



the South River EMC **Communicator**

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Mobile Dental Office Rolls Out

The employees of Tri-County Community Health Council, Inc. (dba CommWell Health), knew their new mobile dental clinic would be a hit before it ever arrived at their location in Newton Grove. On the way to the office for the first time, the crew stopped at a gas station in Warsaw where they were approached by a wide-eyed little boy who was awestruck by the colorful photos of a group of smiling people and, of course, CommWell Health's mascot, Oswald – a cartoon eagle holding a toothbrush that adorns both sides of the bus. The child was excited, and so was his father. They asked if they could go on the bus and were a little disappointed when they learned that the mobile dental clinic wasn't yet operational. Although they weren't able to provide service to that little boy, the crew was full of hope for the thousands of students in Sampson

and Johnston county schools that will receive screenings in the new mobile dental clinic.

"The idea for the mobile dental unit was motivated by my attendance at an oral health conference," said Pam Tripp, chief executive officer for CommWell Health.

"About four years ago we ran a pilot program," said Tripp. "We brought dental services to schools in the Union area (Sampson County), and we found that half the participating children needed some kind of dental work."

Several resources are available for people to receive medical assistance when needed. However, these resources often don't extend to dental care. For many people living in rural areas, they simply don't have the means to afford proper dental care for their families.

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Cooperative Begins To Feel Rate Pressure



MESSAGE FROM

CEO Chris Spears

You might have seen on the news or read a news article lately that Duke Energy Progress is requesting a 14.9 percent rate increase from the North Carolina Utilities Commission. The reasons stated for the increase are primarily the cost of new generation and costs associated with meeting recent state laws and federal regulations regarding coal ash management.

South River EMC is subject to these same regulations. Although we don't own our own coal-fired power plants, the cost of power we purchase through our power provider, NCEMC, that has contracts with Duke Energy is increasing beginning next year to ensure compliance with state and federal coal ash management regulations. Duke Energy's costs to comply with state law and federal regulations are considered part of the cost of generating electricity and are included in the rates that wholesale and retail customers pay.

As you are aware, the regulatory landscape is ever changing. But, one thing that's constant is our mission to provide safe, reliable,

environmentally responsible electricity at the lowest cost possible. The next step in the pursuit of this mission is to make investments in technologies that pave the way for cost savings down the line -- the same way it pays off for you to make energy efficiency upgrades at your home.

As usual, we are working to mitigate rising costs to lessen the impact on our rates and our members. We are always looking for opportunities to keep costs under control and streamline our operations. We have taken advantage of technology in the past several years that has resulted in more choices for our members and fewer long-term costs for the Cooperative.

We continue to look for ways to provide the technology needed to serve our members and the upgrades necessary to

protect our electric-distribution system and your information from cyber threats.

We are making investments to modify infrastructure and incorporate new energy resources and technologies that better manage the grid. This will ensure new resources can be connected to the grid while maintaining high standards of reliability. By investing in technology now, we're paving the way for cost savings down the line.

We have been able to reduce costs to our members by using analytical data to reduce our line loss; by taking advantage of the ability to reduce voltage slightly during peak times; reducing costs associated with

right-of-way clearing through vegetation management methods; and replacing outdoor lighting with LEDs, which last longer and require less maintenance.

We are also continuing to reap the benefits of changing our borrowing partner in 2015. The Cooperative will experience a total savings of \$20 million over the life of our loans by borrowing from the Cooperative Finance Corporation rather than the Rural Utility Services, RUS. We are also realizing a \$500,000 reduction in annual operating costs by reforming our processes and eliminating bureaucracy as a result of the change from the USDA's RUS.

We are always in search of opportunities to operate more efficiently. In the past couple of years we have streamlined our inventory process so that it

is more accurate and takes less time. Additionally, we look for ways to improve our workforce through training and technology. This has led to the re-alignment of tasks and responsibilities as employees retire or leave the Cooperative and the need for fewer employees.

We might not be able to control market forces or government laws or regulations, but you can rest assured that we will take measures that are within our purview to lessen the impact to you. We are always looking out for your best interests.

"WE ARE ALWAYS IN SEARCH OF OPPORTUNITIES TO OPERATE MORE EFFICIENTLY."

DENTAL continued from page A

The pilot program helped CommWell Health recognize a population they weren't reaching with their eight stationary dental offices.

