

South River EMC Communicator

DREAMKEEPERS Supporting Students' Dreams

Everyone has a dream for their life. When you were younger, you might have dreamt of becoming an astronaut or president. As you got older, your dreams might have shifted to becoming a nurse or a paralegal. Unfortunately, many people are unable to support these dreams financially. Students are often faced with financial hardships and are forced to choose between school and paying rent or buying groceries.

Central Carolina Community College (CCCC) established the Dreamkeeper Fund, which launched in 2016 to help students achieve their dreams. This program provides just-in-time financial support for students who face financial challenges that may result in them dropping out. Students can receive up to \$400 per school year.

"Our students are truly just grateful, and it means they can go on to provide a better life," said Emily Hare, executive director of the CCCC Foundation, a non-profit organization focused on innovative curriculum and community service.

The Dreamkeeper Fund

The idea of the Dreamkeeper Fund came about when a tornado hit Sanford in 2011. But it was not known just how many

Continued on page E

INSIDE THIS ISSUE



Celebrating Co-op Month **B**

Don't Be Spooked By Scams **D**

Energy Smarts **F-G**

Keep Energy Vampires At Bay **H**



CELEBRATING NATIONAL COOPERATIVE MONTH: 2019–20 HIGHLIGHTS

How can one think about 2020 and not immediately focus on COVID-19? It has been an unforgettable year managing our way through a storm like no other.

I have shared some of our responses to COVID-19 previously. Since the Annual Meeting was originally postponed and later cancelled, this month I would like to focus more on what has been taking place at South River EMC and how we are performing. As I like to say, it is all about the member. That is why we take member satisfaction very seriously and that is why I will begin with member satisfaction.

As of the second quarter of 2020:

- Our American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) score increased from 86 in the first quarter of 2020 to 87 in the second quarter. A March ACSI Index energy utilities report for 2019-20 posted the following customer satisfaction benchmarks: investor-owned utilities and municipal energy utilities both received a 72 whereas cooperative energy utilities received a 73. Compared to others, South River EMC is performing well with an ACSI score of 87.

- On a scale of 1 to 10, overall satisfaction increased from 8.85 in the first quarter to 9.15 in the second quarter.

The areas of highest performance are as follows:

- Providing reliable service—9.35
- Having competent and knowledgeable employees—9.29
- Restoring electric service when the power goes out—9.21

The areas of lowest performance are as follows:

- Having a goal to provide electricity at the lowest possible cost—8.51
- Helping you learn to manage your energy use—8.82
- Providing a good value for the money you spend—8.84

We strive to be a good steward. As of June, equity was 41.33 percent. The blended interest rate for the Cooperative declined slightly in 2019. In 2018, it was 3.35 percent and in 2019, it was 3.34 percent. It is interesting to note that in 2014, it was 4.63 percent.

As a not-for-profit electric cooperative, excess margins are allocated back to the members based on electric consumption. Over time, the allocations are returned to the members in the form of Capital Credit retirements. Last November,

\$4,645,973 in Capital Credits was retired. This included approximately \$3,087,905 under the 19-year-retirement cycle and another \$1,558,068 under the hybrid approach. Another \$743,214 was retired through early and estate retirements. In July, \$4,061,977 in Capital Credits was retired early, in an effort to assist members who have been impacted by COVID-19. This included \$3,097,974 under the 19-year-retirement cycle. Another \$964,003 was retired under the hybrid approach. Next year we plan to resume our normal retirement schedule and will retire Capital Credits in the fall.

In regard to Construction Work Plan (CWP) projects, there were some carryover projects from 2019, which is normal. The 2020 CWP budget amounted to \$15.6 million. Projects include the following:

The Cape Fear to Vander transmission line project was modified after construction costs exceeded expectations. An alternative to the project was developed that will result in a savings of more than \$4 million. It is being referred to as the Rebekah Evans transmission point of delivery (POD) station and transmission line. Rebekah Evans was a charter director and served on the South River EMC Board as the first female director, from 1940-1965. We are in the

process of acquiring easements for this new transmission line.

The residential security light replacement program, which included an inventory of all security lights, was completed in 2019 along with the sectionalization program. Both were multi-year programs and part of our strategic plan. We are addressing subdivision lighting currently.

A total of 9.7 miles of reconductoring has been completed this year along with upgrading circuit breakers and relaying in the substations. Other substation work included adding new 115 kV switches as well as conducting maintenance on 28 regulators, 22 reclosers, six transformers and adding wild-life protection at 28 substations. Furthermore, more than 700 pole changeouts have been completed.

