

South River EMC Communicator

August 2026

Supporting Our Troops

South River EMC awarded an Operation Round Up grant to a non-profit organization called Blue Star Families, which offers support to military and veteran-connected families surrounding Ft. Bragg and throughout southeastern North Carolina.

Fort Bragg is the largest United States Army base by population, serving a population of 48,775 active-duty soldiers, 3,597 reserve components and temporary duty students, 17,345 civilian employees and contractors and 70,109 active-duty family members according to Military One Source.

"Blue Star Families launched the Greater Fayetteville Region Chapter in April 2025," said Tate Johnson, executive director. "Since launching, we have focused on helping military families feel connected to their communities through programs centered on wellness, belonging, food security, and family resilience."

The grant they received has gone into the Greater Fayetteville Region (GFR) Outdoors Programming, which is one of their fastest-growing initiatives.

The opportunity provides free, family centered outdoor experiences for military members living throughout Cumberland, Sampson, Harnett, Bladen and surrounding counties.

"These experiences are intentionally designed to bring military families together outside of the day-to-day stressors of military life," said Johnson.

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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.

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"For families navigating deployments, permanent change of station, or PCS moves, and time away from support networks, GFR Outdoors creates opportunities to build friendships, strengthen family bonds, improve wellness, and feel a greater sense of belonging in the communities they call home."

Outdoor programming for this year will and has included:

- ziplining adventures at ZipQuest;
- a family kayaking experience;
- a river tubing excursion;
- a family fishing day and outdoor education is scheduled for September; and
- a military family trip to the North Carolina Zoo is set for November.

Opportunities like this allow military families to engage with their local communities to address the challenges found in the Blue Star Families Military Family Lifestyle Survey.

"The survey found that only 39% of active-duty family respondents report feeling a strong sense of belonging in their local civilian community," said Johnson. "It has also identified persistent challenges, including military spouse unemployment, food insecurity, and social isolation—all of which can affect a family's overall well-being and readiness."



Attending a Woodpecker game.

Therefore, creating opportunities for them to engage with their local communities helps address these challenges and builds a stronger community overall.

Whether families kayak together, attend community festivals, participate in food distributions, explore local attractions, or network at career events, they develop relationships that strengthen both military and civilian communities alike.

Furthermore, experiences like this reduce isolation, introduce families to local resources, support military spouse employment through expanded networks, and foster a greater sense of belonging.

Even better, once a military family settles into a community, a service member is able to focus on missions knowing their family has support, and that works for everyone.

Great Grades Were Made in 2025-2026

As we start getting ready for another school year, we must take a moment to recognize the hard work from last school year.

That's right, our "Give Us An A" winners have been selected.

• **Steffon Richardson**
Gallberry Farm Elementary

• **Sarah Bullard**
Cape Fear High

• **Kaylen Sykes**
Pine Forest High

• **James Belprez**
Northwood Temple Academy

• **Makyleigh Smith**
Riverside Christian Academy

• **Peyton Hall**
Stedman Elementary

• **Ethan Lopez**
St. Patrick Catholic School

• **Katina Anderson**
Brookside Christian Academy

• **J'Lynn Williamson**
Lakewood High

• **Mariah Richardson**
Gray's Creek Middle

• **Izabella Urena**
Riverside Christian Academy

• **Antonio Richardson**
Westover High

• **Camryn Alderson**
Freedom Christian Academy

• **Colton Utley**
Pine Forest Middle

• **Tara Feimster**
Gray's Creek High

Thank you to all our diligent students who earned those A's, you will each receive a \$25 gift card.

Interested in participating? The next Give Us An A drawing will take place in February.

Meter Tampering: Dangerous and Illegal

Let's set the scene, it has been another hot day and your heating and cooling unit has been working hard to keep you comfortable. In fact, it's been running a lot lately and that's likely adding up.

Someone, they might pose as a professional, asks if you would be interested in saving some money on your electric bill. They will say they know a way and in most cases these people will have a cost to help you achieve these savings.

