



South River EMC Communicator

BRIGHT IDEAS LIGHT UP CLASSROOMS

South River EMC's educational grant program, Bright Ideas, awarded \$59,952 in funding to our local schools in 2019.

This pool consisted of 39 grants from 24 different schools, four in Harnett County, five in Cumberland County, six in Johnston County and nine in Sampson County.

The Bright Ideas grant program was founded in 1994 when studies found that teachers were spending their own money to provide lessons to students.

Since that time, the Bright Ideas grant program has funded over \$12.2 million toward 11,699 grant projects statewide. South River EMC has locally awarded over \$1 million in Bright Ideas grant funding.

The program awards grants to teachers for innovative, classroom-based ideas in the public,



Triton High School's JROTC program will use their Bright Ideas funds for a service project.

Continued page B

INSIDE THIS ISSUE



South River EMC offices will be closed January 1 in celebration of the New Year.

Start those saving resolutions!

- New Savings Opportunity **C**
- Co-op Smart Programs **D**
- Sports Camp Scholarships **E**
- Energy Smarts **F-H**

BRIGHT continued page B
K-12 school system. Grants can be written for any subject up to \$2,500.

There is always a wide variety of projects ranging from books to tablets to gardens, solar power, robotics and STEM projects.

Applications are submitted by veteran and new teachers alike. A grant for one benefits many.

The program kicks off April 1 and closes in mid-September.



Keep an eye out in Carolina Country, as well as at sremc.com to learn more about Bright Ideas deadlines.

For information on the Bright Ideas program, as well as our recent recipients, please visit sremc.com/content/bright-ideas.

Be Ready Should Jack Frost Come Knockin'

With no true way of knowing what kind of weather we'll receive this winter, be it ice, rain, snow, or all three, being prepared is key.

South River EMC works year-round to reduce outage potential, but sometimes weather brings about broken poles, downed lines and more.

Don't be the person on your street waiting for everyone else to report an outage, report it yourself! You can do so in one of two ways, by calling 910.892.8071, or by texting #out to 888.338.5530, provided you have signed up for outage texting.

Outage texting is an opt-in service and requires action on your part to participate.

To begin, follow these steps:

Text the word **SREMCTEXT** to 888.338.5530.

Follow the prompts for a short registration process. You will

need your South River EMC account number.

The cell phone number used for outage reporting must be one of the numbers on the electric account, because the registration process matches your mobile number with your account service location.

You can opt-in to receive outage information for up to four locations. You can also opt-in with the assistance of a member service representative in the office or over the phone.

Once enrolled, it can be up to 24 hours before your account is text ready for you to be able to use key words (#out; #status) to report an outage, check on the status of an outage and be notified once an outage has been restored.

You can opt-out at any time. Just text STOP to 888.338.5530.

Data and messaging fees may apply depending on the terms of your cell service.



NEW SAVINGS OPPORTUNITY

A New Year brings new opportunities to save energy—and money. You may think energy efficiency upgrades require a great deal of time and expense, but that's not always the case.

If you're interested in making your home more efficient, but don't want to break the bank, there are several DIY projects you can tackle to increase energy savings. Let's take a look at three inexpensive efficiency upgrades that can help you save energy throughout the year.

Trim Dryer Vent

Level of difficulty: easy.

Supplies needed: tin snips, gloves, measuring tape and masking tape.

Estimated Cost: \$25.

If your dryer vent hose is too long, your dryer is working harder than it has to, using more energy than necessary. The vent hose should be long enough for you to pull the dryer out a couple feet from the wall, but the shape of the hose should form a line—it should not have a lot of slack, with twists and curves. A shorter, unobstructed vent hose increases the efficiency of your dryer, dries clothing faster and reduces lint buildup, which can create potential fire hazards.

Simply measure, mark and trim the hose to the desired length, then re-attach the hose to your dryer and exterior vent.

