

cooperative **REVIEW**

for members of Southern Maryland Electric Cooperative



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- Keep your distance from transformers 4
- Before you dig, call 811 4
- Do you need help paying your energy bill? 5
- Around Town 6
- Plugged in to change 8

All are fed at the farm

Finding a need in the community and working together to fill it—that’s how local residents started our cooperative 77 years ago. Many of our founders were farmers who worked together to help the community. Like them, Bernie Fowler Jr. is a local resident who started “Farming 4 Hunger” as a means to help feed the hungry in our community. Through his efforts, 100 acres of land at Serenity Farms in Benedict produced a harvest of more than 1.6 million pounds of produce just last year.

That alone is a success story. But the farm is about more than growing and harvesting crops. The food has to be sorted and boxed and packaged for shipment to area food banks. When Fowler started, the farm was shipping 40,000 pounds of food a day to Baltimore, but one-third of it was shipped back to Southern Maryland to be distributed to local residents. Now, by working with the Maryland Food Bank and local churches, food from the farm arrives fresh to distribution points here in our area.

Working with 44 churches to deliver 6,000 pounds of food 128 times during the summer provides food for 200 to 250 families at each food drop. By feeding the hungry, the



Electric vehicle charging stations are available at the new customer service lobby in Hughesville. Learn more on page 8.



churches also have an opportunity for their youth groups and congregation members to enrich their own lives by working at the farm and helping to harvest, package, and deliver food.

Life can change in an instant

As a result of the recession, many people in our area have experienced setbacks. Some of the volunteers who work on the farm are jobless and have been on the receiving end of the Farming 4 Hunger network.

Struggling parents, struggling kids, families, students, world travelers—all are able to contribute to the community effort of providing sustenance where it is needed most. And by participating, they're being fed.

Hope feeds the soul—true story

Robert was recently released from prison. Although he has no memory of the incident, he had killed his best friend one night while he was drunk, and he woke up in a jail cell. As the end of his sentence drew near, he worked at the farm alongside other inmates. The farm provides prisoners with productive, life-changing work and the opportunity to meet with potential employers. Robert now works as a roofer, but he still volunteers at the farm. He shares his story with others,



warning them of the dangers of drugs and alcohol and encouraging positive life choices.

According to recent research, having a purpose in life may help us to live longer, but Bernie Fowler Jr. believes that having hope is what keeps us going. Volunteers at Farming 4 Hunger enrich their own lives by giving hope to people who have known despair.

There is unity in community

The “three sisters garden,” a Native American tradition, consists of corn, beans, and squash, and students who visit the farm in Benedict can learn about food and its history. Farming 4 Hunger is working with local schools to educate students at all levels. Students can visit the farm that hosts demonstration gardens and learn how to help their own family. Lessons about eating healthy foods, making good choices, and thinking long-term will mesh with the organization’s goal of creating a sustainable model for growing food and feeding the hungry.

Tying community together through food

Fowler has a vision that is bigger than just feeding the hungry. He has worked to connect local farmers in the Mennonite community who grow food with local restaurants and hospitals that purchase food to create a community-based, economically sustainable network for producers and consumers. Fowler recognizes that if local farmers don’t earn enough money from their crops, they won’t be able to continue farming, and that would be a loss for all of us.

The Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission is tracking the progress of Farming 4 Hunger with the goal of duplicating its success in other parts of the state. With more than 2,500 volunteers helping to pick, sort, box, and package food, the farm is on track to distribute 1.7 million pounds of produce this year! That is an accomplishment by any measure.

The produce market at Serenity Farms is now open. All proceeds benefit the working poor.

To learn more or to find out how you can help, visit farming4hunger.com.

Keep your distance from transformers

If you are served through underground electric facilities, you may be tempted to hide that big green transformer in your yard with plants or landscaping, but don't do it.

First, SMECO crews need to have access to all electric equipment, including these transformers, in order to make occasional repairs. In addition, it is dangerous to dig around or work close to the transformer. These boxes contain high-voltage lines and should be avoided, except by SMECO's trained personnel.