"Transportation is a big hindrance," said Christopher Vann, chief development officer, CommWell Health. "The population we serve often doesn't have reliable transportation, unless it is provided for a program offered by CommWell Health."

Vann set to work searching for grants that could help meet the organization's needs.

"We could find grants that would allow us to purchase a unit to perform the services," said Vann. "But, there were rarely grants to provide the services."

About that time, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services launched an oral expansion grant program.

"This collaborative event gave us \$150,000 to purchase the vehicle," said Vann. "As well as funding to provide the services the unit would require."

The CommWell Health Board of Directors worked to set aside money for the dental unit as well and eventually, they were able to purchase its first mobile dental unit.

The plan is to provide basic dental services to approximately 62 schools in Sampson and Johnston counties. Services include sealants, flossing, cleaning, fillings, extractions and X-rays.

"We can perform most things that a standard dental office can provide," said Paloma Soto-Florida, director of dental services, CommWell Health. "Anything that requires conscious sedation, like impacted molars or multiple cavities, we refer to the best area practices."

Working across their six-county service area allows CommWell Health to build relationships and locate the best pricing for families who need that additional care, so it doesn't go untreated.

"The need is great and we are bringing services to the community," said Vann.

CommWell Health's mobile dental office is like stepping into a standard dentist's office with a sign-in desk, a sanitation area and two dental work rooms, the mobile office also has a handicapped entrance.

Thanks to a \$3,000 Operation Round Up grant from South River EMC, CommWell Health was able to place a Shorepower outlet on the Spivey's Corner/Newton Grove campus. The Shorepower installation will be used to power and maintain the electrical systems of the mobile dental office while they are at the schools.

The organization fully expects for this to be the start of the mobile dental program. Vann found in his research that any organization with a unit like this, has more than one.

"We fully expect need to exceed



supply," said Tripp. "There is a national cry to get these services that we want to meet locally."

CommWell Health is a non-profit organization that provides patient-centered medical, dental, behavioral health and special health care services to rural citizens from 16 facilities across Sampson, Johnston, Bladen, Pender, and Brunswick counties. CommWell Health is committed to providing education, prevention and exceptional care in a health home setting.

It is for reasons like this that CommWell Health is the recipient of a record three awards from the National Rural Health Association, including Outstanding Rural Health Organization, Outstanding Rural Health Program, and Outstanding Educator Award. CommWell Health is the only community health center in the nation to receive the Outstanding Rural Health Organization award, which recognizes an organization that has improved access to health services and information for rural people through innovative, comprehensive approaches.

Pam Tripp was recently awarded the Robert J. Greczyn Jr. Community Health Leadership Award by the N.C. Community Health Center Association.



Members To See Important Changes

South River EMC has made some changes that might impact your electric service.

DEPOSITS

An existing member who is disconnected for non-payment with no deposit or an inadequate deposit amount on file, will be required to pay a deposit (or an additional deposit), which will be due with the next bill.

OUTDOOR LIGHTING

Homeowners can request to have an outdoor light installed at their location for a monthly fee. Any outdoor light that is installed at a location that is used for rental purposes must be paid for by the homeowner or landlord. If a tenant requests service at a rental location where an outdoor light exists, the owner/landlord will be contacted and informed that the light must be put in their name and will not be placed in the name of the tenant. Payment for the light by the tenant will be an agreement established

between the owner/landlord and the tenant and will not be the responsibility of South River EMC.

RETURNED CHECKS/ DRAFTS/CREDIT CARD CHARGEBACKS:

Any member whose check/draft/credit card payment to South River EMC is returned for insufficient funds, closed account, charged back or stopped payment will be notified immediately and a returned check/draft/credit card chargeback fee will be added to the member's account. Such charge may be up to the maximum allowed by North Carolina law (GS 25-3-506). The Cooperative will attempt to notify the member regarding the returned check/draft/credit card charge back. If the amount of the returned check/draft/charge back fee charges (**see fees**) is not paid within five days, service will be disconnected. However, if the account is past the disconnection

date, the account will be subject to immediate disconnection until all money owed is paid. Payment must be in the form of cash, money order, certified check or debit/credit card (except for charge back).

If the Cooperative receives two returned checks/drafts from a member in any 24-month period, the Cooperative will no longer accept checks/drafts from that member.

