

Tri-County  
Rural Electric  
Cooperative, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric  
cooperatives serving  
Pennsylvania and  
New Jersey

Tri-County REC  
22 North Main Street • P.O. Box 526  
Mansfield, PA 16933  
Mansfield — 570/662-2175  
Coudersport — 814/274-8740  
Web site:  
www.tri-countyrec.com  
E-mail:  
trico@tri-countyrec.com  
For Emergencies Call:  
1-800-343-2559

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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STAFF

- Annette Bender**, Executive Assistant
- John Lykens**, Director,  
Engineering & Operations
- Barbara Johnson**, Director,  
Financial Services
- Bryan Berguson**, Director,  
Member Services

OFFICE HOURS

Monday through Friday  
7:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.

FROM THE PRESIDENT/CEO

It pays to plan



by Craig Eccher

AS WE ENTER the new year, it seems natural to look ahead to the future.

We wonder what 2008 will bring, both at home and in the workplace. While no one can predict the future, we can certainly take a few steps to plan for its coming.

Planning has always been important in the Eccher household. My wife,

Brenda, and I have been blessed with four active children. Over the years, they have participated in a variety of sports and activities inside and outside of school. So for us, planning — along with good communications — has been essential to ensuring that everyone gets where they need to be when they need to be there.

Your cooperative's management team and directors also know the importance of planning and good communications. They are two factors that are critical to the long-term success of any business or organization. At Tri-County we do a lot of forward thinking in all facets of our business: finance, member programs and services, rebuilding and maintaining our electric system.

Finance: Each fall, we begin planning for the co-op's financial future by preparing yearly budgets, as well as five-year financial projections. We do this so very little catches us by surprise, and so that we can look ahead and formalize future goals.

Member services: With energy prices climbing higher and higher, we've refocused our member services efforts on energy efficiency and conservation programs over the last couple of years.

To help members keep their energy bills as low as possible, we will continue enhancing the conservation and efficiency information on our website, www.tri-countyrec.com. We will continue offering home energy audits and promoting ener-

gy-saving options like compact fluorescent lighting and geothermal heating systems.


We realize electricity is only one piece of your energy bill, and the rising costs of other forms of energy — gasoline, heating oil, propane, natural gas — have had a major impact on most families' household budgets.

To provide additional assistance in this area, I am pleased to announce that Tri-County will begin offering infrared imaging services to members later this year. Infrared images taken inside members' homes can point out areas where insulation or weather-stripping is deficient. We will let you know more about this new service in coming issues of *Penn Lines*.

Electric System and Operations: Planning upgrades and improvements to our electrical system involves a very intensive process. It begins with the preparation of a four-year work plan, which outlines the methodical replacement of aging electric circuits. Rotating new equipment into service not only increases the reliability of our system, it also allows us to achieve operational efficiencies in many cases.

Another major source of planning each year involves right-of-way maintenance. Clearing right-of-way is costly but absolutely critical to maintaining service reliability.

We also look for ways to help our crews work as efficiently and safely as possible. Two years ago, we began replacing our standard service trucks with service bucket trucks. So far, we have cycled in service bucket trucks in our Westfield and Coudersport districts, and plan to add another one in the Mainesburg district in 2008.

The amount of planning we do at Tri-County gives us peace of mind. While there are always going to be things that occur during the course of a year that no one could predict, proper planning helps to ensure that your co-op operates efficiently, reliably and remains financially solid well into the future. 

## Never cut your meter seal

A meter seal serves as a protection against theft of electrical service. It should never be cut without prior authorization from Tri-County.

If Tri-County personnel discover a cut meter seal, the member will be assessed a fee of \$200 for the first offense and \$500 for a second offense.

Any member who discovers that their meter seal has been cut is asked to contact the cooperative to discuss the matter.

We appreciate members' help in maintaining a fair and financially sound cooperative. Proper maintenance of meter seals is one way members can be of assistance.



## Need help paying your heating bills?

**WITH** energy prices at all-time highs, many households throughout Tri-County's service territory will struggle to keep up with energy bills this winter.

If you need help paying your heating bills, you may be able to receive assistance through the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

Funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the program provides energy-assistance grants to help low-income households pay their heating bills through the winter.

### To receive help:

- ▶ You don't have to be receiving public assistance
- ▶ You don't have to have an unpaid heating bill
- ▶ You can either rent or own your home

LIHEAP offers both cash grants and crisis grants, and will be open for application through March 21, 2008.

If you are eligible for a cash grant, the grant will be sent directly to your utility or fuel dealer, and the payment will be credited on your bill. You will receive written notice

telling you if you are eligible for assistance and the amount you will receive.

Crisis grants are available to help those who have emergency situations in which they are in danger of being without heat. Those situations include: having broken heating equipment or leaking fuel lines; being without fuel; or having utility service terminated.

If you have a heating emergency, or for more information about LIHEAP, call your county assistance office or the toll-free LIHEAP hotline at 1-866-857-7095.

To apply for help from LIHEAP, you will need to provide the assistance office with a recent heating bill, as well as the names, dates of birth, Social Security numbers, and proofs of income for everyone in your household.

Below are the financial guidelines for acceptance into the program:

Household Size	Maximum Income (before taxes)
1	\$15,315
2	\$20,535
3	\$25,755
4	\$30,975
5	\$36,195
6	\$41,415
7	\$46,635
8	\$51,855
For each additional household member add \$5,220.	