If you choose to install landscaping near the transformer, make sure to keep plants at least 10 feet away from the transformer. Here are some additional landscaping tips to consider:

- Put grass, gravel, or two-inch rock around transformers or other electrical equipment.
- Do not use ivy or other climbing plants around the equipment.
- Do not change the grade around equipment.
- Call Miss Utility at 811 to have the location of underground power lines marked before digging to plant trees or shrubs.

It's best to keep your distance from the transformers. Teach your children not to sit on or play around the transformers.

.....

Before you dig, call 811

Call Miss Utility by dialing 811 before you plant a tree or shrub, start a garden, or install a fence. SMECO will mark the location of underground power lines on your property.



Don't plant your trees near overhead power lines. Trees that will grow 20–50 feet tall should be planted at least 30 feet from overhead lines.

One call will save you a lot of time, trouble, and money. It could also save your life!

Do you need help paying your energy bill?

Having trouble paying your electric bill? You may be eligible to participate in one of two payment programs offered by the State of Maryland.

If you qualify for the Maryland Energy Assistance Program (MEAP) or the Electric Universal Service Program (EUSP), you may receive payment assistance. EUSP participants are required to be enrolled in a monthly budget payment plan. MEAP customers have the option to participate in a special budget payment plan offered through the Utility Service Protection Program (USPP) that is designed to safeguard MEAP customers from termination of service during the winter.

To find out if you qualify for a MEAP or EUSP grant, apply at your local Office of Home Energy Programs. The locations and phone numbers are listed below. Be sure to call ahead to obtain an appointment to fill out the necessary paperwork.

If your electricity has been turned off, you may be able to be reconnected and placed on a MEAP or EUSP budget payment plan. What happens if you don't make your monthly payments after being placed on a payment plan? You can be dropped from the program and your service can be turned off.

MD Office of Home Energy Programs

Southern Maryland Tri-County Community Action Committee

8371 Leonardtown Rd., Business Rt. 5, Hughesville

410-535-1010

Calvert County

301-274-4474

Charles County

301-475-5574

St. Mary's County

301-870-3770

Metro Line

Prince George's County

Department of Social Services

805 Brightseat Road, Landover

301-909-6300

Pr. George's County

October 2

Homeschool Day: Tricks of the Trade!

Sponsor: Historic St. Mary's City

10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Historic St. Mary's City. A special day of fun and learning just for homeschool families. Try your hand at colonial arts and trades. Activities are gearing for students age 5 and older.

240-895-4990
stmaryscity.org

October 4-5

100-Year Celebration

Sponsor: Mt. Zion United Methodist Church

27108 Mt. Zion Church Road by Apple Basket. Oct. 4: 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.—gospel groups, picture taking with the great danes, Model T autos you can touch, petting zoo, and games for children. At 3 p.m. there will be a tent revival to close out the day. Oct. 5: 12:30 to 4 p.m.—entertainment by youth groups, a face-painting clown, and other activities. There will be crafters, baked goods, a Rada Knife sale, and a variety of food. The sanctuary will be open both days with tours. Admission is free. There will be free offsite parking with bus transportation.

301-475-3440
mtzionmech.org

October 10

Monster Glow Dash 5K—Scary Glow Run

Sponsor: Heroes for the Homeland

5 to 11 p.m. Summerseat Farm, Mechanicsville. This run will feature creepy and scary creatures throughout the course, for participants age 16 and older. The after party will offer dancing, food, and beverages. All proceeds benefit Heroes for the Homeland and Summerseat Farm. Visit the website to register.

240-925-0692
monsterglowdash.com

October 11

Fall Craft Fair

Sponsor: La Plata Volunteer Fire Department Ladies Auxiliary

9 a.m. to 2 p.m. La Plata Firehouse, 911 Washington Ave, La Plata. There will be a variety of crafters, vendors, raffles, door prizes, and food for purchase. There is no entry fee, but a \$1 donation at the door is appreciated.

240-427-7230
laplatafiredepartment.com

Monster Glow

Dash—Glow Run

Sponsor: Heroes for the Homeland

5 to 11 p.m. Summerseat Farm, Mechanicsville. The Saturday night event will feature strictly the glow run. The after party will offer dancing, food, and beverages. All proceeds will benefit Heroes for the Homeland and Summerseat Farm. Visit the website to register.