CREDIT CARD CHARGE-BACKS:

One chargeback at the account level will result in a return fee and the member will be permanently forbidden from using a credit card to make payments to South River EMC. If a member is found to be using a credit card fraudulently to pay their South River EMC electric account they will be forbidden to use a credit card to make payments to their South River EMC account permanently.

Schedule of Fees:

Security Deposits		Disconnection Charge	\$35
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residential: \$300 OR 2x the average monthly bill, whichever is greater • NEW homes: \$375 • Incidental Non-Residential: \$100 • Commercial: Amount equal to two highest months' bills 		(manual/remote/outdoor light)	
Administrative Service Charge (per connection)	\$25	Reconnect Charge-Regular Hours	\$35
Temporary Service Fee	\$100	(manual/remote/outdoor light)	
(incl. administrative service charge)		After Hours Charge	\$75
Late Payment Charge	\$12	(reconnects, new connects on weekends or holidays)	
Returned Check/Credit Chargeback Charge	\$25	Same Day Service Charge	\$75
Collection Charge	\$35	Meter Test Charge	\$75
		Meter Tampering Charge	\$500
		(\$1000 for the second offense, \$1500 for the third, etc.)	
		Damaged Meter/ Disconnect Collar	\$250
		Damaged Remote Disconnect Meter	\$350

Collier Named As New Director

C. Wayne Collier of Linden has been named to serve on the South River EMC Board of Directors representing members in District 7. He will complete the unexpired term of William E. Tew Jr., who passed away April 1.

Rural living has been a mainstay in Collier's life. He grew up on a family farm and received a bachelor's degree in Animal Science from NC State University, he worked for his family farm raising hogs as well as tending row crops and Bermuda hay all the while working full-time for the U.S. Postal Service. He retired from the postal service in 2013.

Collier is no stranger to South River EMC. Aside from being a lifelong member of the Cooperative, he served on the nominating committee for several years. Collier has deep roots in his community serving in many capacities over the years with the following organizations; as a deacon and elder of Sardis Presbyterian church, the Westarea Fire Department as a firefighter and on the Board of Directors (past president); Cumberland County Farm Bureau Board of Directors; Cumberland County Soil and Water Supervisor; N.C. Soil and Water Commission; Cumberland

County Board of Elections (as judge and chief judge); Linden Christian Men's Fellowship; Cumberland County Livestock Association; Cumberland County 4-H; Cub Scouts; Boy Scouts; and the U.S. Pony Club.

Collier states "I appreciate the opportunity to continue the service given by previous directors from the Linden Community, Charles Collier (uncle) and William E. Tew Jr., I believe that being both a residential and business member gives a perspective, which will help my decision-making to continue the tradition of progressive service to South River EMC."

Be Prepared For Emergencies

As much as you love to relax during these hot summer days, it's a perfect time to make sure you and your family are prepared for hurricane season, June 1 - November 30.

It's best to be prepared when a storm of any kind is forecast.

- Create a family disaster supply kit with non-perishable food, water, a battery-operated radio, flashlights, a first-aid kit, a manual can opener, medicines and cash.

- Add portable, rechargeable cell phone power banks to your emergency preparedness kit, and charge them before a storm hits.

- Locate the safest areas in your home for each kind of severe weather threat, often a first-floor interior hallway, room or closet with no windows. If you live in a mobile home, the safest areas may not be inside your home; please designate an accessible safe place.

- Develop an evacuation plan, identifying the safest routes and closest shelters, while also considering areas that are flood-

prone and may be impassible during a severe weather event.

- Plan how to contact relatives in an emergency, and remember your pets when planning for possible evacuation. Not all emergency shelters allow pets.

- Make trees and shrubbery more wind resistant by keeping them trimmed and removing damaged branches. Stay far away from power lines while trimming.

When preparing for storms, you must remember that you're responsible for battery backup equipment for any life sustaining devices or to have a back-up generator. South River EMC does not guarantee continuous and uninterrupted service and during emergency situations, it is the responsibility of members to relocate anyone dependent on electricity to a secondary location such as a shelter until the Cooperative can restore power safely.

If you head out before the storm hits, you can check our real time system map to see restoration



progression. Updates might also be posted to social media and our web site if and when we receive information.