If you're unsure about the hose length, check out YouTube.com for a quick video tutorial.

Seal Air Leaks

Level of difficulty: moderate.

Supplies needed: caulk and caulk gun, weather stripping, gloves, putty knife, paper towels.

Estimated Cost: \$25 to \$50.

Sealing air leaks in your home can help you save 10 to 20 percent on heating and cooling bills. Apply caulk around windows, doors, electrical wiring and plumbing to seal in conditioned air. You should also weather strip exterior doors, which can keep out drafts and help you control energy costs. Types of caulking and weather stripping materials vary, but ask your local hardware or home store for assistance if you're unsure about the supplies you need. For more information, the Department of Energy provides step-by-step instructions for caulking and weather stripping: <https://bit.ly/2Kesu6W>

Insulate Attic Stairs Opening

Level of difficulty: moderate.

Supplies needed (if you build the box yourself): rigid foam

board, faced blanket insulation, tape for foam board, measuring tape, utility knife, caulk and caulk gun, plywood.

Estimated Cost: \$50 to \$100.

A properly insulated attic is one of the best ways to optimize energy savings and comfort in your home, but many homeowners don't consider insulating the attic stairs, or the opening to your attic space. Even a well-insulated attic can leak air through the stair opening, but luckily, there's an easy fix.

An insulated cover box can seal and insulate the attic stairs opening. You can build your own insulated cover box or purchase a pre-built box or kit from a local home improvement store like Home Depot or Lowe's for about \$60. If you decide to build your own, check out these step-by-step instructions from the Department of Energy: <https://bit.ly/36YNCYQ>. It should also be noted, if your attic opening is located in a garage that you do not heat and cool, this upgrade will not be as effective.

Saving energy doesn't have to be hard. With a little time and effort, you can maximize energy savings and increase the comfort of your home. To learn about additional ways to save, visit remc.com/content/energy-saving-tips.



COOPERATIVE SMART PROGRAMS

South River EMC is one of the 26 electric cooperatives across the state working to help members manage their energy use. This is done in multiple ways

Energy use monitoring: You can check your daily energy use, and see how outdoor temperatures affect your energy cost, maybe even encouraging you to adjust the thermostat.

SmartEnergy Profile: You can get more in depth with your energy use with the SmartEnergy Profile. By completing a survey on your home, you can learn about where your home is using energy. Not only that, but you also will receive tips to help save.

SmartPay: SmartPay is our pre-paid program, which can also help you track your energy use since you pay for it before you use it. When your balance falls below zero, your power will be disconnected, so by keeping track of your use, you tend to use energy more cautiously.

SmartEnergy Forecaster: The SmartEnergy Forecaster syncs with your SmartEnergy Profile to help calculate daily energy use based on local forecasted temperatures, as well as your profile settings.

Smart Alerts: You have a lot to keep up with, make it easier with Smart Alerts. You can set a due date reminder, a discon-

nection notification, payment receipt, daily use and excessive use, as well as special alerts. You can set up alerts for email, phone call or text.

To see what else South River EMC has to offer, visit our web site at sremc.com, or speak with a member service representative at 910.892.8071.



NEW YEAR, A NEW WAY OF BUSINESS?

As we welcome in the New Year, this is a perfect time to simplify! South River EMC offers you several options to make payments easier.

- **Draft:** By putting your account on draft, you'll receive your electric bill and a date on which it will be deducted from your account. No hassle with due dates, check writing and late fees. You can draft from a bank account or a credit card. Sign up through your online account, by contacting our Member Service Department at 910.892.8071 or e-mailing billing@sremc.com and requesting a draft authorization form, or by visiting an office.

- **E-Billing:** Looking for a way to

cut down on clutter? Sign up for E-Billing and see just how easy managing your account can be while cutting back on paper. No checks to write, stamps to buy, bills to mail. E-Billing perks include email reminders when your bill is ready, online access to your account 24-hours-a-day, seven days-a-week, daily and hourly electric use summaries, and more. To sign up, complete the form under "service options" at sremc.com.