240-925-0692
monsterglowdash.com

Dinner at Van Sweringen's

Sponsor: Historic St. Mary's City

5:30 to 8:30 p.m. Historic St. Mary's City. Reservations are required.

240-895-4990
stmaryscity.org/visit/calendar

October 12

Apple Festival

Sponsor: Our Lady of the Wayside Church

Noon to 5 p.m. 37575 Chaptico Road, Chaptico. Food, apple desserts, and apples for sale. Bingo, silent auction, live music, children's games, face painting, pumpkin painting, and scarecrow making. Crafters and vendors will have goods for sale. There will be a cash money raffle, with a first prize of \$500 and a second prize of \$250. Our Lady Works of Mercy will accept nonperishable food items and

monetary donations for the Mary Lou Gough Food Pantry in lieu of an admittance fee. Rain or shine.

301-247-1871

Fall Festival

Sponsor: Town of La Plata

Noon to 3 p.m. La Plata Town Hall. This family-friendly event will include free activities for children of all ages, live entertainment, craft vendors, and food for sale.

301-934-8421
townofaplata.org

October 18

Annual Drive-Thru Chicken BBQ

Sponsor: Mt. Zion United Methodist Men

Noon to 5 p.m. Mt. Zion United Methodist Church, 27108 Mount Zion Church Road, Mechanicsville. Dinner includes half a barbecued chicken, baked potato, applesauce, green beans, roll, and snake cake. Dinners packaged to go, but you are invited to dine in the Fellowship Hall or at the picnic tables.

301-884-4132
mtzionmech.org

Basket Bingo to benefit The Humane Society of Charles County

Sponsor: Southern Maryland Business Network

6 p.m. to 10 p.m. Newburg Rescue Squad and Volunteer Fire Department. Come out and enjoy 20 games of bingo. \$ Admission. Special games, raffles, pull tabs, and food will be available. Pre-order tickets and receive five free special game cards. Pre-order by Oct. 11.

301-609-4518

October 24

Dinner Theater

Sponsor: Mt. Zion United Methodist Church

6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. 27108 Mt. Zion Church Road, Mechanicsville. "The Hawaiian Heist" by Nancy Bond. \$ Admission. Reservations will be taken starting Oct. 4.

301-655-0522
mtzionmech.org

October 25

Quarter Million Dollar Cash Bash

Sponsor: St. Michael's and Our Lady Star of the Sea schools

11 a.m. to 5 p.m. St. Mary's County Fairgrounds. Win prizes ranging from \$1,000 to \$30,000 in value.

\$ Admission. Ticket includes event admission, free food and drink, community vendors, door prizes, games, and live entertainment. Purchase tickets online, call, or mail with check payable to Cash Bash, P.O. Box 211, Ridge, MD 20680. Tickets will also be sold at the gate on the day of the event.

240-587-7111
smscashbash.org

Bluegrass For Hospice 2014

Sponsored by Hospice of St. Mary's

Noon to 8 p.m. Flat Iron Farm, Great Mills. A one-day bluegrass music festival to raise money for the Hospice of St. Mary's Hospice House. \$ Admission.

301-737-3004
bluegrassforhospice.com

Haunted Ship

Sponsor: Historic St. Mary's City

6 to 8 p.m. Historic St. Mary's City. Admission is by donation. Walk down to the waterfront and the Maryland Dove for a spooky evening adventure.

249-895-4990
stmaryscity.org/visit/calendar



Plugged in to change

On July 28, 2014, the customer service lobby in Hughesville moved east, from the Headquarters building to 15065 Burnt Store Road. This change provides a convenient location for in-person customer-service needs. This new location has another special feature: two electric vehicle charging stations.

The charging stations at the new customer service location are available to our customer-



members free of charge.

SMECO is utilizing ChargePoint, one of the largest and most open charging networks. To access the station, you will need to sign up for a free ChargePoint account. You will receive a ChargePoint card, which will give you access to over 18,100 places to plug in, as well as the ability to receive notifications that track your energy use, gas savings, and greenhouse gas emissions avoided. Once your card has arrived, you can start a charging session with the card, or you can access the charging station with the ChargePoint mobile app, an RFID credit card, or by calling 1-888-758-4389.



For more information on ChargePoint, or to sign up, visit www.chargepoint.com.