

South River EMC Communicator

March 2026

Career Readiness

Marissa Fux, a vice principal at Cape Fear High School, received a \$2,500 Bright Ideas grant to build a career ready program for her students.

"I got into education while I was still in high school," she said. "I served as a physical education pupil instructor, or PEPI, where I supported elementary students with special needs."

This confirmed for her that education was where she belonged. After working at several schools closely with students, families and other teachers to ensure students had access to the services and support they needed, Fux felt led to go into school leadership.

Awarded a scholarship through the NC Principal Fellows Program at NC State University, she became an assistant principal at Lee County High School and later transitioned to Cape Fear High School.

"The idea for Cape Fear Pipeline Academy came directly from the needs of our students and school community," she said. "While Cape Fear High School is a Blue Ribbon School of Excellence, with many strong academic programs, I noticed a gap when it came to trade and hands-on career pathways."

As she had seen through the years, many students don't thrive in the traditional academic setting.

"They still need a reason to believe in themselves and feel connected to school," said Fux. "Growing up in a blue-collar family, I saw

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Marissa Fux and her students in the Pipeline Academy.



South River EMC earns this award based on data modeled by the ACSI® in 2024. Award criteria are determined by the ACSI based on customers rating their satisfaction with South River EMC in a survey independent of the syndicated ACSI Energy Utility Study. For more about the ACSI, visit theacsi.org/ badges. ACSI and its logo are registered trademarks of the American Customer Satisfaction Index LLC.

first-hand how skilled trades can provide stability, pride and opportunity and that perspective stayed with me."

Fux started the program with the support of her husband, who is a licensed plumber as well as a plumbing instructor at Fayetteville Technical Community College, and Principal Dr. Jason Jordan, all with the shared understanding that this was truly for the students.

"I put out a student interest application through social media, flyers and teacher referrals, especially in hands-on classes like agriculture."

The response was well received with Fux receiving 22 applications, all of which she accepted.

"Once interest was there, everything else followed," she said. "Community partners stepped up, industry professionals volunteered, and resources began to align; it truly became a community effort."

The ability to offer experiences like this is beneficial, especially since after the first session of this class there are already two students enrolled in FTCC courses.



Hands-on learning time.

"The Academy directed them smoothly into a high school connection and into college for free," she said.

Looking ahead, the plan is to run the academy during the fall semester, and to begin with plumbing and continuing on from there.

For the spring semester, the plan is to offer shorter workshops and mini-sessions in various trades like plumbing, electrical, HVAC and even beekeeping.

"The goal was never just to teach plumbing," said Fux. "It

was about showing students what's possible—helping them see a future where their talents, interests, and hard work lead to real opportunities."

It looks like this Bright Ideas grant started this program off on a good path with interested students, and highly invested educators.

"Students were excited by the hands-on learning, real tools, real professionals and the opportunity to do something different from a traditional classroom," said Fux. "Once the program started, interest grew even more, but I intentionally kept the initial group small to build a strong foundation and culture from the beginning."

That foundation looks to be solid and with continued support and interest, will continue to grow.

If you are a public school teacher with a Bright Idea, the application period opens April 1 and closes Sept. 15. Learn more at sremc.com/bright-ideas.

Students listen intently to a guest speaker.



Rate Update: Frequently Asked Questions

Why is my rate changing?

It is South River EMC's mission to deliver electricity at the lowest possible cost, and we work hard to achieve this goal. A recent cost-of-service study showed our current rates need to be adjusted to cover expenses and maintain financial stability. Factors include increased business costs, and higher demand.

How much will my bill change?

Beginning with March bills, the average change will be \$15.30 per 1,000 kwh. However, because we have been using an Equalizer amount of \$7.50 per 1,000 kwh, the impact would be about \$7.80 per 1,000 kwh.

How does this change differ from the Equalizer South River EMC has been using?

The Equalizer is a temporary measure used to recover unexpected increases, while a rate change is a long-term solution for permanent increases. A minimal Equalizer charge will continue through 2026 to recover shortfalls in January and February.

What is the co-op doing to hold down costs?

South River EMC is committed to finding every savings opportunity possible. Additionally, the Cooperative is leveraging AI to streamline tasks and increase productivity. We are continually evaluating operations, reducing expenses where we can, and working to keep rates stable for as long as possible.

