

NEWS



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Manager's Message:

Let's Talk

The energy industry is undergoing rapid change, and technology is paving the way for innovation in the way energy is used, produced, stored and shared. Consumers are interested in more green energy alternatives, while smart homes and apps make managing energy use and paying your electric bill more convenient than ever.

While the changing energy market has created more options for consumers, it has also resulted in more utility scams and misleading information surrounding solar installations in particular. That's because of two factors.

Utility scams are common because of the vast number of utilities that exist, and consumers are understandably anxious with the threat of disruption to their electric, heating or water service. Second, new products and services in the energy industry provide an opening for scammers and pop-up companies to provide misleading information or shoddy products and services.

Avoid Phone Scams

A common phone scam typically begins with a phone number that appears to be from a valid utility company. The scammer will claim you have a past due account and threaten to disconnect service or take legal action. The scammer will typically demand that you use a prepaid debit card or money order, often within a very short, urgent time frame to pay the "past due" amount.

You can combat this scam by being aware of the status of your account. Never give your banking or personal information over the phone to someone you did not call. If you have a question or concern about your energy bill, call us directly at 919-735-2611. Do not use the phone number given by the scammer.

Avoid Solar Scams

Another scam we see from time to time is connected to rooftop solar. Homeowners with rooftop solar may receive a sales call offering an accessory, upgrade or extended

J. Michael Davis
 General Manager



warranty to their solar array. The calls could be from crooks claiming to represent a solar company, promising to replace faulty or broken parts or improve efficiency. Again, if you are not expecting the call, don't be fooled. These calls offering misleading information are likely a scam. Call Tri-County EMC or the company that installed the solar array if you think there may be a problem. Other than occasional cleaning, rooftop solar (if installed correctly) is virtually maintenance-free.

Use Trusted Sources

If you're considering solar for your home, make sure you are working with a reputable company. Because this is still an emerging industry with evolving technology, there has been a proliferation of pop-up companies in the market to make a quick buck. Representatives of rooftop solar companies may have more sales experience than knowledge of the energy industry, and their primary goal could be making a sale and moving on to the next prospect.

Tri-County EMC can offer a candid assessment to determine whether rooftop solar is right for you. After all, we have a different "bottom line" that

is not directly tied to the sale of a product or service. We take a more holistic, objective view of how to achieve energy and cost savings for our members, and that may or may not include rooftop solar.

In this ever-changing environment, it's important to remember you have a trusted energy advisor – your local electric cooperative. We are a community-focused organization that works to efficiently deliver affordable, reliable and safe energy to our members.

Remember, we're just one call or click away, so please reach out with any questions about your electric service or bills—we're here to help.



TCEMC Awards \$27K in Scholarships

Tri-County EMC has announced their 2020 scholarship recipients. Sixty recipients were selected by a scholarship committee, which evaluated applications based on leadership abilities, academic achievement, financial need and community involvement. Forty-seven local high school seniors received \$500 each towards a four-year college or university of their choice, 12 students received \$250 each towards a community college of their choice and one non-traditional student, Ginger Harper, received \$400 towards the University of North Carolina at Wilmington.

Due to COVID-19 and guidelines of North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, the scholarship banquet was cancelled. Once restrictions are lifted, a ceremony will be scheduled to honor student's success.

"We are proud to provide deserving students with the financial resources needed to achieve their academic goals," said Mike Davis, general manager of Tri-County EMC. "In these uncertain times, we are grateful we can continue to support these outstanding scholars and their many aspirations."

Since 2001, Tri-County EMC has awarded \$422,650 to 981 students in Wayne, Lenoir, Duplin, Johnston and Sampson counties.

