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WEBSITE
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OFFICE HOURS
8 a.m.-4:30 p.m., Monday-Friday

STREET ADDRESS
300 Weber Road
Albion, IN 46701

MAILING ADDRESS
P.O. Box 137, Albion, IN 46701

EMERGENCY POWER OUTAGES
To report a power outage, please call 800-933-7362. We are available to serve you 24 hours a day.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Rick Robertson, *Chairman*
Doug Burnworth, *Vice Chairman*
Bill Knox, *Treasurer*
Andy Strack, *Secretary*
George Bennett
Mark Demske
Joe Hutsell
Larry Ott
Jay Wysong

MANAGEMENT TEAM

Ron Raypole, *President & CEO*
Sarah Dreibelbis, *Office Manager*
Doug Dickmeyer, *Manager of Engineering & Operations*
Kevin Dreibelbis, *Communications & Marketing Manager*
Adam Chitwood, *Manager of Finance & Accounting*

HOW ARE WE DOING?

One of the pillars Noble REMC prides itself on is providing excellent service to our members. To make sure we're doing all we can, we recently began sending follow-up surveys through text messaging to members we interact with, asking for their feedback. So don't be surprised if you hear a notification on your phone after speaking with one of our member services representatives, linemen or engineers out in the field!

PATRONAGE CAPITAL: HOW DOES IT WORK?



Over the past 25 years, Noble REMC has been fortunate to be in the position to return more than \$10 million back to our members.

This is what we call "patronage capital," also known as the cash back you receive when Noble REMC has excess revenue to return to our members. (You may even remember receiving a check back in December.)

This cash back is one of the most tangible benefits of being a cooperative member, and it highlights one of our core principles: members' economic participation.

But do you truly know how you receive your equity in our electric co-op?

- When you move into a home or business that receives power from Noble REMC, you become a member of the cooperative.
- Noble REMC tracks how much electricity you buy and how much you pay for it throughout the year.
- At the end of the year, any excess revenue remaining after expenses are paid is allocated to members as "patronage capital."
- When Noble REMC's financial condition permits, your board of directors decides to retire, or pay, the patronage capital back to members.
- Members, and former members, are then issued a check with the amount that corresponds to the years they

were a member and how much electricity they consumed in those years.

- Patronage capital that is not retired is used as operating capital for improvements and maintenance of the co-op's system. This reduces the need for loans, which helps keep costs down.

TIME TO CHECK FOR YOUR CASH BACK

In the weeks after our December disbursement of patronage capital, Noble REMC starts receiving returned checks for wrong addresses and finds there are members who have not cashed their check from the previous two years.

We want to make sure you receive what you're owed.

That's why we have posted a list of names to our website for members, or former members, to view and check that they've received all the patronage capital – the money we return to our members every year – that is due to them.

To check if you have an unclaimed patronage capital check, visit nobleremc.com/unclaimed-patronage-capital and type your name into the search bar. If your name is listed, please fill out the online form or call our office to process your claim.

Noble REMC attempts to return patronage for two years. Following those two years, the unclaimed patronage is returned to the cooperative.

If you have any questions about patronage capital, contact us at 800-933-7362.

RON RAYPOLE
President/CEO

Honoring you!

JOIN US FOR TWO EVENTS CELEBRATING YOU BEING A MEMBER OF NOBLE REMC!

MEMBER APPRECIATION EVENT

MAY 23

Noble County Community Fairgrounds | 5:30-8 p.m.

AND

ANNUAL MEETING

JUNE 14

Virtually on Facebook Live
Time to be determined

As you all know, COVID-19's effect on the safety of our members, employees and directors transitioned our in-person Annual Meeting and Picnic to a virtual format for the past two years.

But, this year, we're bringing back an in-person event!

It will look a bit different – with two separate events – but that allows us to take the best parts of the previous Annual Meeting Picnic format, as well as what we've learned over the past two years, and make something new for 2022:

MEMBER APPRECIATION EVENT

Monday, May 23 | 5:30-8 p.m.

Noble County Community Fairgrounds

WHAT IS IT?

After two years of only seeing you virtually, Noble REMC wanted to take the time to appreciate our members with an event celebrating them. There will be no business meeting, no speeches, no voting – just food, entertainment and activities for families to enjoy.

