

# 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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**Jerry L. Engle, District 4**

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**Ruston Ogburn  
General Manager**

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*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



# Plan, prepare, execute and adjust

By Ruston Ogburn

THIS MONTH marks the two-year anniversary of the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, arguably the most disruptive event to hit our society in a generation. I mention this event only to note the opportunity to guide our future course by learning from it. Our philosophy at Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) is to set priorities, plan and prepare, and execute and adjust, as needed, to provide our members with safe, reliable electric service.

### Commitment to the highest priorities

I was fortunate as a young engineer to work directly with the people who are responsible for controlling the electric grid. Their jobs include periods of high stress and split-second decision making that impact tens of millions of people and huge segments of the U.S. economy. One of the many lessons I learned from them is that if everything is a high priority, nothing is a high priority.

Your cooperative chooses its priorities carefully. The No. 1 goal is to provide safe and reliable service to our members as efficiently as possible. Events impacting the electric grid around the country remind us of the importance of maintaining this focus. The threats of wildfires, ice storms, and cybersecurity issues remind us that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

### Preparation

Somerset REC never stops preparing. The type of preparation changes each season as we build, clear, plan, restock

or respond to weather events.

Over the past two years, the importance of this preparation becomes evident when deliveries get delayed, equipment and material costs rise well beyond budgeted projections and regulatory pressures increase wholesale electricity prices by double-digit percentages.

Fortunately, the years leading up to these problems were well-spent. Our inventory was stocked, and we had strong relationships with multiple suppliers. Our financial position reflected many years of living within our means and prioritizing our operations on strong infrastructure and core business needs. And most important, the cooperative culture — which reflects the culture of our founding members — creates the mindset in our employees that they can overcome challenges that stand in the way of providing service to our members.

### Execution

Plans and preparation make a great starting point. But when the time comes to handle difficult work, everyone must be ready to execute and adjust as needed. Recognizing what needs to be done and finding a way to do it ranks at the top of the list for our employees.

With this milestone in mind, we embrace the opportunity to recommit to providing the best service to our members. As always, if you have any questions about our preparation or execution, please stop by the office or give me a call. ☼

## Dolly Parton's Imagination Library available to our mini members

By Emily Baer

DOLLY PARTON'S Imagination Library was officially launched in Somerset County a few months ago by a community champion, St. Paul's United Church of Christ (UCC).

Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) saw this as an opportunity to be involved and support programs in our community. Over the next five years, your local rural electric cooperative will donate funding to ensure all children who sign up are guaranteed to receive books. With the cooperative's commitment, this has allowed the program to extend to our members in Friendsville, Maryland.

Registered children will receive one FREE high-quality, age-appropriate book by mail each month from birth until their fifth birthday. All children under the age of 5 living in Somerset County and Friendsville, Maryland, can enjoy the benefits of this fantastic program without needing to meet any income guidelines.

Research shows that access to books at an early age equips children to do better in school, obtain more educational opportunities and achieve greater vocational success later in life. Success builds on success. It is Somerset REC's and St. Paul's UCC's hope that the gift of books will enable the children in our community to grow into well-adjusted, happy, and successful adults.

Interested in signing up a child? Go to [ImaginationLibrary.com/](http://ImaginationLibrary.com/) Check-Availability to register Somerset County and Friendsville, Maryland, children from birth to age 5 for free children's books.

For additional information or help signing up a child, please contact the cooperative at 814-445-4106 and ask for Emily, or you can reach Jenn Boland at St. Paul's United Church of Christ by calling 814 445-4534.

### About Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

Since launching in 1995, Dolly



CIRCLE TIME: Students at Country Kids Daycare in Somerset take their first glimpse at new books recently donated to the program's library by Somerset REC. The reading starter pack was provided by the Dolly Parton Imagination Library and sponsored by Touchstone Energy® Cooperative.

Parton's Imagination Library has become the pre-eminent early-childhood, book-gifting program in the world. The flagship program of The Dollywood Foundation has gifted more than 150 million free books in Australia, Canada, The Republic of Ireland, United Kingdom and the United States. The Imagination Library mails more than 1.8 million high-quality, age-appropriate books each month to registered children from birth to age 5.

Dolly envisioned creating a lifelong love of reading, inspiring children to dream. The impact of the program has been widely researched and results suggest positive increases in key early childhood literacy metrics. Penguin Random House is the exclusive publisher for Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. For more information, please visit [imaginationlibrary.com](http://imaginationlibrary.com). ❁



ALL ABOARD: From left, Country Kids Daycare Room Supervisor Sarah Walker and students Ella Bittner and Brielle Baer enjoy reading "The Little Engine That Could," one of the books available to send to children from birth to age 5 through the Dolly Parton Imagination Library.

## Attention high school seniors: It's time to apply for a scholarship

SOMERSET Rural Electric Cooperative (REC) will award \$1,000 scholarships to high school seniors who qualify. The money to fund this scholarship program comes from unclaimed capital credits refunds, which previously had to be turned over to the state. Thanks to the efforts of our political advocates, we can now keep those funds in our communities.

### Eligibility requirements

The applicant must:

- ▶ be a graduating high school senior whose parents or legal guardians are Somerset REC members.
- ▶ attend a public, private, parochial or home school.
- ▶ be enrolled or planning to enroll full time in an accredited post-secondary institution for the 2022-2023 academic year.

