

# South River EMC Communicator

January 2023

## Locally Grown Fresh Food

*In 2019, the "God's Garden" project began to provide fresh produce to five local food pantries and a domestic violence safe house.*

While food pantries often collect non-perishable food items during drives, fresh fruits and vegetables can lower blood pressure, reduce the risk of heart disease and stroke, prevent some types of cancer, lower risk of eye and digestive problems, and have a positive effect upon blood sugar, which can help keep appetite in check.

Lillington United Methodist Church (UMC) received an Operation Round Up grant to help with "God's Garden."

The grant funding was to purchase a cooler, fertilizer and supplies for gardeners at the site. The cooler would keep fresh food crisp for deliveries to local pantries.

"These sites are in Harnett County, with most being very small pantries that do not receive much fresh produce on a regular basis," said Claudia Farr, project administrator. "Harnett County is an area of great need, as can be seen by the US census."

A rural county, not so different from others with sparse transportation options, can be a significant barrier to job hunting, fresh food and healthcare access. This is seen specifically in the rise of participation in food pantries.

To begin the project, local community members donated a two-acre farm site for use.

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*The Harcum family out picking.*



## Holiday Closing

South River EMC offices will be closed Jan. 2 in celebration of the New Year.

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“Community members originally contributed to the food distribution by working at the farm site,” said Farr. “This first year, a successful crop of watermelon was distributed at a local hardware store giveaway with a donation bucket.”

The organization raised \$1,500, as well as the awareness of the project and the need in the local community, with the funds going to a food pantry that was fundraising for an expansion.

In 2020, they had to adapt to overcome people’s hesitance to gather in a single location.

“Since few workers were willing to come to the farm, we developed a satellite garden component,” said Farr. “We supplied these sites with a start-up kit for raised beds to grow produce and they pledged to donate a portion to the garden project.”



Raised satellite garden bed.

Satellite gardeners were invited to attend an informational meeting to support their gardening efforts, and Cooperative Extension helped by providing information needed on successful gardening for those novice growers.

“In 2021 and 2022, we saw an increase in the quantity of our distributions to community pantry sites,” said Farr. “And the satellite gardens grew to 15 sites.”

With that growth, and rising costs, Lillington UMC requested an Operation Round Up grant.

“We decided to request funds from South River EMC, as we were familiar with the Operation Round Up program and thought it would be a good fit for funding a successful grassroots project,” she said. “This past year, the prices of basic planting and growing needs have increased significantly.”

Funding was needed for fertilizer and replacement tools for the upcoming spring and fall planting seasons. The organization has plans to sell plants that they grow from seeds as they strive to become more self-sustaining.



Farm advisor, Ray Stanley, shows the first carrots of the season.

They have not been remiss in building relationships either, working with NC Cooperative Extension and Lillington Crossroads Church Men’s Club, who put in a deer fence, the Lillington Presbyterian Church, which has 12 raised beds to donate produce, as well as partnering with Lillington-Shawtown Elementary exceptional children staff, to support their garden program.

“Receiving these funds solidified our commitment to continue our fresh vegetable mission,” said Farr.

*“This first year, a successful crop of watermelon was distributed at a local hardware store giveaway with a donation bucket.”*

## Operation Round Up Awarded

Recently South River EMC awarded \$61,894 through Operation Round Up.

Members participate in Operation Round Up by rounding up their electric bill to the next dollar.

For instance, if your bill is \$98.76, you will pay \$99, and the remaining 24¢ will go into the Community Assistance Corporation (CAC) fund.

The CAC is composed of community members who review Operation Round Up applications quarterly.

Applications may be submitted by schools and non-profits, which serve a portion of South River EMC members.