For businesses dependent on uninterrupted electric service, South River EMC recommends installing uninterruptible power systems, back up generation or any other devices necessary to ensure the continuity of your business operation in the event of an interruption of electric service or outage.

Take action now to make sure you're prepared to weather the storm.

If you experience an outage, contact the Cooperative at 910-892-8071 to report it. Don't use social media to report outages, sites are not monitored 24 hours a day. In the event of a large outage, phones will be busy, please continue to call if you don't get through the first time.

Will An Early Bird Get The Worm?

Teachers, have you started your back-to-school planning? Whether it's something you need to pick up, or what your schedule will consist of, there are a number of things you're considering. Make sure as you get closer to starting back, you turn those thoughts to Bright Ideas.

The Bright Ideas program began in 1994, as a way to help teachers who were spending their own money on items for the classroom. Since then, the North Carolina electric cooperatives have awarded \$10.9 million in grants to fund 10,400 projects affecting 2.1 million students, since the project's inception. This year, South River EMC, as one of those

participating cooperatives, will top the \$1 million mark in grants awarded through the Bright Ideas program.

What is this program? Cooperatives offer grants to certified, public K-12 teachers who have innovative, classroom based ideas. Grants cannot be for professional development.

This year, South River EMC expects to award \$50,000 in grants, and now teachers are eligible for grants up to \$2,500, there is no minimum amount. Teachers must apply through the Bright Ideas web site, ncbrightideas.com and can do so until September 18. Teachers who apply before August 15 are entered



into our early-bird drawing, for one of five \$100 Visa gift cards.

When writing your application, remember not to use your school name, except where it specifically asks for it. Have a non-educator read over it to catch acronyms or program lingo others might not be aware of before submitting. The great thing about a Bright Ideas grant? You don't have to finish it in one sitting, you can save it and return to it later.

For more information on Bright Ideas, or to begin applying, visit ncbrightideas.com. If you'd like to see some recently funded grants, visit sremc.com.

Save Money While Helping Hold Down Rates

South River EMC is recruiting members to participate in a water heater pilot program. What does it entail?

- A home that receives electric service from South River EMC;
- Operational Wi-Fi in the home;
- An electric water heater (at least 40 gal.);
- A willingness to cooperate with program guidelines.

The ideal candidate home will be working families with an easily accessible water heater. Homes with small children at home all day or a stay-at-home adult are not ideal candidates due to event times and the goal to avoid inconvenience to the household.

Participants agree to have a Smart Water Switch installed on or near the primary water heater. The switch will enable us to turn water heater elements on and off during an event and monitor water temperature during events.

During an event, a signal is sent to the switch via Wi-Fi or 4G cellular signal to turn off the water heater. During the months of June and July, this occurred twice a day on days anticipated to hit peak use, generally between 6-9 a.m. and 3-9 p.m. This occurred four or five times each month.

For the remaining months, we'll operate the switches to turn off water heaters twice daily at the same hours described for summertime. Because newer water heaters are so well insulated, you shouldn't experience a significant loss of heat from the water, but to make sure, we'll constantly

maintain water temperatures and if they drop, the switch will enable the elements to run long enough to heat the water back up before shutting off the heating elements again until the end of the event.

The smart switch also constantly monitors the water heater to identify any irregular activity, generally resulting from a water heater leak or thermostat problems. If this is detected, the member will be contacted. Participating members will receive a \$2 monthly credit for the year they are enrolled in the program.

If you're interested in participating, contact us at sremc@sremc.com, place WH Pilot in the subject line, and provide your name, account number and address. You'll be contacted about your interest and we'll make an appointment to install the switch.



TOGETHERWE SAVE.COM

HERO Homes Are Efficient

High efficiency residential option, or HERO, homes are eligible for rebate from \$200-\$600.

If you'd like to learn more about HERO homes, visit sremc.com or call 910-892-8071 x 2153.



Smart Thermostats Have A Few Tricks

Smart thermostats are proving to be a hit among homeowners. If you're on the fence, look no further for a few reasons why one might be a good fit.

Helps Save Money

Millions of people leave the thermostat set at 70 degrees, even when they aren't home. If you're one of those people, letting a computer handle your home's temp could save you energy and money.

Easier Than Ever

If you've ever struggled to program your thermostat, you'll be amazed at how much easier it is to set up a schedule on a smart thermostat. Some smart

thermostats can even learn your schedule to make certain changes automatically.