As of the end of June, 95.4 percent of the 2019 projects had been completed and 61.7 percent of the budgeted 2020 Work Plan projects had been completed.

Pertaining to reliability, excluding major storms, South River EMC has experienced a reduction in the System Average Interruption Duration Index (SAIDI) by 42 percent from the average SAIDI for the previous three years. A more aggressive right-of-way (ROW) program and completion of a sectionalization program are two primary reasons for major improvements in this area. A formal pole-inspection program has also helped in this area. It should be noted that according to the 2020 Cooperative Difference Survey, reliability is what matters most to members. Affordability came in second.

In June, we began offering video conferencing for members who

prefer more of a face-to-face conversation without coming into the office. More recently, we implemented a Live Chat option as well. Our power supplier, North Carolina Electric Membership Corporation (NCEMC), through a partnership with Franklin Energy, began moving forward with the Connect to Save program in July. South River EMC and three other electric cooperatives are involved in the project. Members can now purchase a smart thermostat for as little as \$25 and receive a \$50 incentive for participation in the demand response part of the program annually. Free installation of the thermostat is included. Additionally, members will be encouraged to allow a water-heater controller to be installed at no cost to them. If they are agreeable, they can receive a \$50 incentive for allowing the water heater to be controlled during peak periods.

Through member participation in the Operation Round Up program, \$215,392 was distributed in 2019 and as of June, \$120,847 has been distributed to a number of very worthy organizations. I would like to point out that in March, Operation Round Up made \$10,000 available to Action Pathways (Cumberland Community Action), \$10,000 to Johnston-Lee-Harnett Community Action and another \$10,000 to Second Harvest Food Bank, in an effort to assist members affected by COVID-19. Through the Bright Ideas grant program, which benefits local schools, \$59,952 was distributed in 2019. It is anticipated that between \$50,000 and \$60,000 will be made available in 2020.

A year ago, the Cooperative established the Helping Hands fund to assist members who may not qualify for normal assistance

with their electric bills. It is funded with profits from the Utility Shield home warranty program. Just recently, the Cooperative made a little more than \$50,000 from the Helping Hands fund available to assist members in need. \$11,730 was allocated to Sampson County Department of Social Services, \$15,400 was allocated to Johnston-Lee-Harnett Community Action and \$24,000 was allocated to Action Pathways (Cumberland and Bladen). The contributions are reflective of the percentage of members in each county served by the agency. These agencies will make funds available to assist South River EMC members in the counties that they serve. I would like to recognize these agencies for providing this service to our members in need.

I could share more. Nonetheless, I hope that you see that our commitment to you has never been stronger and that we are continuing to move forward under very different and, at times, difficult circumstances. I have no doubt we will get all the way through the COVID-19 storm if we keep the faith and work together.

Before I conclude, I want to commend our terrific team of employees. As noted above, one of the areas where we score the highest in regard to member satisfaction, is having competent and knowledgeable employees. I am proud of them and I trust you are as well. We are all here to serve you. As your CEO, I want you to know that it is a privilege to serve you. I hope you are pleased with the service being provided by your electric cooperative and that you will join us in celebrating National Cooperative Month.

DON'T BE SPOOKED BY SCAMS!

This Halloween, and year-round, remember the following tips to help avoid the costly effects of being duped by scammers posing to be South River EMC:

- Your co-op will never demand payment over the phone.
- If you receive a call, do not give out personal information, such as your credit card number, account number, or Social Security number. Hang up and call South River EMC to verify your account status.
- Do not open suspicious emails. Instead, call South River EMC to report questionable activity.
- Do not be rushed or pressured by a threatening caller. Hang up and take time to contact South River EMC and verify information.