The following students are recipients of \$500 scholarships:

<i>Abigail Shackelford, Charles B. Aycok</i>	<i>Jalayah Armstrong, Eastern Wayne HS</i>
<i>Abigail Johnson, Spring Creek High School</i>	<i>Janna Thigpen, East Duplin HS</i>
<i>Aden Rouse, South Lenoir HS</i>	<i>Jenna Spence, Lenoir County Early College</i>
<i>Alexandra Baker, East Duplin HS</i>	<i>Jenny Norris, East Duplin HS</i>
<i>Amanda Lopez-Hernandez, North Duplin Jr./Sr. HS</i>	<i>Jordan Ezzell, South Lenoir HS</i>
<i>Andrew Cox, Southern Wayne HS</i>	<i>Katherine Grantham, Rosewood HS</i>
<i>Angus Dove, Eastern Wayne HS</i>	<i>Kelli Westerbeek, East Duplin HS</i>
<i>Armando Rosas, Duplin Early College HS</i>	<i>Kylie Bunch, Southern Wayne HS</i>
<i>Avery Harper, South Lenoir HS</i>	<i>Levi Sumner, East Duplin HS</i>
<i>Ayden Reaves, Duplin Early College HS</i>	<i>Madison Wells, Wayne Christian School</i>
<i>Bailie Tew, Wayne School of Engineering</i>	<i>Mary Raynor, East Duplin HS</i>
<i>Catherine Freemon, Wayne Country Day School</i>	<i>Matthew Kornegay, Southern Wayne HS</i>
<i>Colby Bowen, Wayne Country Day School</i>	<i>Melissa Smith, North Duplin Jr./Sr. HS</i>
<i>Courtney Barnes, Princeton HS</i>	<i>Michaela Elmore, South Lenoir HS</i>
<i>Daniel Dunn, Wayne School of Engineering</i>	<i>Molly Norris, East Duplin HS</i>
<i>Daylan Wiggs, Southern Wayne HS</i>	<i>Noah Oakes, North Duplin Jr./Sr. HS</i>
<i>Declan Murphy, South Lenoir HS</i>	<i>Ruth Brock, Clinton HS</i>
<i>Elizabeth Espino, North Lenoir HS</i>	<i>Ryan Hare, Southern Wayne HS</i>
<i>Elizabeth Taylor, Southern Wayne HS</i>	<i>Sara Stroud, South Lenoir HS</i>
<i>Ian Ireland, South Lenoir HS</i>	<i>Thomas Scott, East Duplin HS</i>
<i>Isabelle Richards, Eastern Wayne HS</i>	<i>Thomas Wingate, Southern Wayne HS</i>
<i>Isaiah Sumner, East Duplin HS</i>	<i>William Rains, Princeton HS</i>
<i>Jackson Lynch, South Lenoir HS</i>	<i>William Story, North Duplin Jr./Sr. HS</i>
	<i>Zachary Brenner, Wayne Christian School</i>

The following students are recipients of \$250 scholarships:

<i>Brooke Broadway, North Duplin Jr./Sr. HS</i>	<i>Landry Harrell, Wayne School of Engineering</i>
<i>Cassy King, North Duplin Jr./Sr. HS</i>	<i>Lauren Jordan, Southern Wayne HS</i>
<i>Charles Worth, Southern Wayne HS</i>	<i>Savannah Holmes, North Duplin Jr./Sr. HS</i>
<i>Christopher Guy, East Duplin HS</i>	<i>Seth Johnson, Spring Creek High School</i>
<i>Daniela Ponce, Eastern Wayne HS</i>	<i>Tiffany Taylor, Spring Creek High School</i>
<i>Hayden Maldonado, Rosewood HS</i>	
<i>Joseph Lebron, Spring Creek High School</i>	



Tri-County EMC Selects James Kenan High School Teacher for Prestigious Kenan Fellowship

Erica Levai, a science teacher at James Kenan High School with Duplin County Schools, has been named a 2020-21 Kenan Fellow. Her fellowship is made possible through a partnership between Tri-County Electric Membership Corporation, North Carolina's Electric Cooperatives, and the Kenan Fellows Program for Teacher Leadership at NC State University.