You can make changes to settings from anywhere, smart thermostats are Wi-Fi compatible.

Screen Time

Don't waste time on the thermostat, spend it with guests. Smart thermostats feature bigger, brighter screens and you can do things as easily as you check Facebook.

Changes Are No Problem

Many homeowners find themselves reprogramming their thermostat several times a year to keep up with the changing seasons and twice annual

time changes. Smart thermostats take those items into account so you don't have to do a thing.

Get Feedback

Most smart thermostats offer some form of usage tracking with logs of recent energy use. When using a smart thermostat in conjunction with the Smart-View program, you can see how those little changes affect your costs daily.

South River EMC offers a \$20 rebate on the purchase of a smart thermostat. For complete details visit sremc.com or call 910-892-8071 x 2152.

Heating And Cooling Costs Add Up

Heating and cooling accounts for almost half of your electric costs each month. As you enjoy the cool air, consider giving it a rest.

There are several things which contribute to your heating and cooling costs, includ-



ing: the system's age, seasonal energy efficiency ratio, or SEER rating, and your use and maintenance.

As systems age, they naturally are not as efficient as they were upon purchase. By making sure your system is inspected at least once a year, you keep it running in the best shape as long as possible. However, when repairs add up, it's time to replace.

SEER rating is important to look at because it measures the cooling efficiency of your system. The higher the rating, the more efficiently a system cools

your home. And the more efficiently things are done, the less costly they can be for homeowners.

Replacing old heating and cooling equipment with an Energy Star qualified heat pump can cut annual energy bills by nearly \$200. Units of 17 SEER or greater are also eligible for a \$200-\$500 rebate from South River EMC.

For more information or to receive an application, visit sremc.com or call 910-892-8071 x 2152.

TOGETHER WESAVE.COM



Pool Pump Savings Available?

A variable or two-speed pump can save

you energy and money. These units are also eligible for \$50 from South River EMC. For de-

tails visit sremc.com or call 910-892-8071 x 2152.

Cheaper Appliances Might Cost More

The appliances you place in your home affect your energy costs. Just because you buy it for less, doesn't mean it costs less to run.

Cheaper appliances are often less efficient than Energy Star certified appliances. They're cheaper on the front end because you pay more in energy

costs over its lifespan.

By purchasing an Energy Star certified refrigerator, clothes washer, clothes dryer or dehumidifier, you make that cost up in energy savings. After all, certified products go through rigorous testing to receive the Energy Star logo.

When the time comes to

purchase a new appliance, find an Energy Star certified one



and apply for the \$10 rebate from South River EMC. For more information, visit sremc.com or call 910-892-8071 x 2152.

Warm Water Is No Laughing Matter

Having warm water is important, and it shows. Water heating is the second-highest electric cost each month. One reason is because of your standard electric water heater. Installing a more efficient option, such as a heat pump water heater, HPWH, or a solar water heater could save you money.

These systems won't fit every

household, but if you're in the market for a new water heater, and looking to cut back on energy use, research them.

An HPWH is more costly than a standard unit, but also more efficient, using its energy to move heat, rather than creating it, to warm water.

A solar water heater is an expensive option, but its fuel is free.

The Cooperative offers a rebate on solar water heaters (\$150) and HPWHs (\$200), but don't rush to make a decision, check systems out and select the one that's right for you.

For information on the rebates, visit sremc.com or call 910-892-8071 x 2152.

Helping Summer Cooling To Succeed

How much is a cool home costing you? With heating and cooling accounting for almost half your energy costs each month, making a few improvements could help you save.

Begin by checking the insulation in your home. Make sure there aren't spots in the attic, or under your home, where insulation is missing, or thinned out. If this is the case, you'll want to

add more insulation. Replacing or refreshing your insulation, particularly when it has settled, can make you more comfortable and help keep down costs.

There's another item to check for, air infiltration, or the passage of inside air outside, and vice versa.

If warm air is entering your home, it can make temperatures uncomfortable. Visit

sremc.com for areas to check for air infiltration. Fixing it can be simple, weather strip moving parts and caulk non-moving parts. Making improvements means improved comfort and savings.

South River EMC offers several rebates for these improvements. For complete details visit sremc.com or call 910-289-8071 x 2222.