You can enjoy a free meal of porkburgers, chips and soft serve ice cream, while sitting and listening to musical entertainment, or you can walk around and view local community booths or take part in family-friendly activities. Look for more details in upcoming Indiana Connection issues.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS' ELECTION AND ANNUAL MEETING SHIFTS TO JUNE 14

The record number of ballots returned over the past two years with mail-in voting has shown us that members, like you, prefer this option for the board of directors' election. So, the day after Member Appreciation Event, we will once again mail election ballots to your home, with a return date two weeks later.

Noble REMC's Annual Meeting will be held virtually on Facebook Live June 14, just as we have the past two years. This is where we will broadcast the state of the cooperative, as well as announce the winners of the board of directors' election.

Speaking of ...

There's still time to apply for a seat on your board of directors!

We're looking for members who are passionate and hardworking individuals and will bring their experience and perspective to learn how to best serve their fellow co-op members.

The three districts up for election this year are:

District 1: Includes Perry and Elkhart townships in Noble County and part of Benton Township in Elkhart County.

District 2: Covers Orange Township in Noble County and part of Johnson Township in LaGrange County.

District 8: Encompasses Washington and Noble townships in Noble County, part of Tippecanoe Township in Kosciusko County and part of Etna-Troy Township in Whitley County.

To run for election, qualified members of Noble REMC, who live in Districts 1, 2 or 8, must file a petition with the signatures of 15 Noble REMC members supporting the candidacy.

The REMC will provide the petitions for election, as well as other board information. Completed petitions and biographical information must be returned to the cooperative no later than April 4.

For more information about the board of directors' election process, please call Communications and Marketing Manager Kevin Dreibelbis at 800-933-7362.

LIGHTING the Way

ANDY STRACK'S 20 YEARS OF CO-OP SERVICE

Noble REMC wouldn't be successful without our employees and directors. To highlight the work that they do, we've launched a new series – Lighting the Way – to place a spotlight on those who help the co-op thrive.

Noble REMC Director Andy Strack began his service to the co-op in 2002 after being appointed to fill a seat on the board made vacant mid-term.

Since then, he has been re-elected each term to represent District 3, and with more than 30 years of management experience, he continues to bring insight and energy to the board, serving as its secretary, with his warm personality and business expertise. (And what's more, he can ride a unicycle!)

BEST PART OF BEING A DIRECTOR ON THE BOARD?

"The best part is helping Ron (CEO Ron Raypole) and the team make decisions to best keep our co-op running the way it does and helping make decisions to keep the rates low. I think that's a big deal."

WHAT ARE SOME OBSTACLES YOU'VE HAD TO RESOLVE OR OVERCOME OVER YOUR 20 YEARS ON THE BOARD?

"There were a few economic

downturns, like the one in 2008, when we were unsure of how things were going to go and had to make changes on the fly to cut budgets back and that kind of thing. And then the decision to remodel the office was a big one for the board, and we really had to do our homework on that to make sure we were making the right decision."

WHAT IS YOUR CAREER OUTSIDE OF THE CO-OP?

"When I started on the board, I was 32 years in at Pizza Hut as district manager. That's how I made the move to Kendallville in 1991. It was the first time for me to be on co-op lines as a customer.

Then I spent five years helping a group of Subway stores in Fort Wayne. Two years ago, I left Subway and pretty much retired from that line of work. Now I drive a school bus for East Noble School Corporation and work at Cobblestone Golf Course to balance the winter and summer time."

WHAT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF IN YOUR LIFE?

"My wife, Yvonne, and I are proud of raising our four sons. I'm very proud of moving to Kendallville and staying there to raise a family, as a home base."

Noble REMC
Director Andy
Strack at
Cobblestone
Golf Course.



FAVORITE MOVIE?

"Oh, gosh. I have a few of them. Unfortunately, they're not my wife's style of things. They're all kind of goofball, comedy stuff, like Animal House, Rodney Dangerfield's 'Back to School.'"

FAVORITE BOOK?

"The things I like to read are non-fiction, like exploration days of early 1900s, Arctic stuff, mountain climbing books, true stories of the people who went to Everest."

FAVORITE LOCAL RESTAURANT?

"Either Albion Ale House or Shorty's Steakhouse in Garrett."

WHAT'S SOMETHING INTERESTING OUR MEMBERS MAY NOT KNOW ABOUT YOU?

"I come from a very large family of 11 children. I'm number 8 of 11. The upbringing was close; it was a very small house. We were all only home for a short amount of time. By the time the baby was born, the older two were out, but we're still a very close family."

