

cooperative **REVIEW**

for members of Southern Maryland Electric Cooperative



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Upgrade to an approved hybrid heat pump water heater and earn \$550 in rebates for a limited time. Get the details on the back cover.

Old technology finds new life

“Concern for community” is one of the seven guiding principles of cooperative businesses. SMECO embraces this principle, and its employees invest their time and resources into supporting local events, charities, schools, and other endeavors that promote sustainable development in the communities we serve.

One such endeavor has been supplying computer technology to local schools and non-profit organizations.

In the 20th century, computers were starting to become more commonplace in businesses and on college campuses. It took much longer for computers to reach primary schools because of limited budgets. Students badly needed access to computers, and military bases such as Naval Air Station Patuxent River needed to dispose of excess equipment. Seeing a need and an opportunity, the Department of Defense authorized military installations to donate their old computer gear to schools.

Leaders from local businesses and the Naval Air Station Patuxent River formed the

Southern Maryland Applied Research and Technology Consortium (SMARTCO) in 1992. SMARTCO was the first group in the nation to collect and refurbish donations of computers and related equipment for schools.

In 1994, the Patuxent River Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division and SMARTCO worked together to supply hundreds of pieces of donated computer equipment to local classrooms.

SMARTCO's mission has expanded over the years to help non-profit groups. More than 250 organizations that have received computers from SMECO and other donors use them to operate more efficiently and to offer training for their clients. Most of the recipients are in Southern Maryland, but some are as far away as the Philippines. The refurbished computers help some clients learn basic computer skills while others pursue GEDs or earn certifications in computer repair.

SMECO is a longtime supporter of education in Southern Maryland, and the cooperative has been a leader in SMARTCO since the consortium's beginnings. When the group needed space to store the first collection of donated computers, one of SMECO's then-Board Chairman at the time, Lewie Aldridge, donated storage space in a house that he owned in Hughesville. In addition to donating outdated hardware and software, cooperative IT employees also help other volunteers catalog, disassemble, and test the technology. The refurbished technology includes printers, monitors, and fax machines as well as desktop computers and laptops.

While the Navy facilities in Southern Maryland are SMARTCO's main source of used technology, SMECO continues to be a major donor. From September 2015 through May 2016, the cooperative donated almost 900 pounds of old equipment. The most recent donation in May included nine laptops, 10 desktops, 13 servers, and three printers.

Although the computer equipment is usually out of date, it does just fine in bridging the digital divide



SMECO employees Johnny Krell and Brian Street prepare retired SMECO computers for donation to SMARTCO.

for students and adults who need the technology. SMECO not only helps the community through its donations, it also benefits the environment by keeping our old technology out of the landfill.

Donating outdated technology and refurbishing it for a new life to help someone in need provides much needed resources to the community. If you are interested in dropping off your computer equipment to be refurbished and rehomed, call 301-737-0394 for more information.

Correction to program credit distribution

In the August 2016 issue of the *Cooperative Review* newsletter, we ran an article inviting residential customer-members in Charles County to take part in an electric water heater pilot program. To fully comply with SMECO's tariff and the filing that was submitted to the Public Service Commission, some of the program details have been adjusted, as follows:

Customers will not receive an initial bill credit of \$25. Eligible customer-members who participate in the pilot will receive \$25 in bill credits (\$5 per month for five months) during the summer. This is a year-round load reduction program.

Eligible customer-members who would like to schedule an installation appointment can contact Comverge at 1-866-921-9474.

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.

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.

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 and to teach your children not to sit on or play around the transformers.

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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!

Comfort level and energy efficiency can go hand in hand

The summer months were brutal this year and high temperatures and heavy humidity had an impact on electric bills. In addition, some people noticed that their air conditioning had a hard time keeping up with the temperatures—even though their system was working hard, their home was still uncomfortable.

Insulation levels, weatherstripping, and humidity levels are just a sample of the factors that can affect the comfort level and efficiency of your HVAC system.

SMECO's Home Performance with ENERGY STAR® program takes a whole-house approach to improving your home's comfort, durability, and energy efficiency. Instead of tackling energy problems individually, such as replacing an old heating and cooling system or fixing leaky duct work, Home Performance with ENERGY STAR looks at a home as one system and recommends comprehensive improvements for better results.

- Start with a home energy audit for \$100* (a \$400 value).
- Review the findings and decide which upgrades are right for you.
- Get rebates up to \$4,300 from SMECO to help cover the cost of improvements.
- Enjoy year-round comfort in your energy-efficient home.

A participating home performance contractor will use diagnostic tests to identify specific improvements to reduce energy use by up to 20 percent. The contractor then provides a list of solutions and details on the associated energy savings, as well as available rebates.

For more information or to find a participating contractor, visit smeco.coop/homecomfort or call **1-877-818-4094** for additional details.

** The \$100 offer is valid for homes up to 3,000 square feet with a single heating and cooling zone. Audits on larger homes or ones with multiple heating and cooling zones may cost more than \$100 and customers should discuss fees with their selected participating contractor.*

October 2

Autumn Tea

Sponsor: Hughesville Garden Club

1 to 3:30 p.m. Old Waldorf School, 3074 Crain Highway, Waldorf.

Soup, salad, scones, sandwiches, and desserts, plus door prizes and entertainment. Reservations are required. \$ Admission.

301-374-6762

hughesvillegardenclub.org

October 5

Little Explorers: What's Bugging You?

