



# South River EMC Communicator

## WORK CONTINUES WITH OPERATION ROUND UP

The Dunn Police Athletic League, or PAL, was the recipient of an Operation Round Up grant to help fund its community programs. The afterschool programs, as well as the sports programs for students in the local community, changed when COVID-19 hit, with hands-on gatherings being predominately suspended with a bigger move to community service.

Let's start at the beginning, back to 1914.

"The Police Athletic League began in New York," said Rodney Rowland, director. "Kids were found throwing rocks at store windows, and that needed to stop."

PAL got students off the streets and more involved in sports and beyond.

### Closer To Home

"Dunn PAL began in 1995, and is the second-oldest unit in the state," said Rowland. "We had a few officers participate and, with grant funding, started a couple sports programs to fill afterschool time."

*continued on page D*

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE



South River EMC offices will be closed Friday, July 3, in celebration of Independence Day.

CEO Column	<b>B</b>
Bright Idea Grants	<b>E</b>
Election Results	<b>E</b>
Energy Smarts	<b>F-H</b>



MESSAGE FROM CEO CHRIS M. SPEARS

## LOOKING OUT FOR YOU AS WE MOVE FORWARD THROUGH THE COVID-19 STORM

As we move forward through the COVID-19 pandemic, our number one focus is keeping everyone safe, healthy and well. Many changes have been implemented associated with COVID-19 and related concerns.

We postponed the Annual Meeting until October 8, closed the lobbies, moved office employees to teleworking and separated line crews. For about three weeks in April, we actually had our lineworkers working individually on pole inspections, mapping updates and more. As part of our Pandemic Continuity of Operations Plan, we have taken steps to help ensure that the Cooperative can “keep the lights on” and restore power when outages occur, which is a high priority. Only lineworkers are trained to work on the high-voltage power lines safely. Consequently, it is critical that we keep them healthy and available so they can provide an essential service.

Separations are essential to prevent a widespread outbreak of COVID-19 among our crews. Additionally, the Cooperative limited the operation of the drive-through windows at both offices to two days a week for a period of time but resumed five days a week in May. The drive-through windows have been

used more than we ever expected and I am thankful they were re-opened in January. The Cooperative began offering virtual appointments as well in May so that members could experience a face-to-face conversation with a Member Services Representative through video conferencing. By the time this article is published, a Live Chat function should also be available on our website. Technology has truly allowed South River EMC to serve our members in new ways, which has proven very beneficial during the pandemic.

Knowing that this is an extremely difficult time for so many of our members, South River EMC has taken a number of action steps as we look out for our members.

To begin with, decisions were made early on to hold off on some previously approved larger expenditures to help hold the line on expenses. Of direct benefit to members struggling to pay their bill, on March 20, the Cooperative stopped making service disconnects for non-payment of electric bills. It should be noted that this took place prior to Executive

Order 124, which prohibited utilities from disconnecting for non-payment through the end of May.

At the May 5 Board meeting, the Board of Directors approved a recommendation from management to go beyond Executive Order 124 and allow members an additional month before resuming disconnection for non-payment. On May 30, Governor Cooper extended

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the moratorium on disconnects two more months. This was not anticipated, especially early in May. Nonetheless, we understand the need to allow members more time to stabilize financially and that is why the Cooperative extended the moratorium period originally.

Members have been encouraged to pay what they can to avoid a harder-to-manage situation down the road and the majority are doing just that. Members will have six months to pay COVID-19 balances. We will continue to work with our members on these important matters.

In addition to allowing members more time before they are subject to disconnection for non-payment of their electric bill, the South River EMC Board approved a recommendation from management at the June 2 board meeting to retire Capital Credits earlier than normal this year.

Typically, the Cooperative retires Capital Credits in October and/or November. Many members could safely benefit from receiving their Capital Credit retirement in July, as opposed to waiting

until November, and that is why the recommendation was made.

The Cooperative retires under a hybrid approach that includes a 19-year average and between 20 and 25 percent of the previous year's allocation. This year, the total Capital Credit retirement will be approximately \$4 million, which includes \$3 million under the 1-to-9-year retirement cycle and \$1 million under the hybrid approach (20 percent of the 2019 allocation).

