

## May You Avoid The Rough

*Arnold Palmer is quoted in saying, "Success in golf depends less on strength of body, more on strength of mind and character."*

This strength is what the First Tee program works to build in students alongside building a love of golf.

First Tee began in 1997, formed by people from different golf programs, who wanted to bring the game to kids.

"Our chapter originated in Moore County," said Courtney Stiles, executive director of First Tee Sandhills. "They received approval for the chapter in 2002 and began organizing in 2003."

Beginning with one program one day a week, First Tee started with about 15 students. This has now grown into a seven-county program, which includes Harnett and Cumberland counties. Programming supports the development of values found within the game of golf to include honesty, integrity, perseverance and respect.

Using golf, a sport you already wanted to teach, to instill lessons inherent in the sport, that's a hole in one!

"We use life skills as a pillar of each lesson," said Stiles. "An example of how we work on responsibility is by explaining how we leave a site as we found it or better; picking up trash and divot filling, we talk about

*continued on page B*



## Join Us

Our annual meeting is Thursday, April 27, at 6 p.m. Login or call-in information can be found at [sremc.com/annual-meeting](https://sremc.com/annual-meeting) or in the April newsletter.



## What's Inside

Using AI to Improve Service C	
Youth Programs	D
Notice of Hearing	E
New Tax Credits	H

*GOLF continued from page A*

who takes responsibility at home and ask students to pick a task to make their responsibility."

First Tee works with students both in school as well as after school, from ages 7-18 years old.

To meet the needs of such a wide variety of students, you need equipment and Starting New At Golf, or SNAG, had that ability.

"We partner with SNAG for our equipment needs, their products have a pretty good lifespan," said Stiles. "The equipment allows for safe engagement and it's great to use."

The materials allow for more flexibility in lessons, suited as it is for students, and helps them reach success faster.

First Tee has programs in 68 schools, but the Operation Round Up grants they have written, including their most recent award, have been to facilitate growth in their outreach programming.

"We see children leave more confident, and better commu-

nicators," said Stiles. "Parents are expressing that their students are having healthy conversations."

Surveys are sent out to parents as their children participate in the program, and one such response was shared with us.

"The oldest child in the family was a daydreamer, and seemed to lack in focus, however, after some time in the program his parents reported that he's able to focus on what's in front of him, as well as being more respectful," she said.

Most recently, the organization received a \$2,000 Operation Round Up grant, allowing them to serve even more students outside of school, by meeting them where they are and not requiring extra transportation.

"When we go out into the community to provide programs, we begin with plastic SNAG equipment and corresponding Velcro targets as an introduction to the game of golf. The equipment is kid-friendly, safe, and can be used both outside and inside depending on the space available," said Stiles. "We can use the exact same equipment whether we are in a school's outdoor green space, or an indoor multi-purpose room at a community center."

Equipment though, like most items, gets old, worn out and loses pieces. The grant will



help purchase a new set of SNAG equipment. This one set will allow the organization to serve two programs simultaneously.

The goal with this grant is to offset the cost of delivering the program to organizations like the Salvation Army, as well as the Armed Services YMCA.

"It's such a relief and privilege to receive funding," said Stiles. "We know people take seriously what organizations they support and we appreciate that they trust us to invest in our programs."

After all, fundraising done by the organization, goes back into the program.

The extra equipment also allows First Tee to just say yes when asked to visit sites and introduce the program to schools and organizations.

That's a whole new crop of students who can learn a new sport from this Operation Round Up grant.

Interested in learning more about First Tee of the Sandhills? Visit [firstteesandhills.org](http://firstteesandhills.org).



# Using AI To Improve Service

*South River EMC's right-of-way (ROW) program has been a focus of improvement for the Cooperative.*

The ROW program aims to keep the 4,765 miles of electric line that serve you, clean and free of debris each year.

We use a combination of services to do this, which includes an environmentally safe compound spray that is formulated for the areas where work is being performed. We also send crews out to trim trees that could impact electric service.

Last year, we wrote about a company we are working with called AiDash, which uses artificial intelligence (AI) to help pinpoint our ROW efforts. We have some updates to share with you.

As a refresher, AiDash takes an innovative approach to ROW using satellites and algorithms to establish trimming and maintenance schedules for electric systems. This is important to us, because it helps the Cooperative better manage costs, as well as providing you with uninterrupted service, as much as possible.

Done by tracking the growth of plants, the ability to do this helps reduce scheduling and work costs for South River EMC by sending crews to specifically targeted areas.

While we are learning from our data, we won't begin full implementation until 2024. What we have learned is that over half of our mileage has no vegetation risk, which means

we're doing a good job so far in our ROW efforts.