Levai, who has been teaching for 10 years, is among the 19 teachers from across North Carolina selected to participate in the 2020-21 fellowship year. Beginning in June, she will partner with mentors and industry experts at Tri-County EMC, based in Dudley, to explore how power is generated and delivered to members and communities served by the cooperative. Levai will learn the history of the electric cooperative model and see firsthand how Tri-County EMC is innovating its services and enhancing systems to continue to meet, and exceed, the expectations of its members.

"The experience will provide me with the tools and resources needed to provide my students with STEM experiences in the classroom," said Levai.

Levai will transfer this knowledge to her students by creating lessons that will help them understand how electricity is produced and delivered to their homes. Her lessons will also

increase their awareness of various career pathways in the energy field and at the cooperative.

"Tri-County EMC is committed to the educational flourish of students in the communities we serve, and we are thrilled to have Ms. Levai join us this summer to expand her knowledge of our electric cooperative," said Mike Davis, general manager for Tri-County EMC. "This partnership with the Kenan Fellows Program is a wonderful opportunity not only for the cooperative and Ms. Levai, but the students as well."

As part of the award, Kenan Fellows receive a \$5,000 stipend and participate in 80 hours of professional development focused on project-based learning, digital learning, and leadership development. Educators who complete the year-long program remain in the classroom while growing professionally as part of a statewide network of teacher leaders. Today, an



ERICA LEVAI
James Kenan High School

elite network of 493 Kenan Fellows are working to improve Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) education in North Carolina and beyond.

"Thanks to the support of industry leaders such as Tri-County EMC and North Carolina's Electric Cooperatives, we are able to empower more teachers to ignite students' passion for STEM in more locations across the state," said Dr. Elaine Franklin, director of the Kenan Fellows Program for Teacher Leadership. "Their support also allows us to provide educators with knowledge of local career opportunities available to students and strengthens collaboration with industry."

About the Kenan Fellows Program for Teacher Leadership:

Established in 2000 as an initiative of the Kenan Institute for Engineering, Technology & Science at NC State University, the Kenan Fellows Program for Teacher Leadership addresses the critical need for high-quality professional development for educators and is the largest (science, technology, engineering, and math) STEM-focused teacher fellowship in North Carolina. The fellowships are made possible through the generous support of the program's many corporate, education, and foundation partners. Visit kenanfellow.org to learn more.



Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month:

Home cooling makes up a large portion of your energy bills. Try to keep the difference between the temperature of your thermostat setting and the outside temperature to a minimum. The smaller the difference, the more energy you will save.



Supporting Our Members and Communities in Response to COVID-19

Tri-County EMC remains committed to partnering with our members to give back to our local communities and those in need. Our concern for community has never been more important than over the past few months, as we have all faced a time of unprecedented challenges and are working together to overcome them.

We would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to all our members who have helped us to provide critical aid and

support to our community in response to COVID-19 through the generosity of those who continue to participate in our Operation Round Up program.

And to lend a helping hand to all our members during this extremely difficult time, as of March 18, 2020, Tri-County EMC suspended all residential disconnections for nonpayment and is not charging any late fees or interest. In addition, we returned security deposits to eligible members to help mitigate the financial impact of COVID-19. Members

who continue to experience hardship are encouraged to contact us at 919-735-2611 so we can work together to further resolve your individual circumstances.

Thank you again to each of you for your support, kindness and patience as we've worked to battle COVID-19. We're in this together, and the cooperative difference has continued to shine through. We are grateful to serve each and every one of you, and we're here for you, now and always.



Tri-County EMC Membership Corporation in Dudley, N.C., was chartered May 8, 1940.

Mission Statement:

Tri-County Electric Membership Corporation is a member-driven cooperative committed to providing reliable electric power at a reasonable cost, to offering superior service, and to taking an active role in supporting the communities it serves.

We are here to serve you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and 365 days a year.

For Outages or Emergencies:
919-735-2611 or 1-800-548-4869

tcemc.com

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Brandy Rouse

Employee of the month



Aaron Barwick

Aaron Barwick is one of 47 employees ready to serve you. He has worked with Tri-County EMC since September 6, 2011 and is a first-class lineman for the cooperative. Aaron and his wife, Cayla live in Faison with their son, Hobbs.