Most of the Cooperative's members will receive their Capital Credit retirement as a credit on their account in the latter part of July. The exception will be some of the largest accounts, such as school districts, who will receive a check because the amount being distributed is much higher

due to their above average electric consumption. I trust that an early retirement of Capital Credits will be a real blessing to many members experiencing financial hardship.

Now that we are moving through the three phases of Governor Cooper's plan for re-opening North Carolina, your Cooperative is moving forward as well. A South River EMC Return to the Worksite Plan has been developed, which outlines in detail how we are working

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toward what many refer to as a “new normal.” On June 1, South River EMC began taking appointments in the lobbies of its offices.

Office employees are returning to the offices as well under the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines. Beginning in June, up to 50 percent of office employees, started returning to the office a week at a time as they alternate between the office and home for now. Hopefully, in July the lobbies will be opened again and there will be no need to make an appointment.

We do appreciate the patience of our members during this time as we strive to provide excellent service under extraordinary circumstances. In regard to service and member satisfaction, I want to mention that our most recent Member Satisfaction Survey for the 1st Quarter of 2020 found

that South River EMC had an American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) score of 86. A March 2020 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. You can see that compared to others, South River EMC is performing well with an ACSI score of 86. Our overall satisfaction score came in at 8.85 on a scale of 1-10 with 10 being the highest. Additionally, one of the areas of highest performance was having competent and knowledgeable employees, which received a score of 8.99.

I can assure you that our commitment to you has never been stronger and every action taken has been with the member in mind. We are not through the COVID-19 pandemic yet and concerns remain, especially until a vaccine is readily available. Nonetheless, I believe, with God's help, we will keep moving forward through this storm and come out stronger on the other side. I continue to pray God's protection on you, our members, our employees, our families and others. I want you to know that your local electric cooperative is here for you and that we truly are looking out for you.

On a personal note, I completed six years of service at South River EMC on May 1. It is a privilege to serve you as your CEO and I am grateful for the opportunity.

*PAL continued from page A*

Managed by a board of community members, the program offered three softball teams, a flag football team and basketball.

When the program began, there wasn't a lot of centrally located space available for activities, and much of it was donated. However, it wasn't always available for use when it was needed, but that has since changed. The organization secured committed offices and facilities for use.

The programs intent is to help students who are in tough home situations, or not receiving the necessary care or support at home.

PAL began partnering with Boys Town in Nebraska, which helps students who are suffering from abuse, addiction, abandonment or violence, so that they can reach their potential. A few students from the local area have attended.

Although sports is a step to get students involved, education is the focal point to help students succeed.

"We adapt and tailor programs each year," he said. "We provide educational assistance after school four days a week, year-round."

That programming includes character building, mentoring, SAT prep, college/career readiness, and homework assistance. Students also benefit from many different areas of enrichment including arts, video, radio, robotics, circuitry, 3D printing, music and more.



However, to provide this programming requires money, thus the Operation Round Up grant. Grant funding was used to purchase 20 Chromebooks, three laptops and software for those devices to help with SAT prep and more.

And those devices were put into use upon reception; however, their use became a little different in recent months.

"We had to change gears and be creative during this time. In March, we moved from tutoring here on campus to delivering meals to students after realizing a great number of kids heavily rely of school meals during the school year," said Rowland. "We started with 50 meals the first week being out in March to 280 meals delivered each day Monday through Friday."

The NC Food Bank contacted the PAL organization about opening a drive-thru food pick-up site, that is open Monday through Thursday from 4-5 p.m.

"We went from 40 meals to 70 meals," he said. "Which includes

30 meals at our gym on the east side of town."

The gym is located at 610 East Johnson Street, while the main office is located at 610 Fairground Road.

Meanwhile, mentoring and youth leadership program students are helping to deliver and operate the drive-thru food pick-ups. Some have come to help in the greenhouse, which means about 20 students are involved in this type of programming at its current stage.

"We are also open Monday-Thursday for online tutoring with our gym site available for internet and Chromebook access," said Rowland. "We have around six students in the gym and another 10 students online."

Summer camp programming kicked off June 1, with about 70 registered students.