Residential Service	
Grid Access	
Single-Phase	\$37.50
Energy	
Summer	13.09¢
Winter	12.09¢

Residential TOU Service	
Grid Access	
Single-Phase	\$41.25
Energy	
On- Peak	21.90¢
Off-Peak	8.76¢
Super Off-Peak	4.39¢

Visit [sremc.com/rates](https://www.sremc.com/rates) for more information.

Why doesn't the co-op cut its budget?

The co-op operates as leanly as possible without affecting service quality or safety. Budget cuts alone cannot offset the significant increase in delivery costs.

where you can reduce costs. Scan this QR Code to learn more:



What can I do to help control my costs?

• Visit [sremc.com](https://www.sremc.com) and try out the energy calculators to see



Reliability Requires Investment

As your local power provider, South River EMC's mission has always been simple: keep the lights on and support the communities we serve. But behind every switch, every warm home and every business that opens its doors is a complex system that requires constant care.

Reliable electricity doesn't happen by accident. It requires ongoing investment in our local grid—through system repairs, maintenance, upgrades and the integration of new technologies that help us operate smarter and more efficiently.

Much of the energy system we rely on today was built decades ago. While it continues to serve us well, age alone means that components must be repaired or replaced to maintain performance and safety.

From poles and wires to transformers and substations, every part of the grid has a lifespan. Routine maintenance helps extend that lifespan, but eventually equipment must be updated to meet modern standards. These proactive investments reduce the likelihood of outages, shorten restoration times when disruptions do occur and create a stronger backbone for our growing community.

The demands on the electric grid are also evolving. Homes and businesses today use more electricity than ever, and that trend will only continue. Electric vehicles, advanced HVAC systems, smart appliances and new commercial facilities add load to the local distribution system. As these technologies take hold, the grid must be able

to support increased demand while maintaining the reliability our members expect. Strategic upgrades are essential to ensuring we can meet these needs both today and in the decades ahead.

At the same time, new technologies are reshaping how we operate. Tools such as, smart meters, drones and advanced monitoring systems allow us to detect problems faster and respond more effectively. These technologies can isolate problems, reroute power to minimize outages and provide real-time data that helps us plan and maintain equipment more efficiently.

Implementing innovative technologies into the grid is not just a convenience—it is a necessity for ensuring reliability in an increasingly complex energy landscape.

While these improvements require thoughtful planning and financial investment, the return is significant. A stronger grid supports economic growth, improves service quality and enhances safety for our crews and community. Most importantly, it ensures that the essential power you rely on is available whenever you need it.



Our commitment to reliability runs deeper than infrastructure alone. It reflects our responsibility to the people and communities we serve. Every upgrade, every repair and every technology we deploy is an investment in your daily life—from the comfort of your home to the success of local businesses and schools.

We know that powering our community means preparing for the future, not just maintaining the present. By investing in our local grid today, we are building the foundation for a brighter, more resilient tomorrow.



The 2026 Annual Meeting

Begin registration for the Annual Meeting with a phone call or online form beginning April 27 at 8 a.m. You must be registered before the beginning of the Annual Meeting on April 30 at 6 p.m.

Students, You Could Be Here

Students have a few more weeks to apply for the All-Star Sports Camps held at two college campuses. Current fifth and sixth graders can apply for the 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 June 27-30 and the Wolfpack Women's Basketball Academy at North Carolina State University in Raleigh June 14-17.

The overnight camps enable campers to 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.
- ▶ Have their own transportation to and from camp.



Rayleigh Arnold and Coach Wes Moore



Kyrin Ford and Coach Hubert Davis

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 to March 31. Eligible students interested in the scholarship should visit [sremc.com/basketball-camps](https://www.sremc.com/basketball-camps).



Weatherize For Comfort

Weatherization is important because it improves comfort, safety and energy efficiency in homes and buildings. By sealing air leaks and adding insulation, weatherization helps maintain

consistent indoor temperatures year-round. This reduces heating and cooling costs, lowers energy consumption and eases strain on utility systems. Weatherization also protects buildings from mois-

ture damage, improves indoor air quality, and can extend the life of HVAC equipment.

Scan the QR code for weatherization rebate details from South River EMC.

Save Big With A Heat Pump Rebate

The Cooperative helps members upgrade to high-efficiency heat pumps through a rebate program designed to reduce upfront costs and lower long-term energy bills.

Installing a qualifying heat pump allows homeowners to earn a rebate while improving comfort and system performance.

Heat pump efficiency is measured using the SEER 2 (Seasonal Energy Efficiency Ratio 2) rating, the current federal standard.