- **Budget Billing:** Would it be easier to pay about the same amount each month? Our budget billing program offers a predictable monthly payment with no true-up, except on your final bill. Based on a rolling 13-month average electric bill, your monthly bill varies slightly, but you'll avoid the abrupt highs and lows from fluctuating weather patterns. Each month your amount will be based on the average of the current bill and the previous 12 months. Average is good.

Interested? You need to have had service with the Cooperative for at least 12 months and your account must be current. Call our office at 910.892.8071 or e-mail us at billing@sremc.com and request budget billing.

GIVE US THOSE A'S!

It's time to send in your kids' most recent report card with at least one A for the "Give Us An A" drawing, to be held in February.



The drawing is held for students achieving at least one A on their report card. Each of the 15 students whose names are drawn will receive a \$25 gift card.

The program is open to students who are members, or children of members, of South River EMC. Just make a copy of the most recent report card with at least one A, and send it to the Cooperative.

You must include the member's name, South River EMC account

number and a daytime telephone number, report cards will not be accepted without this information.

Send report cards to:

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

Or scanned and e-mailed to connections@sremc.com.

Report cards are due by close of business, February 10.

MAKE YOUR APPLICATION A SLAM DUNK

January means a new opportunity for students to get into Cooperative camps.

This month, South River EMC opens up a chance for current fifth, sixth and seventh graders to apply for the Touchstone Energy basketball camps offered at NC State and UNC-Chapel Hill.

The camp opportunity gives boys and girls a unique experience to attend basketball camp with one of the state's premier collegiate basketball programs.

Students statewide are encour-



Coach Wes Moore and Mallory Edwards.

aged to apply for one of 50 all-expenses-paid scholarships to attend the Roy Williams Basketball Camp at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (June 20-24) and the Wolfpack Women's Basketball Academy at North Carolina State University in Raleigh (June 21-24).

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, seventh or eighth grader. This means the student should currently be in fifth, sixth or seventh 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 January 2 to March 31.

Eligible students interested in the scholarship can contact the Cooperative at 910-892-8071, ext. 2151, or download an application from sremc.com/content/basketball-camps.



Coach Roy Williams and Brooks Moore.



You never know where you could be losing that warm air, check it out!

Is It Too Cool For The Pool?

While it's too cool for the outdoor pool, it's never too early to look at deals for pool season. So, what does that mean?

It means if you have a single speed pool pump, look at variable and two-speed pumps. With a single speed pump you only have one setting, the highest, to perform all actions of

the pool. This is an overuse of energy and water.

With a variable or two-speed pump, you can save. A two-speed pump has two speeds to work with and can be a little more tailored to fit the job, be it filtering or cleaning. The variable-speed pump has multiple speeds and options to find the

best fit for the amount of water being filtered. Both options are eligible for a rebate from South River EMC.

Not thinking about it yet? That's okay, just keep it mind and if you do replace your pool pump, visit sremc.com or call 910.892.8071 x 2152 as rebates may change.

It's Time For Improvement, Home Improvement

It's the perfect time to do a little home improvement. A signal that work is needed is that you notice that certain areas of your home seem cooler than others.

Before you adjust the thermostat, check around. Is the weather stripping good on the doors and windows? Do you feel air coming in around the baseboards or window frames that maybe caulk will fix?

Perhaps you've been in the attic recently and noticed the insulation is a little sparse. This could allow heat to exit in the winter. There may even be some air leaks in your ductwork that prevents you from getting the most from your heating and cooling system while impacting your home's air quality.

Fixing problems like this improves comfort and costs. Seal holes and keep more of the air

you heat and cool while reducing energy costs. Begin saving with some improvements around your home.

Check what rebates you could receive by making these improvements and enjoy those savings even more. For details on rebates visit sremc.com or call 910.892.8071 x 2222.

