

# 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

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## Guest Column



# Why does your cooperative hold an annual meeting?

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

THE COUNTDOWN is on, and planning is underway for the cooperative's 83rd annual meeting. After much discussion and review, your board of directors has again decided on a drive-thru format for 2022.

When COVID-19 hit two years ago, there were many questions and uncertainties that came with planning such an event. Upon reflection, I believe that having to reinvent the wheel was a blessing in disguise.

Our last in-person annual meeting was held in 2019 at Seven Springs Mountain Resort, where we welcomed 273 members. In 2020, the cooperative hosted our first drive-thru event, accommodating 602 members, and in 2021, 730 members. These numbers speak for themselves when it comes to annual meeting preferences.

You've heard it before, "location, location, location." Changing the location of the annual meeting has had a positive impact on attendance since Somerset is more centrally located for the majority of our members than Seven Springs. Also, the convenience of staying in one's vehicle has been widely mentioned as a benefit to the drive-thru event.

The drive-thru format has certainly made us put on our thinking caps. While we are unable to offer entertainment, basket raffles, guest speakers and scholarship presentations, we are still able to provide you with an annual meeting report that communicates pertinent cooperative information, such as director nominee information, minutes

from the previous year's meeting, a financial report and a list of scholarship recipients. In a year with a contested election, ballots are handed out and collected in the drive-thru line, and a door prize will always be given as a thank-you for attending.

So why hold an annual meeting? In a cooperative form of business, it is the key to the entire operation. You, as a cooperative member, are an equal owner and have a responsibility to participate in the necessary democratic process through which the organization operates. Part of this process is the election of directors to represent you in most of the cooperative's management affairs. There are few local businesses or services that offer its benefactors an opportunity to participate in the selection of the leaders that guide it.

Also, an annual meeting must be held if the cooperative is going to continue to operate legally and successfully. I appreciate any ideas and feedback that can make this year's meeting even better than last year's event.

I encourage you to mark your calendars for Thursday, May 26, 2022, as your rural electric provider's drive-thru annual meeting, which will be held at the cooperative office. Annual meeting notices will be mailed the beginning of May with further details and information about the event. I would like to set a goal of at least 1,000 members in attendance this year. We look forward to seeing you in the drive-thru line! ❁

# Saving rural health care in your community

By Emily Baer

IN ONE of the most challenging health care times of our lives, there may have been concern with the type of health care one would receive during a hospital transition during a pandemic. I recently had the opportunity to ask Andy Rush, president of UPMC Somerset, some questions about the transition in our rural community. He is optimistic that the future of rural health care is here to stay and will continue to prove a benefit to those treated at UPMC Somerset.

**About UPMC:** A \$23 billion health care provider and insurer, Pittsburgh-based UPMC is inventing new models of patient-centered, cost-effective, accountable care. The largest nongovernmental employer in Pennsylvania, UPMC integrates 92,000 employees, 40 hospitals, 800 doctors' offices and outpatient sites, and a more than 4-million-member Insurance Services Division, the largest medical insurer in western Pennsylvania. In the most recent fiscal year, UPMC contributed \$1.7 billion in benefits to its communities, including more care to the region's most vulnerable citizens than any other health care institution, and paid more than \$900 million in federal, state, and local taxes. Working in close collaboration with the University of Pittsburgh Schools of the Health Sciences, UPMC shares its clinical, managerial, and technological skills worldwide through its innovation and commercialization arm, UPMC Enterprises, and through UPMC International.

*U.S. News* consistently ranks UPMC Presbyterian Shadyside among the nation's best hospitals in many specialties and ranks UPMC Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh on its Honor Roll of America's Best Children's Hospitals.

**Describe the transition from Somerset Hospital to UPMC Somerset.**

We were able to perform extremely well as a community hospital because



**CARING STAFF:** Andy Rush, president of UPMC Somerset, shown here with Amber Phillippi, director of inpatient services, strives to expand services and offer new ones while recruiting many new providers for the hospital's patients.

of the generosity of our community and commitment of our dedicated staff. As challenges arose with being a rural, independent hospital and with our desire to continue to elevate the care we were providing the community, our board of directors made the decision to explore partnerships with other health systems.

In 2017, the board of directors requested proposals to affiliate with a larger health care system that could enhance opportunities and access in the region. The objectives for an affiliation were to bring additional medical services to our community to prevent the need for travel for specialty care; to address significant financial pressures; to be supported and led by an innovative and transformational health care system; to offer our patients groundbreaking and compassionate medical care; and to partner with an organization that will enhance the quality of health and life in our community.

On Feb. 1, 2019, Somerset Hospital officially became UPMC Somerset to ensure a future of high-quality patient care for Somerset and surrounding

communities for generations to come. UPMC committed to invest at least \$45 million over 10 years to enhance services and upgrade facilities at UPMC Somerset.

**How many patients/beds can the hospital accommodate?**

The hospital has 111 licensed beds.

**How many employees does the hospital have?**

UPMC Somerset is one of the largest employers in Somerset County, with approximately 850 employees.

**Are there new departments or equipment coming to the area so patients don't have to travel as far for treatment?**

UPMC Somerset is consistently evaluating the health care needs of our community so we can continue to best serve those in our region. UPMC Somerset is increasing its cardiac electrophysiology capabilities. We recently opened an outpatient telemedicine center to increase access to specialty services, such as endocrinology and neurosurgery, and we anticipate adding many more services. UPMC Somerset is also looking forward to bringing a UPMC

Hillman Cancer Center to Somerset.