The most-recent funding cycle was in December and the following non-profit organizations and schools were selected:

- ▶ Disabled American Veterans-Chapter 74—\$5,000
- ▶ Fayetteville Area Operation Inasmuch—\$5,000
- ▶ Sampson County Partnership for Children—\$5,000
- ▶ Dunn Police Athletic and Activities League—\$5,000
- ▶ Janice Faye's Ranch Inc.—\$9,470
- ▶ Special Olympics NC – Cumberland, Harnett and Johnston counties—\$5,000
- ▶ Johnston County Arts Council—\$2,500
- ▶ Midway Elementary School—\$2,500
- ▶ Plain View Elementary School—\$10,000
- ▶ Clement Elementary School—\$2,500
- ▶ Midway High School—\$9,924



The next deadline for Operation Round Up grant applications is Feb. 17.

For details on the program, visit [sremc.com/operation-round](http://sremc.com/operation-round).



Electronic Carolina Country—perfect for: a casual morning read over coffee, a read while awaiting an appointment, an afternoon read on the couch, maybe even that wakeful 4 a.m. pre-coffee read.

That's right, you can receive this newsletter electronically each month, visit [sremc.com/carolina-country](http://sremc.com/carolina-country) and click on "sign-up for electronic Carolina Country."

*Please note: Once signed up, it may take a month or so to discontinue your hard copy of the newsletter.*

# It All Adds Up: Part One

## Transformers

*Last month, we shared a graphic along with the CEO column that addressed some of the changes in costs we are experiencing.*

As is the case everywhere, cost and delivery time are huge factors in how we do our work.

One of the biggest impacts on our day-to-day work involves transformers.

Transformers are devices that convert high-voltage electricity to a lower voltage so it can be used in homes and businesses safely.

They are part of the electricity delivery system and can be pole mounted or pad (ground) mounted.

If you have overhead service, you will see the pole mounted, if you have underground service, you will see a green pad mount. In this case, there is no true difference, other than the location of the unit.

Over the years there has been little change to cost and availability of transformers. However, between 2020 and 2022 alone, they have increased in cost anywhere from \$468 for a pole mount transformer to \$1,603 for a pad mount transformer.

With approximately 29,000 transformers on our system, those kinds of costs add up. Not only that, but the availability of this equipment has a wide window as well.

In the past, we would receive shipments of transformers weekly. Now, single-phase transformers take about five months from order to delivery, and three-phase transformers, which carry more power,



are eight to 12 months' delivery time.

Don't worry though, South River EMC retires what we call idle services, or services that have been unused for a period of time, and recover those transformers.

We have also rescheduled projects to ensure we have a stock of transformers.

"The escalation in material costs, along with longer lead times for delivery, has made us rethink our material acquisition and reclamation processes," said Chuck Richardson, vice president of Operations and Engineering. "In the future, should material and equipment availability be further impacted by a declining economy and work force, our dependence on third party maintenance shops and equipment brokers will grow."

Our ability to provide safe, reliable and affordable electricity is also due in large part to our partnership with the Tarheel Electric Membership Association (TEMA).

TEMA is a service company which supplies the materials needed to operate and maintain your electric utility system.

Established in 1975, TEMA provides bulk material purchases resulting in better lead times, price, and representation.

TEMA, like South River EMC, is a non-profit cooperative dedicated to service, quality, and cost containment.

While turnaround for certain products is looking better, others remain to be seen and cost is still a major part of the process.

South River EMC is looking out for you.

# Have You Been Making The Grade?

*A new year is here, so how are those grades?*

South River EMC is once again offering the "Give Us An A" program to students who achieve at least one A on their most recent report card.

Simply make a copy of the report card and send it to:

**South River EMC**  
**"Give Us An A"**  
**PO Box 931**  
**Dunn, NC 28335**

Or email it to:

[connections@sremc.com](mailto:connections@sremc.com).

You must include the member's name, address, South

River EMC account number and daytime telephone number. Report cards will not be accepted without this information.

The drawing is held for students achieving at least one A on their report card, and 15 names will be drawn randomly to receive a \$25 gift card.

The program is open to students who are members, or children of members, of South River EMC.

Don't miss an opportunity to celebrate good grades.

Report cards should be submitted by 5 p.m. Feb. 6.