## Explore your options with E-bill

With E-Bill, Tri-County's new internet bill presentment and payment program, you can access your account information 24 hours a day, seven days a week from the comfort of your home.

E-Bill gives members the ability to:

- ▶ Pay your bill online using your checking account, MasterCard, Visa or debit card
- ▶ View your current bill online
- ▶ View your monthly billing and payment history
- ▶ Monitor receipt of payment
- ▶ View your electric consumption and costs in chart form
- ▶ Request maintenance work, or a new electric service
- ▶ Start or stop service
- ▶ Review service requests, outage information and capital credit information
- ▶ Receive your bill via email instead of the U.S. Postal Service
- ▶ Update your account information

To explore the features of E-Bill, visit the Tri-County website, [www.tri-countyrec.com](http://www.tri-countyrec.com), and click on the E-Bill option on our home page. You will be prompted to register using your account number and a password. Once registered, you will be able to view your account information and may chose to pay your electric bill online.

For more information about E-Bill, contact the Tri-County office at 1-800-343-2559

**SAFETY**zone

**Generate safely**

To ensure the safety of our lineworkers, Tri-County requires that backup power sources such as standby and portable generators be isolated from the cooperative's power lines through the use of a double-throw transfer switch.

A generator that is not properly isolated can "backfeed" electricity into the co-op's distribution system, re-energizing lines thought to be dead and creating a potentially lethal situation for linemen working to restore power.

Properly isolating your generator from the co-op's electric lines requires the installation of a double-throw transfer switch by a professional electrician.

If you have questions about the proper installation of an emergency generator, contact Tri-County's engineering department at 570/662-2175 or 1-800-343-2559. For additional information about generators, visit our website at [www.tri-countyrec.com](http://www.tri-countyrec.com) or call us to request a free brochure, "Choosing and Installing Emergency Generators."



**Juniors eligible for free trip to D.C.**

Tri-County Rural Electric will send six students from the co-op's service territory on an all-expenses-paid trip to the nation's capital this summer.

If you are a high school junior who enjoys sightseeing, history, politics and making new friends, then this trip may be for you.

The lucky students will have the opportunity to explore Washington, D.C., with a group of their peers from across the country during the 2007 Rural Electric Youth Tour, a six-day sightseeing excursion that mixes fun and education.

During the tour, which takes place June 15-20, participants will have the opportunity to explore Washington's historic sites, visit the Smithsonian, make friends with Youth Tour students from throughout the United States, meet with federal legislators and learn about electric co-ops and the cooperative movement.

The 44th annual Youth Tour is expected to draw more than 1,300 students to Washington for the week. If you are interested in being one of them, here is what you need to know:



**POLITICAL ACTION:** Tri-County's Youth Tour delegates visit with U.S. Congressman John Peterson in his office on Capitol Hill during the 2007 Rural Electric Youth Tour. Pictured are, from left, Travis Baker, Rebecca Ostrom, Rachel Spencer, Sarah Bunch, Rep. Peterson, Katherine Kasper and Carrie Dinger.

**Rules for 2008 Rural Electric Youth Tour**

1. Contest is open to any high school junior (2007-2008 school year) whose parents or legal guardians are members of Tri-County Rural Electric Cooperative.
2. Submit an essay, not exceeding 400 words, on the following topic: "How electric cooperatives differ from other electric utilities."
3. Essay must be typed and double-spaced.
4. Complete the accompanying student information sheet and staple it to your essay. *Also be sure to include a wallet-size photograph of yourself.* Mail to: Tri-County Rural Electric Cooperative, Attn: Bryan Berguson, P.O. Box 526, Mansfield, PA 16933.
5. Entries must be received by Monday, March 3, 2008.



6. After reviewing the applications and essays, Tri-County will select six Youth Tour delegates. They will be notified by March 14, 2008. The Youth Tour delegates will be eligible for special scholarship opportunities, and the top-scoring delegate will compete with other candidates from Pennsylvania co-ops for the chance to represent the state at the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's 2009 Annual Meeting.
7. The decision of the judges is final.

*For more information about the Youth Tour and agenda, call Tri-County's Mansfield office at 570/662-2175 or 1-800-343-2559, see your high school guidance counselor or browse our website at [www.tri-countyrec.com](http://www.tri-countyrec.com).*

# Student Information Sheet

*All participating students should complete this form and return it to the co-op office, along with their essay and a wallet-size photo, by March 3, 2008.\**

Name	Age	Birthday
Address (RR, Box, City, Zip, Country)		
Social Security Number	Birthplace	Telephone Number
Parents' Names, Address		
School Name and Address	Major Study Interest	Career Goal
State Representative	State Senator	U.S. Representative

*List activities you have participated in and any special honors you have received during high school, such as class officer, plays, music, athletics, etc.*

Activity	Years	Remarks

Please list any public speaking experience you may have: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

*\*\* List extra curricular activities and years of involvement in which you have participated, such as 4-H, church, community and service clubs:*

Activity	Years	Remarks

List any other activities, special interest or hobbies: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

List your local newspapers, dailies & weeklies: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

List any health problems that could affect you during the trip, including medicines to which you are allergic: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

\* *Please include your essay, along with a wallet-size photo of yourself when submitting your student information sheet.*  
 \*\* *Please attach an additional sheet of paper, if necessary.*