To learn more about Andy, check our YouTube channel in the coming weeks for a video full of additional fun questions!

Kerry and Jocelyn Clouse stand proudly in front of their coffee roasters at the headquarters of their business, Country Roads Coffee.



COUPLE PERKS UP LOCAL COMMUNITY

It may not have been part of their plan, but the lives of Kerry and Jocelyn Clouse changed three years ago by a wandering thought, a Christmas gift and some beans.

Kerry had been curious about roasting his own coffee beans so he and his wife, Jocelyn, could drink fresh coffee every day. Jocelyn took note and bought Kerry his first "green beans," the fruit seed of the coffee plant, and a popcorn popper to try his hand at it.

When family and friends tasted what he did, they saw the potential for something more.

The Clouses, who are Noble REMC members, decided that during Jocelyn's next open house (where she sold primitive items) they would package and sell a few bags for a little extra cash.

"We sold out, and then the messages kept coming and the bigger orders," Jocelyn said. "We had no idea. It has literally snowballed since."

What was once done as a hobby with a quarter cup of beans at a time in their popcorn popper, now has expanded over the past three years to include two commercial-sized roasters that process

1,800 pounds of coffee beans every month for their business, Country Roads Coffee — headquartered in Green Township near Albion.

Country Roads' coffee is now available in grocery stores, cafés and businesses across northeast Indiana. The company sells a variety of roasts, including a different flavor each month, coming in one- or five-pound bags, ground or whole bean, in K-cups or a custom pouch.

"We feel as if we've been in a whirlwind these past three years," Jocelyn said. "We sometimes have to stop and just take it in because it just keeps growing."

That growth is thanks, in part, to word-of-mouth, but also to the couple's work at local farmers' markets and area partnerships. Kerry and Jocelyn can be found at a market nearly every Saturday, whether it's in Columbia City, Fort Wayne or somewhere nearby.

For Kerry, the business has fulfilled him in a way he wasn't expecting. It has pushed him outside of his normal routine and boundaries, though he still works full-time outside of the business.

"It's kind of opened me up and out of my comfort zone. I have an inner salesperson that I didn't know," Kerry said. "People think I'm crazy, especially people that I work with, as far as markets, but it's fun. I find it fun — the community, the people we're around."

Meeting new customers at markets, they soon become friends, and that's been one of the greatest gifts for the couple.

After three years, they say they still don't quite feel like professional roasters, but the community, which has embraced the business and its coffee, would say different.

"We'll tell people, we're not professionals. We are a couple who wanted to drink coffee, good coffee, every day, and we wanted to help others to do the same thing," Jocelyn said. "Everything we do is probably 'against the rules,' and we just do it."

For more about Country Roads Coffee, visit countryroadscoffee.com or follow them on Facebook or Instagram.

**CHECK OUT PAGES 25 AND 26
FOR MORE CO-OP NEWS**

KLOPFENSTEIN BECOMES JOURNEYMAN LINEMAN

When Mike Klopfenstein makes a goal, he sees it through. It's as easy as that.

Take for example his path at Noble REMC.

He began as an apprentice lineman in June 2019, and by December 2021, he had earned his journeyman lineman certification, alongside an Associate of Applied Science in Apprenticeship Technology – Electric Line Technician degree through Ivy Tech.

“Everybody’s like, ‘Do you feel different?’ I honestly don’t feel different,” said Klopfenstein. “I made it a goal if I start something, I finish it.”

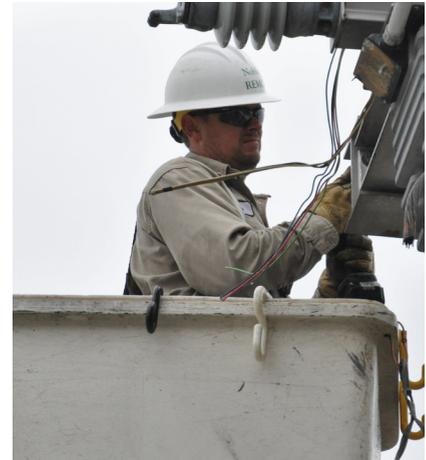
He earned his certification through Indiana Electric Cooperatives’ Rural Electric Apprenticeship Program (REAP), a four-year course that includes 612 hours of classroom

instruction and more than 8,000 hours of on-the-job training as an apprentice lineman. (He completed it in less time because he had previous instruction.)