SEER 2 replaced the older SEER rating and reflects real-world operating conditions,

including updated testing procedures and external static pressure. Because of this, SEER 2 ratings provide a more accurate picture of how efficiently a system will perform in everyday use.

A higher SEER 2 rating means the heat pump delivers more cooling for each unit of electricity, resulting in lower energy consumption and reduced utility bills.

Compared to older systems, SEER 2-rated heat pumps operate more efficiently, run more quietly, and maintain more consistent indoor temperatures.

By upgrading to a qualifying heat pump, you can take advantage of the rebate, improve home comfort, and enjoy long-term energy savings.

For rebate information scan the QR code.



Water Heating For Less?

Interested in installing a new water heater?

Eligible options typically include heat pump water heaters, which use heat from the surrounding air to heat water far more efficiently than standard

electric models, and solar water heaters that harness the sun's energy.

Members can receive a rebate—often around \$200 for a heat pump water heater and \$150 for a solar water heater— after

purchase and installation.

Efficient water heaters can significantly reduce energy use and lower monthly utility bills, while the rebate helps offset upfront costs.

For details, scan the QR code.

Energy-Smart Savings for New Homes

The HERO Home Program rewards members who buy or build high-efficiency homes.

HERO stands for High Efficiency Residential Option, and these homes are designed to be at least 30% more energy efficient than standard new construction under North Carolina's building code.

That means better insulation, tighter air sealing, improved windows, efficient lighting, and smart equipment choices—all combining to lower energy bills

and boost comfort.

There are two ways to receive the HERO certification:

The Prescriptive Path is straightforward but inflexible. It involves full compliance with a list of specific requirements for things like insulation, high-efficiency lighting, window U-factors, whole house tightness and duct leakage testing, among other things.

The Performance Path, on the other hand, is more flexible. It

requires an energy cost analysis as proof that the home you are building will have energy costs that are less than or equal to that same home built to the HERO Code's prescriptive requirements.

This path does NOT allow for appliance tradeoffs, because the HERO Code is focused almost solely on improvements in the thermal enclosure.

South River EMC offers rebates for HERO homes, scan the QR code for more information.



Pool Pump Speed Options Explained

Pool pumps are essential for circulating water and keeping a pool clean, but not all pumps operate the same way. The type of pump you choose can affect energy use, noise levels, and long-term operating costs.

Single-Speed Pumps

Operate at one constant, high speed; lowest upfront cost and

simple to operate; highest energy consumption and operating cost; loud operation.

Two-Speed Pumps

Run at high speed for cleaning and low speed for daily filtration; more energy-efficient and quieter than single-speed pumps; moderate upfront cost with noticeable energy savings; limited flexibility

with only two fixed speeds.

Variable-Speed Pumps

Allow precise speed control for different pool functions; most energy-efficient option; very quiet; higher upfront costs with considerable energy savings.

A rebate is available, scan the QR code on page F for details.

Rebate Can Help With Necessary Window Replacement

Windows do more than open to the breeze — they protect your home from the elements, affect comfort, curb appeal and energy costs. If windows are past their prime, replacement could be more than cosmetic ... it's smart financial planning.

1. Rising Energy Bills

Windows with poor insulation let conditioned air escape in winter and let heat in during summer, causing your HVAC system to work harder and increasing energy costs.

2. Noticeable Drafts or Temperature Imbalances

If you feel cold air seeping in around the frame or your rooms are unevenly heated/cooled, it's a sign your windows may no longer seal properly.

3. Difficulty Opening or Closing Windows

Sticking, jamming or windows that won't stay open often point to warped frames or failed hardware—common issues in aging windows.

4. Condensation Between the Panes

Moisture or fog between double-paned glass means the seal has failed and the insulating gas is gone, significantly reducing efficiency.

5. Visible Damage or Decay

Cracks in glass, rotting wood frames, peeling paint, and warping don't just look bad—they compromise the functionality of the window.

6. Excess Outside Noise

Older, inefficient windows let more sound into your home. Newer models with better seals and

insulated glass can help reduce neighborhood or traffic noise.

7. Outdated Appearance

Old windows can drag down your home's aesthetic. New windows refresh both interior and exterior looks.

8. Safety and Security Concerns

Windows with worn-out locks or thin glass are easier to break. Modern replacements often include stronger glazing and improved locking systems.

9. Poor UV Protection

UV rays can fade furniture, flooring, and décor. Many newer windows include coatings that block more harmful UV radiation.

South River EMC offers rebates for window replacements.

For details scan the QR code on page F.

South River EMC
Communicator

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The power of human connections®