### How to apply

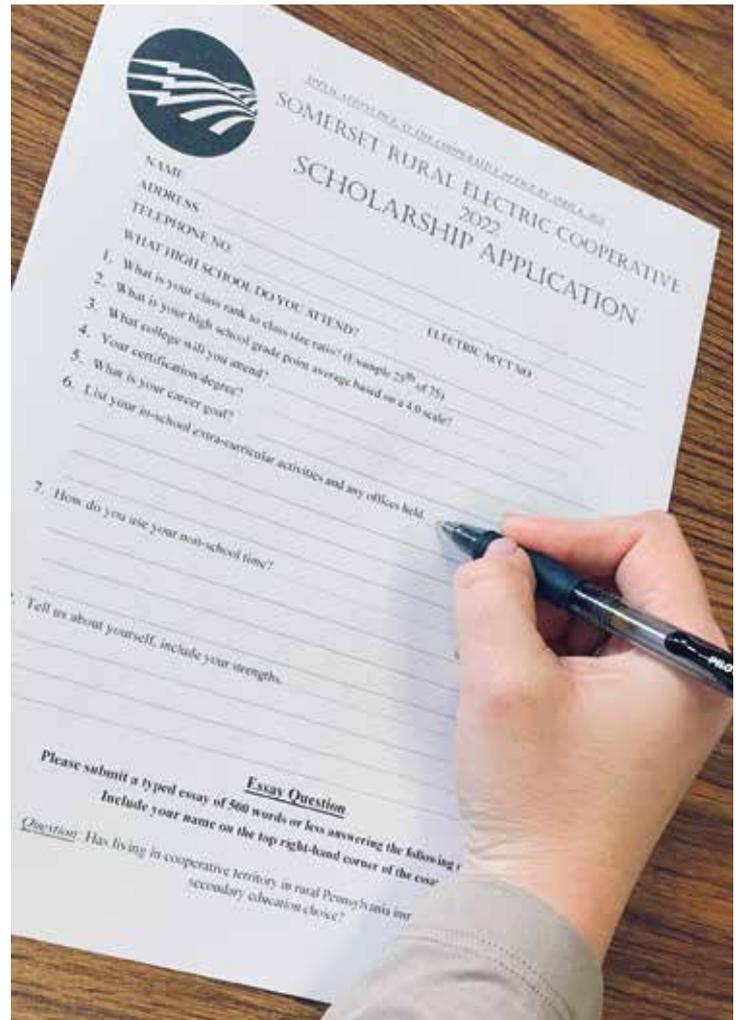
Applications are available on the co-op's website, [somersetrec.com](http://somersetrec.com). Look for the link on the homepage for a fillable PDF scholarship application. Applications are also available at the Somerset REC main office and in the guidance offices of most Somerset County high schools.

### Application deadline

Applications and all required information must be delivered to the Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative office or postmarked by April 6.

Scholarship selections will be made mid-April, and award recipients will be notified in May.

Please direct questions to [ebaer@somersetrec.com](mailto:ebaer@somersetrec.com) or call 814-445-4106. ❁



## Tataleba joins co-op family

Steve Tataleba joined the co-op family on Jan. 4 as a heating, ventilation and air conditioning technician. His previous work experience includes installing and maintaining HVAC equipment as well as plumbing for Darr Construction.

His responsibilities will include assisting with the installation and maintenance of new mini-splits and geothermal units, installing and servicing water heaters, wastewater testing, and assisting the metering department, as needed.

He is a 2015 graduate of Berlin Brothersvalley High School and a 2017 graduate of Penn Highlands Com-



Steve Tataleba

munity College, where he earned an associate degree in criminal justice.

Steve also obtained a HVAC technician certificate from the Greater Johnstown Career and Technology Center.

He lives in Lambertsville with his wife, Meghan. In his spare time, he enjoys being outdoors, playing video games and riding anything with a motor.

“As with any new opportunity in life, it comes with a chance to meet new people and experience new things,” Tataleba says. “It also means that I’ll be able to expand my knowledge with this new opportunity. I’m enthusiastic to be able to get to work for a great company like Somerset REC and its great members.”

Best of luck to you, Steve! ❁

# In Memory of Clarence Knopsnyder



We are deeply saddened to announce that on Feb. 1, 2022, Clarence Knopsnyder passed away. He started at Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative on March 22, 2010, and was just 10 days shy of his planned retirement date of Feb. 11, 2022.

Clarence was a quick-witted and dedicated employee, who had a wide range of responsibilities at the cooperative. Like clockwork, every day around 3:15 p.m., we would hear Clarence before we saw him. He would start his evening shift by greeting everyone as he passed each office from back to front.

His friendly personality connected with each co-worker he'd see with a simple line...

"How was your day?" or "Seeing anything?" or "I just played a round of golf, it's beautiful outside. Enjoy your evening!"

One of Clarence's most important duties during his shift was to manage the cooperative's outage system. This included relaying outage information from the member to the lineworkers on call. Chances are, if you had an outage between 3:30 p.m. and midnight, Clarence was who you spoke with. In addition to managing outages, Clarence kept the office and warehouse areas well maintained and performed preparation and cleanup work for board meetings and cooperative events.

Clarence loved to joke and have fun. More important, he had a heart of gold and would do anything for anyone. Clarence had a passion for golfing and hunting. As soon as the weather broke, he was on the golf course and always looked forward to spending time in the woods during archery season. Opportunities to spend time with his wife, Amy, and their children, Jenna and Derrick, and grandchildren, Liam and Amelia, were the joys of his life.

Clarence's supervisor, Jonathan Hillegas, says:  
"Clarence was a genuinely good guy, who was dedicated to the cooperative. I always looked forward to talking with him every afternoon. He was the type of person who could make you smile, even when you were having a bad day. He was a great person and friend. I will truly miss him!"

*Clarence will be dearly missed by his cooperative family.*



BANQUET: Clarence and his wife, Amy, enjoyed attending the Employee-Director Banquet over the years.