To learn more about the programming, visit [dunnpal.org](http://dunnpal.org), or learn about fundraising efforts on their Facebook page.

## GOT A BRIGHT IDEA?

If you're a teacher with a bright idea, consider applying for a Bright Ideas grant.

South River EMC is accepting applications online at [ncbrightideas.com](http://ncbrightideas.com).

Beginning in 1994, the Bright Ideas grant program started to help teachers enhance learning in their classrooms. It was discovered that teachers were spending at least \$500 of their own money for classroom supplies.

Bright Ideas grants can help certified teachers in public K-12 schools with the opportunity to receive up to \$2,500 to fund

innovative, classroom-based, projects. All you need is a bright idea.

Grant applications are accepted for all subjects, but will not be considered for professional development.

Each year, South River EMC awards over \$50,000 in Bright Ideas grant funding to schools



in Sampson, Harnett, Cumberland, and Johnston counties.

Since 1994, electric cooperatives have awarded \$12.9 million in grants to 2.5 million students in the public school system.

If you have an application in by August 15, you could be eligible to win a \$100 Visa gift card. The final application deadline is September 15.

South River EMC only accepts applications online at [ncbrightideas.com](http://ncbrightideas.com). If you're interested in learning more about this program, visit [sremc.com](http://sremc.com) or e-mail [sremc@sremc.com](mailto:sremc@sremc.com).

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTION RESULTS

Thank you everyone for participating in the new election process for 2020. The results are in:

**District 1:** Kelly Harrington

**District 2:** Sue Flowers

**At-Large:** George Williams

As you may be aware, terms of office for directors are staggered so only three expire each year. The ways in which directors may be elected are as follows:

1. By petition. Any 100 members of the Cooperative, acting together, may make nominations in writing, listing the nominees separately with respect to the particular term and the particular directorate district from

which they are nominated, not less than 40 business days prior to the meeting.

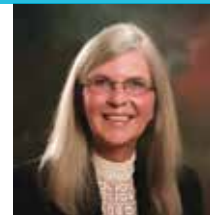
2. From nominations by a committee on nominations.

As a member of the Cooperative you were asked to vote on the nomination choices, no petitions were made. We had 995 members participate in the May election with 418 votes cast by mail-in ballot and 577 votes were cast electronically.

Once again, we thank you for taking the time to participate in the election process of your Cooperative and look forward to seeing you at our Annual Meeting on October 8.



Kelly Harrington



Sue Flowers



George Williams



Build your HERO home to a higher standard.

## Stars, Stripes, & Savings

Though often associated with the Fourth of July and America, stars have an additional association in the energy world.

Energy Star is an efficiency program run by the Environmental Protection Agency and Department of Energy. Through the adoption of energy-efficient products and practices, products are made more cost-

effective, better performing, and more environmentally friendly for consumers. The Energy Star label identifies these products.

When it comes time to replace your heating and cooling equipment, consider purchasing an Energy Star rated product. Not only do Energy Star qualified heat pumps possess a high seasonal energy effi-

ciency ratio (SEER) and heating seasonal performance factor (HSPF), they also are 20 percent more efficient than models you might have in your home now.

By having a product with an efficiency of 17 SEER or greater, South River EMC members are eligible for a rebate. For more information, visit [sremc.com](http://sremc.com) or call 910.892.9071 x 2152.

## Built To A Higher Standard

Whether you're building or buying a new home, be sure to consider building a HERO Home, or High Efficiency Residential Option. In 2012, North Carolina worked extensively to ensure homes were built to a higher standard.

HERO homes are 30 percent more efficient than homes built to code, providing you with better insulation, fenestration, air sealing, equipment

and lighting packages. Though these alterations are slight, your savings can be great.

Two options exist when building a HERO Home: the prescriptive path and the performance path. With the prescriptive path, your home must comply with specific requirements, such as high-efficiency lighting, duct leakage testing and more. With the performance path, an energy cost analysis is required that

is provided by a HERS Rater and signed off on by a Design Professional. If you're interested in making the switch, we recommend that you read the North Carolina Energy Conservation Code, which can be found at [energycodes.gov](http://energycodes.gov).