Now, according to AiDash assessments, our trimming can be performed on an approximate six-year rotation, as oppose to the eight-year rotation we're currently working on. However, this type of reporting will help us focus on those areas in need of trimming so it can be done in a time-sensitive manner.

A fall-in risk assessment was also done. This assessment identifies trees found outside of where we have cleared our right-of-way, that trees, if they fall, are large enough to impact electric delivery.

Knowing this will help South River EMC plan accordingly, so we can stay ahead of issues that will interrupt your service, as well as saving us in repair costs.

"We believe the program will benefit us in the tree trimming bid process, as we will be better able to identify the line mileage

in need of trimming," said Chuck Richardson, vice president of engineering and operations. "Also, we will have a better idea where hot spots are and can be proactive in trimming before calls come in."

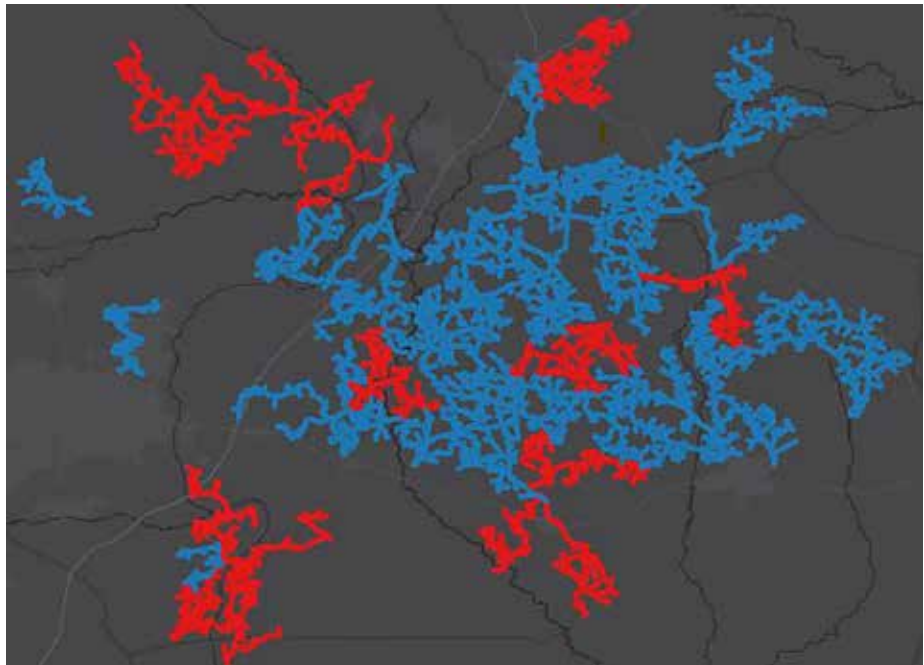
## **2023 ROW Schedule Trimming:**

- ▶ Anderson Creek- 56.5 miles
- ▶ Harrington- 102.6 miles
- ▶ Little River- 62 miles
- ▶ South River- 127.9 miles
- ▶ Western Harnett- 65.5 miles

## **2023 ROW Spraying Schedule:**

- ▶ Erwin- 100 miles
- ▶ Grays Creek- 51.1 miles
- ▶ Harrington- 80.1 miles
- ▶ Herman Jackson- 153 miles
- ▶ Piney Green- 138.7 miles

That's a total 937.4 miles of line being cleared in 2023.



*This map shows areas where trees are within range of our power lines, that if they fall, could interrupt service.*

# You've Got The A's

*You made the grade and we are happy to recognize your hard work so far this school year.*

The following 15 students received at least one A on his or her most recent report card and submitted it for the "Give Us An A" drawing. Each student selected will receive a \$25 gift card:

**J'Lynn Williamson**

Roseboro-Salemburg Middle

**Joshua Culbreth**

Mac Williams Middle

**Catherine Williams**

Clement Elementary

**Tara Feimster**

North Carolina Virtual Academy

**Giulianna Copare**

Fayetteville Christian Academy

**Jocelyn Williams**

Midway Middle

**Michael Monte**

Harnett Central High

**Lydia Butts**

Erwin Elementary

**Jade Feimster**

Cumberland Academy

Virtual School

**Samuel Mitchell**

Hobpton High

**Kaitlyn Fulmore**

Grays Creek Middle

**Emery Williams**

Clement Elementary

**Chase Jackson**

Hobpton Elementary

**Claire Joyce**

St. Ann Catholic School

**Cam Vuncannon**

Western Harnett High

Congratulations to our lucky students! Keep up the good work!

The next "Give Us An A" drawing will be in July.