Don't believe it, because what is more than likely happening, is that your meter is being tampered with, which is the illegal and dangerous practice of altering, bypassing, or damaging a utility meter to prevent it from accurately recording consumption, usually to lower utility bills.

First and foremost, meter tampering is dangerous, according to the Cooperative Research Network, illegally utilizing a meter can cause an arc flash bright enough to cause blindness and powerful enough to launch fragments of shrapnel-like, red-hot

debris. You don't want to end up on the wrong side of that.

No one other than a trained employee of South River EMC or an authorized contractor of the Cooperative is permitted to break the meter seal. Any member who is found to have bypassed the meter or unlawfully removed the meter will have electric service disconnected immediately and will be subject to a fine.

Fines are \$500 for the first offense, a \$1,000 fine for the second and so on. The member must pay the entire outstanding amount due, including fees, before electric service will be reconnected. The Cooperative can seek criminal prosecution if

deemed necessary.

Even if you did not perform the tampering, if your meter has been tampered with, those fees will be assigned to you as the meter is assigned to your home.

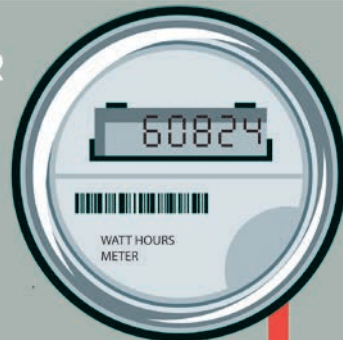
We choose to discuss this because it's a problem that can impact many people. Tapering is itself dangerous and illegal on top of that, then with damage to equipment or stolen energy, you're likely worse off than when you started.

If you have been contacted about something like this, all we can ask is for you to say no. If you see anything a miss with your electric service at the meter, please contact us at 910.892.8071.

DO NOT TAMPER WITH YOUR ELECTRIC METER

Meter tampering can result in electric shock, is illegal and increases electricity rates for other co-op members.

- ⊘ Never break a meter seal.
- ⊘ Never open a meter base.
- ⊘ Never remove a meter or alter an entrance cable in any manner.



If you know or suspect that someone has tampered with their meter, please contact us immediately.

Trade your mailbox for your inbox.

With an email notification each month, you'll find bill-paying is easier, neater, less stressful, and you'll save money! Enroll today at www.SREMC.com/ebilling.

Understanding Your Electric Bill

August is typically one of the warmest months of the year, and that means air conditioners across our community are working overtime to keep homes comfortable. During periods of extreme heat, many members may see an increase in their electric bill and wonder what factors contribute to the cost of electricity.

At South River EMC, we believe understanding your electric bill is an important part of being an informed member. While the total amount due may seem like a single number, it actually reflects several different costs associated with delivering reliable electricity to your home or business each month.

The largest factor is often the amount of energy you use. Electricity is measured in kilowatt-hours (kWh), and the more energy your household consumes, the higher your bill will be.

During the summer, air conditioning is typically the largest driver of increased energy use. When temperatures climb into the 90s or higher, our cooling systems run longer and more frequently, consuming significantly more electricity than they do during milder weather.

Another major factor is the cost of generating or purchasing electricity. Like many cooperatives, South River EMC purchases power through contracts with North Carolina Electric Membership Corporation. The cost of producing electricity fluctuates based on fuel prices, including natural gas, coal and other energy resources used to generate power. Changes in wholesale power costs influence the price of elec-

tricity delivered to members.

Transmission costs also play a role. Before electricity reaches your home, it must travel across a network of high-voltage transmission lines that connect power plants to local distribution systems. Transmission equipment requires ongoing maintenance and upgrades to ensure reliability, especially as electricity demand continues to grow.

Closer to home, South River EMC maintains the local electric distribution system—utility poles, power lines, transformers, substations and other essential equipment that safely delivers power to members.