Sponsor: Historic St. Mary's City

10 to 11 a.m. 47414 State House Road. Meet at The Shop at Farthing's Ordinary. Designed for preschool-age children 3 to 5. \$ Admission; one accompanying adult free. 240-895-4990

HSMCdigshistory.org

October 8

Treasures Sale

Sponsor: All Saints Episcopal Church

8 a.m. to noon. 100 Lower Marlboro Road, Sunderland. Find great buys, gently used items, tools and perhaps an antique. Come to intersection of Rtes. 2 and 4, Sunderland, MD. Free admission; free parking.

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allsaints1692.org

Hide Tanning Workshop

Sponsor: Historic St. Mary's City

10 a.m. to 2 p.m. 18751 Hogaboom Lane, St. Mary's City. Learn to prepare deer skin Yaocomaco-style. This is a hands-on event; dress for work. For adults and children age 14 and older. \$ Admission. Reservations required.

240-895-4990

HSMCdigshistory.org

October 9

Fall Festival

Sponsor: Town of La Plata

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

301-934-8421

townoflaplata.org

October 12

Homeschool Day

Sponsor: Historic St. Mary's City

10 a.m. to 4 p.m. 18751 Hogaboom Lane. Experience early Maryland through hands-on activities, demonstrations, and crafts. \$ Admission age 5 and older; one accompanying adult free. Registration recommended.

240-895-4990

HSMCdigshistory.org

October 14

Authentic Designer Purse Bingo

Sponsor: Waldorf Jaycees

7 to 10 p.m. Waldorf Jaycees Hall. Doors open at 5 p.m., game starts at 7 p.m. Featured: authentic Coach, Michael Kors, Dooney and Burke, and Kate Spade bags. There will be a 50/50 raffle, pull tabs, special raffles, snack bar, and door prizes.

301-908-1680

childrens-aid-society.org

October 15

Tea and Tour

Sponsor: Chesapeake, the Calvert County chapter of Questers International

1 to 5 p.m. Poplar Hill on His Lordship's Kindness, 7606 Woodyard Road, Clinton. Traditional English tea, music, and tour of the National Historic Landmark. Tea from 2 to 4 p.m.; tours at 1 p.m. and 4 p.m. Call

for reservations. \$ Admission. Limited to 40 people. Festive attire is encouraged.

410-286-7586

“Adults Only” Tour

Sponsor: Historic St. Mary’s City

5 to 7:30 p.m. 47414 State House Road. Witchcraft, murder, and mayhem to be presented on a tour designed to dramatize the darker side of the colony. For adults 18 and older. \$ Admission. Two tours: 5 to 6 p.m. or 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. Reservations required.

240-895-4990

HSMCdigshistory.org

Margaret Brent High School Alumni Association Dinner and Dance

Sponsor: Margaret Brent High School Alumni Association

5 to 11 p.m. Mechanicsville Moose Lodge, 27636 Mechanicsville Road. Dinner at 5:30 p.m. and the dance is from 7 to 11 p.m. Music is by B&B Express. \$ Admission. By ticket only. Cash bar.

240-587-4480

October 19

Little Explorers: Little Mice

Sponsor: Historic St. Mary’s City

10 to 11 a.m. 47621 Old Cove Road. Designed for preschool-age children 3 to 5 and an accompanying adult. \$ Admission.

240-895-4990

HSMCdigshistory.org

October 21

The Way to Wellness Health Fair

Sponsor: St. Mary’s County Department of Aging & Human Services

8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Southern Maryland Higher Education

Center. Free. There will be demonstrations, workshops, medication collection, and health screenings, plus over 60 vendors. Shred-It truck will be on site with shred services available from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. (four boxes max).

co.saint-marys.md.us/aging

Card Party

Sponsor: Trinity Church

7 to 10 p.m. 9611 Trinity Church Road, Charlotte Hall. \$ Admission. Refreshments will be available.

301-643-0191

October 22

Haunted Ship

Sponsor: Historic St. Mary’s City

5:30 to 8 p.m. 47414 State House Road. Don a costume and visit the Maryland Dove, transformed into a not-so-scary haunted ship. Trick-or-treating, face painting, and games. Admission is by donation.

240-895-4990

HSMCdigshistory.org

October 29

Lady Baltimore Ball

Sponsor: Historic St. Mary’s City

7 to 11 p.m. Reconstructed State House of 1676, 47418 Old State House Road. Come out for an evening of “merriement to celebrate the Halloween season.” \$ Admission. Reservations required. Sponsorships available.

240-895-4977

HSMCdigshistory.org

October 31

Halloween Party

Sponsor: St. Mary’s Department of Aging and Human Services

11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Loffler Senior Activity Center, 21905 Chancellors Run Road, Great Mills. Tickets are required.

301-737-5670, ext. 1658

stmarysmd.com/aging



Shower yourself in savings

Home appliances make our lives easier but they can also use a lot of energy. One appliance—the water heater—is the second-largest energy user in most homes. In an average home, water heating accounts for about 25 percent of the total energy usage—adding up to \$400 to \$600 per year to utility bills. Taking steps to reduce water-heating costs can save you money—a key step is to choose an energy-efficient model.

The recommended option is a heat pump (hybrid) water heater. Heat pump water heaters use electricity to move heat from one place to another instead of generating heat directly, which makes them two to three times more energy efficient than conventional electric resistance water heaters.

If you upgrade to an ENERGY STAR® hybrid heat pump water heater now, you can maximize your savings. SMECO is offering a \$500 rebate and a \$50 bonus rebate when you buy between September 1 and October 15, 2016.

Qualifying models that hold 55 gallons or fewer must have an energy factor of 2.0 or higher, while units larger than 55 gallons must have an energy factor of 2.2 or above.

For more information, visit smeco.coop/steam or call 877-818-4094.