## Coming in 2023—Basketball Camps

*South River EMC is offering a chance for current fifth and sixth graders to apply for the Touchstone Energy Basketball camps offered at NC State and UNC-Chapel Hill.*

The camps give boys and girls a unique experience to attend basketball camp on one of two of the state's largest college campuses.

Students statewide are encouraged to apply for one of 50 all-expenses-paid scholarships to attend the Carolina Basketball Camp at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the Wolfpack Women's Basketball Academy at North Carolina State University in Raleigh.

Both camps are typically held in June.

The overnight camps are held

in the summer, and campers work closely with coaches and players to develop fundamental skills, helping them perform and excel both on and off the court.

### Campers must:

- ▶ Be a rising sixth or seventh grader. This means the student should currently be in fifth or sixth grade.
- ▶ Attend a school in the Cooperative service area.
- ▶ Have permission from a parent or guardian to attend. An information sheet must be signed.
- ▶ Provide their own transportation to and from camp.

Winners will attend the camps courtesy of South River EMC. The

Cooperative funds one scholarship to each camp.

Applications are scored on academics, extracurricular activities and an essay that must accompany the application.

The application period runs from Jan. 2 to March 31. Eligible students interested in the scholarship can contact the Cooperative at 910.892.8071 or visit [sremc.com/basketball-camps](https://sremc.com/basketball-camps).





## Interested In A HERO Home?

*A high efficiency residential option, or HERO, home is an energy-efficient building option for those looking to save.*

That's because a HERO home is 30 percent more efficient than homes built to the standard building code.

This type of home includes slightly better insulation, fenestration, air sealing, equipment, and lighting packages to deliver even greater savings.

## New Year, New Appliances?

*Is 2023 the year to replace some appliances? If so, see what your savings could be by switching to Energy Star certified products.*

Energy Star certified appliances are guaranteed to use less energy, and can save even more with efficient use.

For example, washing only full loads of laundry, particularly with cold water, on top of an energy-efficient unit using less water and electricity, means even greater savings.

An Energy Star certified dryer with a moisture sensor can help cut down on the run time of the appliance. And Energy Star certified refrigerators, appliances that run every day, all day, nine percent

There are two ways to achieve HERO certification, the prescriptive and the performance path, both of which have their specific lists to meet. What are those specifications? You can learn more about them at [energycodes.gov](https://energycodes.gov).

If you find that a HERO certified home is right for you, you can learn about the rebates offered by South River EMC at [sremc.com/hero-program](https://sremc.com/hero-program) or call 910.892.8071, ext. 2153.

more efficient. It might not seem like a lot, but again, it's an appliance that is constantly running.

Now, Energy Star certified appliances might have a higher price tag, but with proven savings, they should be up for consideration.

Use the appliance calculators on our website, [sremc.com/rebates-efficiency-tips](https://sremc.com/rebates-efficiency-tips), or sign up for a SmartEnergy Profile, to see how changes can impact your costs.

Ready to look at new appliances? See what South River EMC offers rebates on, and visit [energystar.gov](https://energystar.gov) to find the most efficient appliances. For details, visit [sremc.com/energy-star-appliances](https://sremc.com/energy-star-appliances) or call 910.892.8071 x 2153.

## Get Rid Of That Chill

*Are you experiencing a chill this heating season? It may be time for some efficiency improvements, even if you have a new home.*

Your home may have cracks and gaps that allow for air infiltration, or the loss of heated air outside, or the entrance of cold air into the home. A little infiltration is to be expected, but too much makes you uncomfortable and costs you.

Caulking and weather stripping are actions you can take to improve comfort. The other option in-

volves checking insulation. Insulation prevents heat transfer, or the loss of heated air to the outdoors. Since you're paying for this air, losing it is something you want to prevent.

Making improvements can help comfort and cost. Learn more about what and where to improve and you can also read about the rebates offered by South River EMC at [sremc.com/insulation-weatherization](https://www.sremc.com/insulation-weatherization) or by calling 910.892.8071, ext. 2222.