Maintaining this equipment is covered through the monthly service charge. This is a flat monthly fee all members pay, regardless of how much electricity they use. This fixed fee ensures all members pay a fair share of the basic, operational costs required to keep the power grid reliable and ready to serve your home or business. Whether a member uses a little electricity or a lot, we must maintain infrastructure and have crews, equipment and resources available to provide electricity around the clock.

Summer temperatures can also influence costs in less obvious ways. When the demand for electricity is high across a region, wholesale power prices can increase. Utilities and grid



operators must ensure enough generation is available to meet peak demand, and those costs can be reflected throughout the electric system.

The good news is that simple steps to lower energy use can make a meaningful difference. Setting your thermostat a few degrees higher when you're away, replacing dirty HVAC filters, using ceiling fans, sealing air leaks and avoiding the use of major appliances during the hottest parts of the day can help reduce energy consumption, lower your bill and reduce strain on the local grid during peak demand.

South River EMC's mission is to provide safe, reliable and affordable electricity while being transparent about the factors that impact energy costs. We understand every dollar matters, and we are committed to making smart investments that keep the lights on and support the communities we serve.

If you ever have questions about your electric bill or co-op programs designed to help you save, please reach out. We're here to help you make informed decisions that work for your household.

Bright Ideas Deadline Approaching Swiftly

Every great lesson begins with a Bright Idea.

Through the Bright Ideas grant program, South River EMC is proud to help local teachers turn innovative classroom concepts into reality.

Bright Ideas provides grants of up to \$2,500 for creative, hands-on classroom projects that enhance student learning in certified North Carolina public K-12 schools.

Whether it's introducing new STEM technology, creating engaging literacy programs, expanding art and music opportunities, or bringing science to life through interactive experiments, the program helps educators provide experiences that might not otherwise fit within school budgets.



Funding cannot be used for professional development.

Each year, South River EMC awards at least \$50,000 in Bright Ideas funding to eligible teachers serving schools in parts of Harnett, Johnston, Sampson and Cumberland counties.

Since 1994, North Carolina's electric cooperatives have invested millions of dollars in innovative classroom projects, benefiting millions of students across the state.

The application period opened April 1, and we have seen a lot of applications come in so far.

Teachers who submit their applications by Aug. 15 are entered into a drawing for a \$100 Visa gift card, while the final application deadline is Sept. 15.

Applications must be submitted online through the Bright Ideas website at ncbrightideas.com.

South River EMC believes strong schools build strong communities. By supporting teachers with funding for innovative educational projects, the cooperative invests in the future workforce and helping students discover new opportunities to learn, explore and succeed.

Learn more about South River EMC's Bright Ideas program at sremc.com/bright-ideas.

Flags will fly once again over South River EMC offices for Veteran's Day. Sponsorship opportunities will open next month if you would like to honor or memorialize an active or retired service member with a tag. For details visit sremcfields.com





Is A HERO Home For You?

South River EMC's High Efficiency Residential Option (HERO) program is an option to consider if you're in the market for a new home.

Choosing a HERO home can help you save up to 30% because these homes are built efficiently from the ground up.

The HERO program offers re-

bates to builders and buyers who build to either the prescriptive or the performance path.

For details on the program or the rebate, scan the QR code.

Stay Cool And Save

Replacing an older heating and cooling system with a high-efficiency unit, 16 SEER 2 or greater, can improve comfort and help reduce energy use.

The cooling efficiency of a unit is measured by the seasonal

energy efficiency ratio 2, or SEER 2, rating. The higher the rating, the more efficient a system.

A properly sized and professionally installed system can provide more consistent temperatures and improved indoor comfort.

South River EMC offers rebates to members who install higher efficiency HVAC systems in their homes.

Learn more about the rebate by scanning the QR code.

Improve Efficiency To Help Cut Costs

Making your home more energy-efficient starts with reducing air leaks and improving insulation.

Having the right amount of insulation and sealing air leaks is important, with approximately 50% of your electric bill attributed to heating and cooling.

If cost is standing in your way, having a weatherization package

completed by Community Action, could make you eligible for a rebate from South River EMC.