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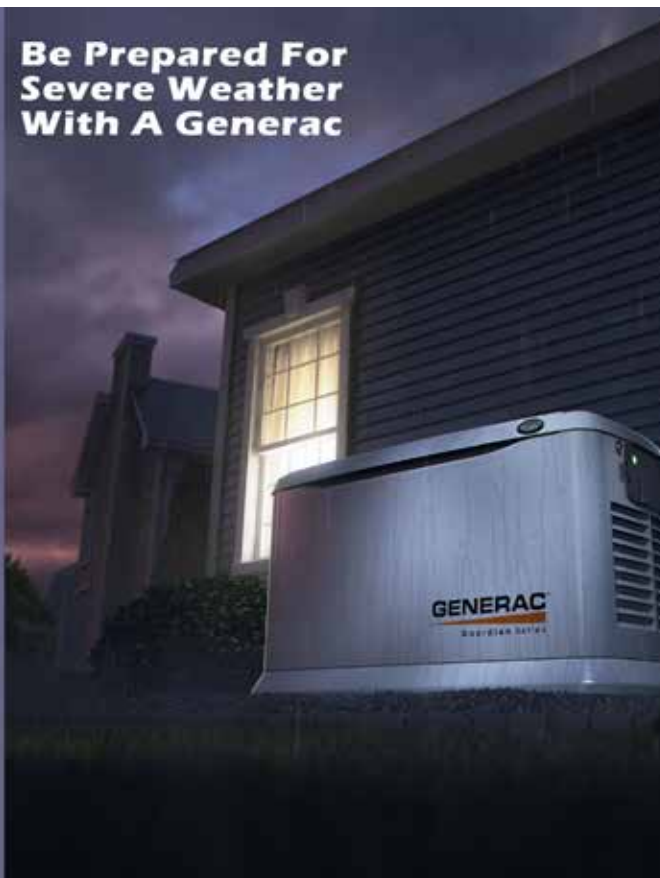


South River Electric
Membership Corporation

A Truist Energy Cooperative

For more information, contact the Advise Guys at 910.892.8071 or at adviseguys@sremc.com.

Be Prepared For Severe Weather With A Generac



DREAM Continued from page A

students were in financial need until Hurricane Florence struck. This event brought to light numerous students' needs. Many were food and housing insecure; half of these students were unable to come up with \$500.

"CCCC created a food pantry to help students get by, but that was just a little Band-Aid to get students to persist," described Hare.

In a survey from 2019, it was discovered that 54 percent of CCCC students had run out of money three or more times in the past year, and 68 percent said they would have trouble gathering \$500 in cash or credit to meet an expected need in the next month. To add, 53 percent of students showed signs of housing insecurity, and 29 percent reported low food security. The Dreamkeeper Program works to tackle these conditions.

However, conditions have only worsened during the COVID-19 crisis.

Hare describes the application process that the CCCC Foundation follows to award students funds.

"Students send in applications; whereby, they have a time-limited emergency expense. We proceed to find out what information is missing and what led to the situation," said Hare. "In doing so, we are able to better determine who needs funds. Our committee checks references from CCCC faculty and staff and examines each application on an individual basis."

Funding is given directly to vendors, like landlords and utility companies. If food or housing is needed, the Foundation provides food from the CCCC pantry, as well as, connecting the student with local non-profits and the Rapid Rehousing Foundation.

Since its inception in 2016, 161 students have been served with an average of \$334 spent per student.

Out of all the students who have received funds, 60 percent graduated, transferred, or re-enrolled to continue their education. These students are most at-risk for dropping out without assistance.

The program receives funds from an annual on-campus fund drive and has solicited donations from businesses. However, to continue to support their students and to combat COVID-19's financial effects, CCCC was awarded a \$10,000 Operation Round-Up Grant from South River EMC.

For every dollar donated to this fund, it has been calculated that the return on investment is 426 percent. The funds from the Operation Round-Up Grant will impact almost 200 students in the Harnett County area.

Brad Baker was a recipient of Dreamkeeper funds and graduated in 2019. Currently, he is a Game Day assistant, running sound and the scoreboard for CCCC volleyball and basketball games. He also has his own DJ company.



Brad Baker, Class of 2019

Because of the Dreamkeeper funds, Baker was able to graduate and give back to his CCCC community.

"We are so grateful to South River EMC. The grant is going to make a difference in the lives of our students, and they are going to pay it forward," stated Hare. "Imagine going to your local hospital, a lot of times the nurses and staff have been trained at CCCC, and you want them to have the best education."

CCCC is a two-year public community college serving over 16,000 curriculum and continuing education students from Chatham, Harnett, and Lee Counties annually.

For more information about Central Carolina Community College, the curriculum, or the Dreamkeepers Fund, visit cccc.edu.



Get prepared for cooler weather by replacing insufficient insulation.

Improve Your Home, Improve Your Savings

As weather changes ensue, keeping your home comfortable is of the utmost importance.

Take time to consider some money-saving improvements, such as air and duct sealing, improving or replacing your insulation, weatherstripping, and caulking.

If you have leaks in your ductwork or insufficient insulation, conditioned air can be lost. Perhaps, the weatherstripping needs to be replaced around your doors and windows. Replacing your weatherstripping can reduce air leakage.

Taking these measures will improve the operation of your home, while also saving money.

For more information about the rebates South River EMC offers for insulating and weatherizing, visit sremc.com or call 910.892.8071 x 2222.