## A Better Way To Stay Comfortable

*A new year, but the same old heating and cooling problems? Say it isn't so!*

There are plenty of fixes for heating and cooling your home, but eventually the unit is old and needs replaced. Heating and cooling systems average about 10 years, and remember that is the average, there are some that go longer and some that don't even make it that long.

But the number one item to consider when looking at a heating and cooling unit is efficiency.

Look at the seasonal energy efficiency ratio, or SEER, rating, which measure the cooling efficiency of the unit. The higher the SEER rating, the more efficient the unit. Of course, you will need to make sure

the unit is appropriately sized for your home as well.

South River EMC offers rebates on 17 SEER or greater heat pumps, the typical heating solution in this area. Heat pumps pull heat from the outside air or ground (depending on the unit) and use it to heat your home. Conversely, it pulls heat from the home in the summer, cools it and re-circulates it back into the home.

The three types of units eligible for rebates include air source, ductless, and geothermal. Again, research is necessary to find the best fit for your home.

Information on the rebates can be found at [sremc.com/energy-star-heating-cooling](https://www.sremc.com/energy-star-heating-cooling) or by calling 910.892.8071, x2222.



## Water Heating Has Options: Here's Two

*Is it time for a new water heater? If so, there are options, solar and heat pump water heating in particular.*

Solar water heaters can be a cost-effective way to generate hot water for your home. They can be used in any climate, and the fuel is free. These systems include storage tanks and solar collectors, and there are two types: active, which have circulating pumps and controls, and passive, which don't.

### Active Solar Water Heating System Options

#### **Direct circulation systems**

Pumps circulate household water through the collectors and into the home. They work well in climates where it rarely freezes.

#### **Indirect circulation systems**

Pumps circulate a non-freezing, heat-transfer fluid through the collectors and a heat exchanger, which then heats the water that flows into the home. They are popular in colder climates.

### Passive Solar Water Heating Systems

Typically less expensive than active systems, but they're usually not as efficient. However, they can be more reliable and may last longer. There are two basic types of passive systems:

#### **Integral collector-storage passive systems**

Consisting of a storage tank covered with a transparent material to allow the sun to heat the water, the water from the tank then flows into the plumbing system. These systems work best in areas where temperatures rarely fall below freezing and in households with significant daytime and evening hot water needs.

#### **Thermosiphon systems**

Water is heated in a collector on the roof and then flows through the plumbing system when a hot water faucet is opened. Most of these systems have a 40-gallon capacity.

### Tanks and Collectors

Most solar water heaters require at least a well-insulated storage tank.

Two types of solar collectors are used for residential applications:

#### **Flat-plate collector**

Glazed flat-plate collectors are insulated, weather-proofed boxes that contain a dark absorber plate under one or more glass or plastic (polymer) covers.

#### **Integral collector-storage systems**

Also known as batch systems, they feature one or more black tanks or tubes in an insulated, glazed box. Cold water first passes through the solar collector, which preheats the water. It then continues to the conventional backup water heater, providing a reliable source of hot water. Appropriate for mild-freeze climates because the outdoor pipes could freeze in severe, cold weather.

Solar water heating systems almost always require a backup system for cloudy days and times of increased demand.

Another option is heat pump water heating, which is a two to three times more efficient way of heating water as compared to standard water heating.

Because they use energy to move heat, rather than generate it, they are a more affordable option to replace a current water heater as well.

It will call for a new and different system, but unlike solar, this system doesn't need to be roof-mounted. However, it is a system that requires 1,000 cu. ft. of space, as well as being located in an area that remains in the 40–90 degree range.

There are additional water heater options you could consider, but South River EMC offers rebates on these two specifically. Do your research today to find out what you want and need when the time comes to replace.

For details on the rebate offered by South River EMC visit [sremc.com/energy-efficient-water-heating](https://www.sremc.com/energy-efficient-water-heating) or call 910.892.8071 x 2153.



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PO Box 931  
 Dunn, NC 28335  
 910.892.8071  
 800.338.5530  
[sremc.com](https://www.sremc.com)

  

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