Covering everything from climbing school and tool and equipment instruction to classroom work, surprisingly, his favorite part of the program was the book work – not something you normally hear.

“I enjoy learning. I enjoyed expanding within the electrical field,” Klopfenstein said. “When I sit down and focus on something, I enjoy it. REAP is a great schooling program to help anybody who enjoys the outdoors or working with your hands or for anyone who wants to excel in the utility industry.”

Klopfenstein has been in his new role for a few months now, and he is



Mike Klopfenstein performing his duties as a journeyman lineman at Noble REMC.

enjoying the consistency of the work and the camaraderie with those he works alongside.

As a journeyman, he will now be a leader on his crew. Rather than looking to someone else for answers on the job site, he’ll be the one to help teach the next class of apprentices.

OPERATION ROUND UP: CHANGING LIVES

For 20 years, the Operation Round Up program has been changing lives, as well as the community, through the spare change voluntarily given by Noble REMC members.

With more than 85% of our members participating in the program and more than \$900,000 in funds granted over two decades, the pennies donated by rounding up your bill each month are making a big impact.

The first quarter distribution of the Operation Round Up Trust Fund awarded \$7,500 to four different

organizations in our community, including:

Central Noble Construction, \$2,000, canned goods

Junior Achievement serving Noble County, \$1,500, Economics for Success Program

Allen County – Fort Wayne Historical Society, \$1,000, local school group programs

The Crew Youth Center, \$3,000, Career Pathway Program

Thank you to those members who choose to participate in the program and contribute to improving the quality of life in our area! None of this would be possible without your generosity.

For local nonprofit organizations who are seeking funding for a project, please fill out and return an application to the Noble REMC office by Friday, April 1, to be considered for the next round of Operation Round Up disbursements. Applications can be downloaded from nobleremc.com.

INDIANA CONNECTION



Cooperative CALENDAR of STUDENT ART



ART CONTEST



You could **win \$200** >>> **ENTER YOUR BEST ARTWORK**
Fill the pages of the 2023 calendar!

ELIGIBILITY

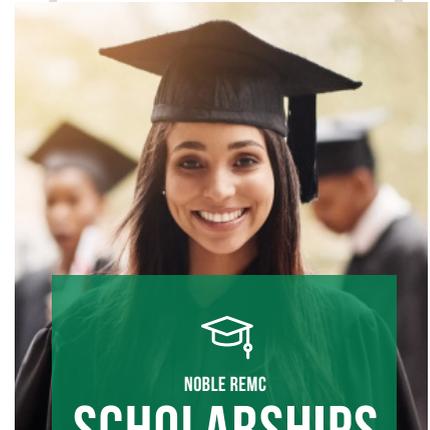
Indiana public, private or home-schooled students in kindergarten through 12th grade during the 2021-22 school year are eligible to enter the contest.

DETAILS AND DEADLINE

A complete set of rules and required entry forms are available at indianaconnection.org/for-youth/art-contest. Artwork must be received by March 18, 2022.

PRIZES

A first-place artist will be selected for each grade, K-12, and will receive \$200. The artwork of each grade level winner will also illustrate either the cover or a month of the calendar. Additional artists will earn honorable mention awards and will receive \$75. Their artwork will appear in a special section of the calendar. An "artist of the year" will be selected from among the first place winners and will receive an additional \$100.



NOBLE REMC

SCHOLARSHIPS 2022

NOBLE REMC
CONTINUOUSLY LOOKS FOR
WAYS TO SUPPORT OUR
COMMUNITY.

That's why each year we assist our young members in their pursuit of higher education by awarding three \$1,000 scholarships to our graduating seniors.

APPLICANT REQUIREMENTS

- > The applicant's parents or legal guardians' primary residence must be within Noble REMC's territory.
- > The parents or legal guardians must also be a member in good standing with the cooperative.
- > Applicant must be a 2022 graduating senior.
- > Recipient must be eligible to enroll as a full-time student at an accredited educational or training institution in the fall of 2022.
- > Applicant must provide a current high school transcript, two letters of recommendation and a short autobiography.
- > Completed application must be submitted to cooperative no later than March 18.
- > Funds will be available to recipient upon successful completion of his/her first semester.

HOW TO APPLY FOR A SCHOLARSHIP:

Visit noblerehc.com/scholarships to download an application and learn more. **Submit your application by March 18.**

Noble REMC
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative