get a reported outage, the caller will say he heard a loud bang like a gunshot, so when I heard the words, ‘It sounded like an airplane crash,’ I thought it was just an exaggeration.

“I hung up with the member and reported the outage to the operations manager so we could get a crew on its way to respond to the outage. Soon after, our general manager at the time, Rich Bauer, came out to the front office and told us to turn

on the television. We watched in horror as the towers fell. Then, our crew that had gone to restore the outage radioed in and told us a plane *had* actually crashed near Shanksville.” — Tawnya Zorn, Operations Assistant

“I remember sitting in the living room and watching the news on TV with my mom. I was in the afternoon kindergarten class at Maple Ridge Elementary in Somerset, and they canceled school that day.” — Casey Pyle, Lineman

“I was in Springs, Pa., working for Asplundh cutting trees for Somerset REC for right-of-way maintenance. The neighbor closest to where we were working came running out of her house and invited us in to watch the news about the twin towers. We stood in her living room watching what was happening when it came across the TV about another plane crashing near Shanksville.” — Roger Shroyer, Meter Technician

“I remember being only a few months out of college, and had started at my first full-time place of employment, The Children’s Aid Home. I was driving to work that morning when the first plane hit the tower in New York City. I was listening to the radio in my car when the emergency announcement and news of the first plane crash came on, and I remember my very first thoughts being, ‘Oh goodness, this must be real, and someone is going to be in very big trouble.’ I was only a minute away from work, and when I got there, I went straight to my office. Staff were scattered around and talking with great concern when the second plane hit the other tower in New York City.

“At that time, some of the staff and children were gathered in the recreation room watching on live TV as the second plane hit, and I remember thinking about what a tragedy this day was going to be and feeling scared for what might come next. What came next was news of a third plane crashing only miles from Somerset and the loss of communications in our building and town. No outgoing or incoming calls. It was very scary, and I couldn’t even comprehend what was going on in our country, so I did the only thing I felt I could do: I went back to my office and started praying.” — Kristi Burkett, Billing Clerk 🌟



Member Appreciation Day

Friday, October 1, 2021
10 AM - 2 PM

Somerset REC Office
223 Industrial Park Road
Somerset, PA 15501



Join us for lunch!

We will be grilling hot dogs and kielbasa and offering other refreshments.

Please help our neighbors in need. We will be collecting non-perishable food donations for local food pantries. All donating members will be entered for a chance to win a \$50 bill credit!



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BE PREPARED BEFORE A STORM STRIKES

In the event of a power outage, be prepared by keeping the following items in an easy-to-find emergency supply kit.



■ WATER

Three-day supply, one gallon per person per day.



■ TOOLS

Flashlight, extra batteries, manual can opener, battery-powered or hand-crank radio, NOAA Weather Radio with tone alert.



■ FIRST AID KIT AND PRESCRIPTIONS

First aid supplies, hand sanitizer and at least one week's supply of prescriptions and medications for the family.

Learn more at www.ready.gov



AMERICA'S ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES

Source: American Red Cross, Federal Emergency Management Agency.