# Last Chance Middle Schoolers

*This summer, current fifth and sixth graders can attend the Touchstone Energy Basketball camps offered at NC State and UNC-Chapel Hill, courtesy of South River EMC.*

The camp opportunity gives 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 (June 17-21) and the Wolfpack Women's Basketball Academy at North Carolina State University in Raleigh (June 18-22).

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.
- ▶ Provide their own transportation to and from camp.



Winners will attend 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 ends March 31.

Eligible students interested in the scholarship can visit [sremc.com/basketball-camps](http://sremc.com/basketball-camps), or [ncelectriccooperatives.com/sports-camps](http://ncelectriccooperatives.com/sports-camps) to complete an application.

Applications must be completed online.

## Why Are Profiles Important?

*The SmartEnergy Profile program available to members provides you with a report designed to help you manage energy use better.*



The report may answer some of those all important questions, such as:

- ▶ What are major energy uses in your home?
- ▶ How are energy costs varying month to month, year to year?
- ▶ Are there ways to save that you're missing?

This is done by inputting home data, using your billing data and local temperatures to give you a detailed bill analysis.

When you make changes, whether to thermostat settings or

appliances, update your profile to see how it impacts your energy use and costs.

Looking at how choices impact your energy use is often helpful in making energy saving changes work well for you.

You can sign up today by either logging into your South River EMC account or visiting [sremc.com/smartenergy-profile](https://sremc.com/smartenergy-profile).

Don't be shy, fill out your profile, and if you make a change in your home, make it in your profile.

This helps to customize your energy use report, as well as your energy saving tips.

## Notice of Hearing

*South River EMC is soliciting public input regarding our demand-response and electric vehicle charging standards as part of new requirements contained in the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021, which amended Title I of the Public Utility Regulatory Policies Act (PURPA).*

The amendment to PURPA requires South River EMC to garner public input and hold a hearing on these standards on or before Nov. 15.

South River EMC will receive written member and public comments until April 28, to facilitate the consideration and determination of appropriate standards on the following matters: Demand-response practices, pursuant to 16 U.S.C. § 2621(d) (20). Electric vehicle charging programs, pursuant to 16 U.S.C. § 2621(d)(21).

### Your Opinions Matter

Your input is welcome and it must be made in the form of a written comment. The official comment form can be found online at [sremc.com/PURPA](https://sremc.com/PURPA), via email request to [PURPAComments@sremc.com](mailto:PURPAComments@sremc.com) or in either office. Completed forms should be



returned by one of the following ways:

- ▶ by U.S. Mail addressed to South River EMC Attention: PURPA, PO Box 931, Dunn, NC 28335;
- ▶ via email to [PURPAComments@sremc.com](mailto:PURPAComments@sremc.com);
- ▶ through online form at [sremc.com/PURPA](https://sremc.com/PURPA);
- ▶ or through hand delivery.

The Board of Directors of South River EMC will consider the comments starting on June 6 and will issue the Cooperative's written determination on or before Nov. 15. This schedule may be revised or updated.

For complete information, please visit [sremc.com/PURPA](https://sremc.com/PURPA).



## What A HERO Home Offers

The Home Energy Rating System (HERS) score is the measure of a home's energy efficiency and the lower the score, the more energy-efficient and well-built the home.

As part of the North Carolina Energy Conservation Code, the HERO program encourages energy-efficient building. Homes that qualify for the program are some of the highest-quality and most energy-efficient homes being built today.

In fact, the increased energy efficiency measures have been evaluated as the most cost-effective measures for achieving an additional 30 percent in

energy efficiency beyond minimum code requirements. This means a chance at monthly savings, with another benefit of a HERO home being that the house is more comfortable due to less drafts from the tighter framing/envelope.

If you're in the market for a new home, a HERO home might be for you. For details on the home specifications visit [energycodes.gov](http://energycodes.gov). For information on the rebates issued on a HERO home, visit [sremc.com/hero-program](http://sremc.com/hero-program) or email [adviseguys@sremc.com](mailto:adviseguys@sremc.com).

## Water Heating Has Options

Water heaters provide us with our hot water needs, but in order to get the most cost-effective use you have to start with the type of unit you buy.

First, you look at fuel type, electric or natural gas. Then it's on to size, with options for a 30-gallon tank up to 80 gallons depending on family size.

Second, you must decide if you will purchase a water heater with a tank, or a tankless water heater. Tankless water heaters are energy savers if you are heating water with natural gas. A standard and a tankless water heater are similar in use because of the initial energy used to heat water on demand of a tankless unit.

Third, there are the number of brands. The brand

you select may be based on cost, research, or opinion. The one thing to remember is that the unit has to be a good fit for your family.