**What is the hospital's role in the community? Or has it lost the community touch?**

UPMC Somerset is an integral part of the community. One of the attractions of the affiliation with UPMC was its commitment to not only strengthen the health care, but to improve the communities it serves. UPMC Somerset has increased its support of many nonprofit organizations, as well as community initiatives. In 2020, UPMC Somerset contributed \$2.5 million in community benefits and dedicated \$1.3 million of that amount to care for those without means to pay. These contributions were part of UPMC's health system's \$1.7 billion in total community benefits. UPMC Somerset's annual economic impact to the region is \$101.4 million.

**Are there volunteer opportunities?**

Volunteers are valued members of our team. Our Volunteer Services Department assists prospective volunteers with finding work that matches their skills and interests with hospital needs.

**Are there current job opportunities?**

Yes, there are job opportunities in both clinical and nonclinical areas. All our job openings can be found on [Careers.UPMC.com](https://careers.upmc.com).

**Does UPMC have other office locations throughout Somerset County?**

One of the benefits of becoming UPMC is that we have been able to expand our physician offices. We have primary care offices in Berlin, Davidsville and Windber, as well as Johnstown in Cambria County.

**How did COVID-19 affect UPMC Somerset?**

There is not a hospital in the country that hasn't been impacted by COVID-19. UPMC Somerset is very fortunate to be part of a large health system. In the last 22 months, UPMC Somerset has quickly been able to operationalize a COVID-19 testing site, a COVID-19 unit, telemedicine services and a vaccination clinic. We have been able to share resources across UPMC's 40-hospital network in Pennsylvania, New York and Maryland. The remarkable staff at UPMC Somerset continues to work extremely hard to care for patients across the region.

**Has UPMC provided better medical technology for patients?**

Our affiliation with UPMC has allowed UPMC Somerset to expand services, offer new services and recruit many new providers. With these additions, we have also improved technology along the way. For example, our minimally invasive spine program that was launched after we affiliated with UPMC required state-of-the-art equipment, which

we acquired to be able to provide the service. Another example of this is our physician practices have integrated with UPMC's electronic medical record system. This is a major investment and great benefit of being part of a large system.

**Is telemedicine available?**

UPMC Somerset uses telemedicine in both inpatient and outpatient settings. For inpatient, UPMC Somerset has tele-stroke, tele-neurology, tele-ICU, tele-nephrology and tele-pulmonology. Telemedicine is a service that rapidly expanded because of COVID-19. Our physician practices offered video visits when patients were unable to come to the office. UPMC Somerset recently opened the UPMC Somerset Outpatient Telemedicine Center, which offers tele-endocrinology and tele-neurosurgery. We anticipate that we will add additional services to this center. Telemedicine is especially useful in rural communities, as it connects our patients with specialists without the need for the patient to have to travel.

**What services are currently offered at UPMC Somerset?**

- ▶ Primary care
- ▶ Orthopedics, including minimally invasive spine surgery
- ▶ Cardiology, including interventional cardiology and cardiac electrophysiology
- ▶ Pulmonology
- ▶ Gynecology
- ▶ Urology
- ▶ Otolaryngology
- ▶ Neurology
- ▶ General surgery
- ▶ Gastroenterology
- ▶ Pain management
- ▶ Advanced wound care
- ▶ Laboratory
- ▶ Radiology
- ▶ Physical, occupational and speech therapy
- ▶ Cardiac and pulmonary rehabilitation
- ▶ Occupational medicine

For more information about hospital services, visit [UPMCSomerset.com](https://UPMCSomerset.com). 🌟



UPMC SOMERSET: Shown here is the hospital's main entrance at 225 S. Center Ave. in Somerset. Equipped with 111 licensed beds, UPMC Somerset is one of the largest employers in Somerset County with approximately 850 employees, who are dedicated to treating patients and ensuring they have a great health care experience.



**CHRISTMAS CUDDLES:** Cooperative members and employees collected new blankets and stuffed animals as this year's focus for the Co-op Cheer program. Christmas Cuddles is a new program at Maple Ridge Elementary, where it provides children with a sense of warmth and security. Donations were also dropped off at Meadow View Nursing Home and Siemons Nursing Home. Shown, from left, are Danielle Bowers, coordinator at Maple Ridge, Kyran Baker-Smith, D.J. Wilson, Aubrey Baer, Colton Shumaker and Somerset REC employee Kara Specht.

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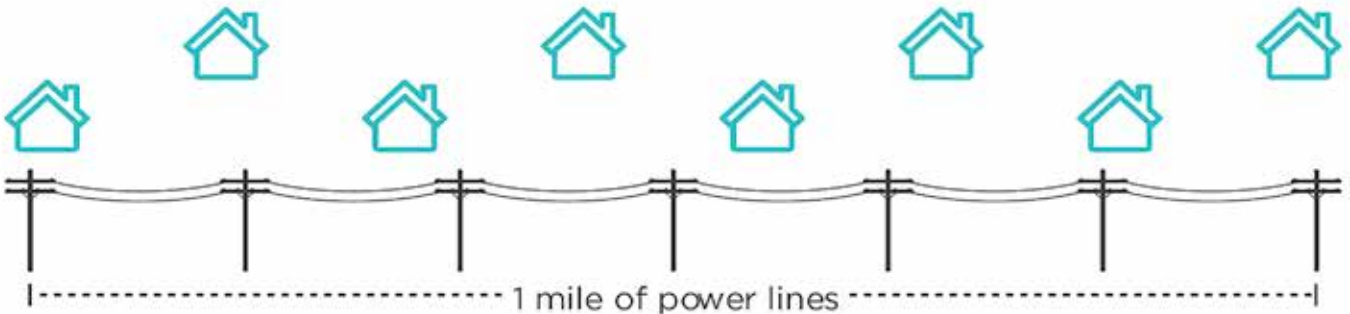
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