South River EMC offers rebates for HERO homes, visit [sremc.com](http://sremc.com) or call 910.892.9071 x 2153 for more information.

## Flip Your Fridge

Refrigerators are a focal point in your kitchen; whereby, you keep your food fresh and post big moments from your life on the doors. Buying a refrigerator is a big deal, not only cost wise, but efficiency wise. It can be tough to decide what's best for your home. However, appliance purchasing can be made easier if you look for the Energy Star.

Energy Star is a simple choice for saving money, energy, and the environment. Energy Star certified appliances incorporate advanced technologies that use 10–50 percent less energy and water than standard models. When it comes to flipping your refrigerator, consider the fact that a 15-year-old refrigerator uses 33 percent more energy than a new Energy Star model.

Energy Star models are more money up-front but will save you more in the long run.

South River EMC offers rebates on the purchase of a new Energy Star qualified electric clothes washer, clothes dryer, refrigerator or dehumidifier. To find out if you're eligible for the rebate, visit [sremc.com](http://sremc.com) or call 910.892.9071 x 2152.

## Splash Into Savings

Whether you're just relaxing on a hot day or throwing a pool party, pools are a summer staple.

While pools largely contribute to summer fun, they can be one of the most expensive appliances in the home. With a single-speed pump, your pool energy operation costs are at their highest due to its constant 3450 revolutions per

minute (rpm) speed. However, by switching to a variable or two-speed pump, you can save up to 75 to 90 percent on energy costs. Operating between 600-3450 rpm, variable-speed pumps can circulate at different speeds throughout the day. By switching and reducing your pump speed by one-half or less, you can save a considerable amount of energy and

money!

Enjoying your pool does not have to come with high energy costs. By switching to a more efficient pump, you could save not only on your energy costs but also receive a rebate.

To find out how, visit [sremc.com](http://sremc.com) or call 910.892.8071 x 2152.



Splash into summer savings with a new variable speed pool pump.

## Shower Yourself With Savings

Showering, dishwashing, and clothes washing are all tasks that require hot water consumption, so it makes sense that water heating accounts for the second largest portion of your electric bill.

“Out of sight, out of mind” is a classic saying when it comes to many home appliances and your water heater is no exception. However, before your water heater fails and cold showers ensue, consider replacing your old water heater. By replacing, you can save more money and have a more energy

efficient water heater.

Heat pump water heaters, or HPWH, are an energy-efficient alternative to your traditional water heater. Instead of generating its own heat like traditional water heaters, a HPWH pulls heat from the surrounding areas and pours it into the tank at a higher temperature. According to the Department of Energy, HPWHs use up to 63 percent less energy and are two to three times more efficient than traditional water heaters.

Solar water heating systems are an additional replacement

option. They are reliable, adaptable, and pollution free. Not only can this heating system help protect the environment, it can also help reduce your monthly electric bill.

Not only are you maximizing water savings by switching, you’re also being more energy efficient. Coupled with a source of lower electric use when you switch, South River EMC is also offering savings in the form of a rebate.

For details visit [sremc.com](http://sremc.com) or call 910.892.8071 x 2152.

## Sealing the Money Leaks

Heating and cooling the home takes up approximately 50 percent of your electric bill, and if there’s insufficient insulation or leaks for air to escape, heating and air aren’t the only things that will be leaking. However, measures can be taken to seal these money leaks.

Consider air and duct sealing in your home. Hidden air leaks cause much of the heating and cooling losses in older homes and are oftentimes found in floors and ceilings and many other areas. Ducts are used to distribute conditioned air throughout your house, but with the existence of leaks and holes, approximately 20 percent

of the air moved is lost.

As temperatures rise in the summer, improved insulation can help keep your home stay cooler by reducing the amount of heat flow. Holes in the insulation reduce the effectiveness of your insulation.

By taking these steps, you can improve the insulation and weatherization of your home while also saving on your energy costs. South River EMC offers a rebate for this work. To find out if you’re eligible for a rebate, visit [sremc.com](http://sremc.com) or call 910.892.9071 x 2222.



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PO Box 931  
Dunn, NC 28335  
910.892.8071  
800.338.5530  
[www.sremc.com](http://www.sremc.com)