The most efficient options for many families are solar and heat pump water heaters. Though both are more expensive than a standard electric water heater, depending on your water use, they could be more efficient. But as we always recommend, do your research. Look for space or temperature requirements, back-up options or necessities.

South River EMC offers rebates on solar and heat pump water heating installations. For details visit [sremc.com/energy-efficient-water-heating](http://sremc.com/energy-efficient-water-heating) or email [adviseguys@sremc.com](mailto:adviseguys@sremc.com).

## Energy Star Appliance

The Energy Star appliance rebate will be discontinued on March 1.

## Weatherize For Comfort To Improve Costs

South River EMC's new weatherization program begins March 1.

Comfort is important, and if you're not comfortable it can cost. That's why making improvements is your best bet. Not only can improvements help your comfort, but they might also help your cost.

Residents who meet federal low-income guidelines living in

a single family or manufactured home are eligible for a weatherization rebate if they participate in a weatherization program offered by a third-party contractor.

The work must be performed by some agency such as Community Action, and include air/duct sealing, improved insulation, an HVAC tune up, and programmable thermostat.

You must own the home where the work is being performed.

Rebates are available for homes with air source heat pumps or electric furnace and central air conditioning that have had the work performed.

Details can be found at [sremc.com/weatherization](https://sremc.com/weatherization) or by emailing [adviseguys@sremc.com](mailto:adviseguys@sremc.com).

## Heating And Cooling Add Up

Sometimes replacing your heating and cooling system is just what needs to be done.

Even the highest seasonal energy efficiency ratio (SEER), rating, gets old and over time, becomes less efficient. Keeping the unit serviced will keep it running as efficiently as possible, but when it's time to replace, consider your options.

Air source heat pumps, which

pull heat from the surrounding air, are eligible for a rebate, as long as they are 16 SEER or greater. Rebate amounts vary based on SEER rating and type of home.

Then, there are the homes that have central air conditioning, if you install a unit of 16 SEER or greater, you could be eligible for a rebate.

Lastly, geothermal rebates are rarely seen as a replacement to

air source heat pumps because of the groundwork needed, but units installed that are 17.1 energy efficiency ratio (EER) rating or greater are also eligible for a rebate.

Full rebate information is available at [sremc.com/energy-star-heating-cooling](https://sremc.com/energy-star-heating-cooling) or by emailing [adviseguys@sremc.com](mailto:adviseguys@sremc.com).



## New Energy Efficient And Renewable Tax Credits



There are new energy efficiency and renewable tax credits available thanks to the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022. If you've been considering making an improvement, this might be the time.

Credits are available for purchases made between Jan. 1, 2023, and Dec. 31, 2032.

### Let's look at the energy efficiency credits available

- ▶ **Air source/ mini-split heat pumps:** 16 SEER or greater units are eligible for up to \$2,000 in credit (30% of the purchase and installation).
- ▶ **Central air conditioning:** a 16 SEER or greater unit is eligible for a tax credit up to \$600 (30% of the purchase and installation).
- ▶ **Gas furnaces:** the unit must have a 97% annual fuel utilization efficiency or greater and is eligible for a tax credit for up to \$600 (30% of the purchase and installation).
- ▶ **Insulation, to include weather stripping, spray foam, air-sealing caulk and house wrap (batts, rolls, blow-in fibers, rigid board, expanding**

**spray or pour in place):** elements are available for tax credit up to \$1,200 (30% of the purchase and installation).

- ▶ **Windows and skylights:** Energy Star certified models are eligible for a tax credit up to \$600 (30% of the purchase and installation).
- ▶ **Exterior doors:** Energy Star-certified doors are eligible for tax credits up to \$500, approximately \$250 per door (30% of the purchase and installation).

### There are also options for clean energy tax credits


- ▶ **Geothermal heat pumps:** units must be Energy Star certified and are eligible for tax credits up to \$3,200 (30% of purchase and installation cost.)
- ▶ **Residential solar:** Unit must be located at either primary or secondary home, no rentals, and the system must be net metered for a tax credit of 30% the purchase and installation cost.
- ▶ **Battery storage:** unit must be three kilowatts or greater on non rental property and is eligible for a tax credit of 30% of the cost of purchase and installation.
- ▶ **Fuel cells:** units of a half kilowatt (0.5) or greater with an electricity only generation efficiency of greater than 30% on principal homes only. Units are eligible for tax credits of 30% of the cost of purchase and installation.



South River EMC  
**Communicator**

PO Box 931  
Dunn, NC 28335  
910.892.8071  
800.338.5530  
sremc.com



 Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives  
The power of human connections®