A weatherization package for single family or manufactured low-income homes includes: air/duct sealing, improved insulation, an HVAC tune-up or replacement and a programmable thermostat in a home with a heat pump or an

electric furnace/central AC.

For details scan the QR code.



A Window Upgrade Could Help Savings

Upgrading to newer, more efficient windows is a smart investment that can improve your home's comfort and help lower energy costs.

Energy-efficient windows help reduce unwanted heat gain during the summer and heat loss

during the winter, making it easier for your heating and cooling system to maintain a comfortable indoor temperature.

In addition, new windows can enhance your home's appearance and increase its overall value.

South River EMC has a rebate to help members offset the cost of installing replacement windows.

For complete guidelines and rebate details, scan the QR code.

Heat Your Water More Efficiently To Save

Installing an energy-efficient water heater can help lower energy use, while providing reliable hot water for your family.

The water heating rebate helps members reduce the cost of purchasing and installing solar or

heat pump water heaters.

Because water heating is one of the largest energy expenses in many homes, upgrading to an efficient model can lead to long-term energy savings.

Both solar and heat pump

water heaters are great options, but you must consider which one works for you.

For complete eligibility information, rebate amounts and application details, scan the QR code.

Pool Pumps, Still Part Of A Discussion

A variable or two-speed pool pump can help reduce electricity use while keeping your pool clean and properly maintained.

Variable and two-speed pool pumps operate more efficiently than traditional single-speed

models by allowing the pump to adjust its speed based on the pool's needs.

These upgrades can provide reliable performance while helping members save energy and lower operating costs over

the life of the equipment.

If you're thinking about upgrading your pool pump, a variable or two-speed could earn you a rebate.

For complete eligibility information, scan the QR code.



Message from Advise Guy Aaron Jackson



Keep the Sunshine Outside This Summer

When temperatures climb into the 90s, most of us expect our air conditioners to work overtime.

But what many homeowners don't realize is that one of the biggest sources of heat inside the home is sunshine coming through the windows.

Heat moves in three basic ways: conduction, convection, and radiation. During the summer, the sun's energy reaches your home as radiant heat. Unlike conduction or convection, radiant heat doesn't need air to carry it. It travels in the form of electromagnetic waves from the sun through space and then passes easily through your windows.

Once that sunlight enters your home, it strikes your floors, furniture, countertops and walls. Those surfaces absorb the sun's energy and heat up. They then slowly release that heat into the air inside your home, much like a sidewalk stays warm long after the sun goes down.

During the winter months this is a great way to cheaply warm our homes but, in the summer, this process creates a "greenhouse

effect," forcing your air conditioner to remove not only the heat coming in from outside but also the heat that has been stored inside your home.

The U.S. Department of Energy estimates that 25 to 30% of the energy used for heating and cooling is associated with heat gain and heat loss through windows. Even modern double-pane windows can allow a significant amount of the sun's heat to enter your home on a bright summer day.

The good news is that one of the easiest energy-saving measures is also one of the least expensive. By closing blinds, shades, or curtains before direct sunlight enters your home, you can block much of that radiant energy before it can heat the surfaces inside. Less heat enters your living space, which means your air conditioner has less work to do.

Pay particular attention to east and west-facing windows. East-facing windows receive intense morning sun, while west-facing windows often receive the hottest

afternoon sun—just as outdoor

temperatures are reaching their peak. Keeping these windows shaded can noticeably improve comfort throughout the day. Our family has made it point to do this over the month of June and the increase in comfort when temperatures are at their highest is really astounding.

Energy efficiency doesn't always require expensive upgrades. Sometimes, simple habits make a meaningful difference. Closing your blinds before leaving the house takes only a few seconds, but it can reduce the amount of radiant heat entering your home, improve comfort, and help your air conditioner run more efficiently throughout our long North Carolina summers.

If you are interested in upgrading your windows though, take a look at our Energy Star Windows rebate at sremc.com/advise-guys or reach out to us with questions at adviseguys@sremc.com.



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