Water Heating Alternatives

As temperatures drop, there's nothing like taking a hot, relaxing shower. However, to save water and money, you might find yourself taking a quick shower instead.

In order to preserve those long, hot showers, consider a more efficient water-heating alternative.

Heat pump water heaters (HP-WHs) and solar water heaters are two alternatives that can help you save money and water. HPWHs use up to 63 percent less energy than typical water heaters. Solar water heaters are reliable, adaptable, and pollution free.

South River EMC offers a \$150 rebate for solar water heating and a \$200 rebate for heat pump water heating. For more details, visit sremc.com or call 910.892.8071 x 2152.

The Star In Heating And Cooling

Maintaining a comfortable temperature in your home with the change of seasons can often-times be challenging.

Energy Star helps you tackle this feat with ease. Energy Star qualified heat pumps possess a high seasonal efficiency ratio (SEER) and heating seasonal

performance factor (HSPF). These models are 20 percent more efficient than models you may have in your home now.

Additionally, if you purchase an Energy Star rated product with a SEER rating of 17 or higher, you might be eligible for a South River EMC rebate.

Energy Star rated heat pumps will use less energy, you will be more comfortable and save more money.

Visit sremc.com or call 910.892.8071 x 2152 for more information.

Higher Standards For Greater Savings

High Efficiency Residential Option Homes, or HERO, are 30 percent more efficient than homes built to NC residential code. How, you might ask?

These homes are built to a higher standard with better insulation, fenestration, air sealing, and equipment and lighting packages.

When building a HERO home, you have two options. With the prescriptive path, your home must meet certain requirements. With the performance path, an energy cost analysis is required that is provided to you by a HERS Rater and signed off by a Design Professional.

Both options provide greater energy savings than a standard home. Energycodes.gov offers more information about these two options and building a HERO home.

Call 910.892.8071 x 2153 or visit sremc.com to learn about South River EMC rebates for HERO homes.

Savings Without Sacrifice

Energy Star is a well-known symbol in the energy world. After meeting strict energy-efficiency standards, these products have been deemed as more energy efficient, environmentally friendly, and cost effective.

These certified products use 10–50 percent less energy and water than standard models. This means you can save more energy without having to sacrifice the quality of your product.

If you are looking to replace an appliance, consider

Energy Star rated products.

South River EMC offers a rebate on the purchase of Energy Star certified products such as refrigerators, washers, dryers, and dehumidifiers. Find out more by calling 910.892.8071 X 2152 or visit sremc.com.



ENERGY-EFFICIENT TRICKS TO KEEP VAMPIRES AWAY

Watch out for phantoms that haunt your electric bill. Phantom loads refer to energy that appliances draw when they are in standby mode. Anything that is connected to an electrical outlet is a suspect. Phantom loads cost the average U.S. household \$100 per year. Once you understand what's using power in your home, you can stop the vampires with some easy tips.

Standby power, also called vampire power, vampire draw, phantom load, ghost load or leaking electricity refers to the way electric power is consumed by electronic and electrical appliances while they are plugged

“Ready to pick up your stake, take a stab at saving electricity and fighting vampire power?”

into a wall circuit.

Standby power use has increased with technology. Why the increase in wasted electricity when we're supposedly getting smarter about energy management? It makes sense when you think about the kinds of devices that consume the most phantom power.

Generally, the biggest phantom power consumers include any device with a remote control such as TVs, DVD players, gaming systems, garage door openers, routers, cable modems, etc.

Make phantom loads disappear by unplugging unused appliances and electronics. There are some well-designed power strips on the market that can help reduce or minimize phantom loads. These power strips have many outlets, but only one master outlet. When power to the master outlet is cut off, the other outlets are cutoff as well, which stops vampire loads.

Ready to pick up your stake, take a stab at saving electricity and fighting vampire power? Lucky for you, the battle against this energy waster can be won easily by following these steps:

- Unplug appliances and electronics when you're not using them. For example, if you are not charging your cell phone or other battery-operated device, unplug the charger from the wall.
- Use power strips that allow you to unplug several electronics by flipping a single switch. This is especially



Advise Guy Robby Talton

important for televisions, DVD players, microwaves and computers. Power strips can be found at most hardware stores.

- Use clocks powered by rechargeable batteries.
- Because it is not practical for all devices to be unplugged when not in use, when you are looking to purchase or replace electronic devices that are not easily unplugged, look for Energy Star devices. Energy Star home electronics use less power in their standby mode, therefore reducing your overall phantom load.

For additional energy-saving tips, videos and resources, visit sremc.com or contact the Advise Guys at adviseguys@sremc.com or 910.892.8071.

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