HERO Homes For Savings

Could you have a 30 percent savings just by building a tighter home?

That's right, South River EMC rebates on high efficiency

residential options, or HERO, homes, which include, better insulation, high-efficiency lighting, window U-factors, whole house tightness and duct leakage testing, among other

things.

If you're interested in building a HERO home and saving money, visit sremc.com or call 910.892.8071 x 2153.

When It's Time To Replace Your Heating And Cooling Unit

Heating and cooling accounts for 50 percent of your energy costs each month. That's a fact, but by making sure you replace old or failing systems you can achieve savings and comfort, for the most part.

As a system ages, it becomes less efficient. With a lifespan of 10-12 years for a heat pump, you have time to look around, but also remember it could be sooner than you think, and the longer you hold onto an old unit, the more it adds up.

If you're looking into a new heat

pump, a high-efficiency unit is the way to go. A 17 SEER or greater unit can help you save. SEER, which stands for seasonal energy efficiency ratio, measure the cooling efficiency of these systems. But don't go away thinking that's not important in winter. It's important, because knowing how high those temperatures get in the summer, you want to be prepared year-round.

But another aspect to saving money and energy is how you use your high-efficiency heating and cooling system. If it's

running constantly, it adds up. Reasons include heating loss and low thermostat settings. By making sure your home is weatherized and insulated and that your thermostat is set to 68 degrees or so this winter, will help.

For details on high-efficiency heating and cooling systems, as well as information on rebates, visit sremc.com or call 910.892.8071 x 2152.



An energy service advisor can help pinpoint heating and cooling problems.

A Hot Shower On A Cold Day

Happiness isn't heated water, but warm water does tend to make everyone a little happier on cold days. So, if your water heater goes out, it is of utmost importance to get it replaced.

In times like these, the best decisions are not always made, you typically just replace what you have with another just like it.

Why? By selecting a different system, like a heat pump water heater, you could save energy and money. Heat pump water heaters move heat, rather than generating it, making them two to three times more efficient.

A solar system will take a little more planning, but with the appropriate resource, you could see water heating savings. Sun

is free, but you have to make sure you receive enough to meet water heating needs.

If you'd like to look into either type of system, as well as others, you can visit energy.gov, and search water heater. To learn about the water heater rebates offered by South River EMC visit sremc.com or call 910.892.8071 x 2152.

Why Should I Purchase Energy Star Appliances?

Has someone in your family ever said, what's the point of purchasing an Energy Star appliance? If so, the response is energy savings.

An Energy Star refrigerator will save homeowners \$60 a year over about five years. That's \$300 in savings. Energy Star clothes washers use 25 percent

less energy each year and 33 percent less water. Energy Star certified dryers have about 20 percent energy savings. Energy Star certified dehumidifiers use about 30 percent less energy, just look at those savings!

Now, don't let the cost stop you, although they are slightly more expensive than standard

appliances. Depending on your use, they often make up those costs in energy savings.

If you're interested in estimating those costs, try the appliance calculator at sremc.com. And when you buy one, get rebate information at sremc.com, or by calling 910.892.8071 x 2152.

Smart Thermostats: The Home's Control Panel

Thermostats let you adjust the temperature in your home, they're the control panel for your heating and cooling system. What makes them smart is that they learn from your behaviors, allow you to control the climate in your home remotely, show you energy consumption in real-time, and can even adjust themselves based on ambient conditions like humidity.

For example, you can set it so the unit is at a lower temperature while you're at work, and then spring back into action in time to make the house comfortable by the time you get home. Most smart thermostats will show you how long it takes to make the requested change, allowing you to see the efficiency of your climate control system.

A smart thermostat can be a win-win all around, so why not try one? For details on the rebate offered on Energy Star smart thermostat, visit sremc.com or call 910.892.8071 x 2152.

South River EMC Communicator



Follow Us! southriveremc

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



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