



Steve Lucas, CEO

MAY YOUR NEW YEAR BE HAPPY AND ENERGY EFFICIENT

I don't know about you, but for me the snowflakes and frosted windowpanes start to lose their charm pretty soon after the last of the Christmas decorations have been packed away. What was once cozy to me becomes just cold after the new year sets in. Of course I know every year that winter is coming, but somehow when it actually hits full force, without the warm filter of the holidays, I'm still caught a bit off guard.

Judging from many of the calls we get at this time of year, many of you must feel the same. Inevitably we get some calls from our members after the holidays questioning why their power bills are higher than usual. Most often the bills are not actually higher than usual; in fact, they're pretty typical for this time of year.

There are obvious reasons for an increase. Furnaces have been kicking in for over a month at this point. Regardless of your heat source, your furnace needs electricity to operate the fan. This usage is usually showing up for the first time of the season at this time of year.

There are also Christmas lights. If you've replaced your holiday lights with energy-saving LED varieties, your holiday display won't have nearly the same impact on your energy costs as the old-fashioned incandescent lights do. Still, those twinkling lights do add to your usage, especially if your house is a neighborhood showstopper.

Other reasons are less obvious. After Daylight Saving Time ends in November darkness begins setting in by late after-

noon, meaning most of your waking time at home is spent with the lights on. This increased usage begins to add up in December and starts showing up on bills right about now.

Also, between the darkness and the cold, you're probably spending more of your evening hours indoors, perhaps watching more television or using more electronic devices, all of which require more electricity.

Fortunately, there are ways you can control these seasonal costs, and we've got resources to help you. As a member of this co-op, you have access to a variety

Get your new year off to a good start by safely and responsibly recycling that old refrigerator and replacing it with an energy-efficient model. Focus on Energy will pick up qualifying fridges and freezers for FREE, and give you \$20 for doing so!



of energy-saving ideas and information through our partnership with Focus on Energy. You'll find much more than just tips for saving energy, although there are plenty of those. You can find rebates and incentives for qualifying upgrades, and you can even choose a pack of energy-efficient products such as LED light bulbs, showerheads, or faucet aerators that will be delivered to your door, free of charge.

Another great service offered through Focus on Energy is the refrigerator recycling program. If you're still using an old, energy-guzzling refrigerator, Focus on Energy will pick it up and recycle it safely and responsibly, free of charge. Focus on Energy even offers \$20 in return for picking up a qualifying old fridge or freezer. And if you take advantage of a rebate and replace that old refrigerator with an Energy Star-rated model, you'll save up to \$150 yearly in energy costs.

Just visit focusonenergy.com or call 1-800-762-7077 to take advantage of these services.

Feel free to call us at SREC as well. We've got a rebate program of our own that can help you upgrade older equipment and appliances with new, energy-efficient models. And we're always available to answer any questions you might have regarding your energy usage.

From all of us here at SREC, we wish you a happy, healthy, and energy-efficient new year.



MEMBER PHOTO OF THE MONTH

The winning photo for January in SREC's Member Photo Contest was taken by Everett Thoreson of South Wayne.

Start your new year with a 2019 SREC calendar, featuring winning photos from the 2018 Member Photo Contest.

Pick one up at any SREC office while supplies last.

More than just a *Photo*

Photos by Tamara Nelson, Rustic Road Photography



Sometimes, there is much more to a photograph than meets the eye. The interaction between the person being photographed and the person behind the camera can be as lasting as the image.

Tamara Nelson, of rural Stitzer, is very comfortable behind the camera.

“It’s been a lot of fun. It’s a great opportunity to meet people. I’ll be honest—my camera is kind of my safety (security?) blanket. When I don’t have it, I feel exposed.”

Just as taking a photo is sometimes being in the right place at the right time, sometimes taking a picture is not the only or even main reason she’s there.

“I feel like when I meet people, they become more than clients,” Nelson said. “People end up sharing with me, and what your real job is isn’t why you are there. We end up talking about something that helps them heal or helps me heal. It’s been great to meet people and have them touch my life, too.”

Sometimes, photography allows her to take an almost documentary approach to a difficult situation, such as the death of her grandparents.

“Life is messy,” she said, but sometimes taking pictures takes the emotion out of it but records events so you can process it later.

It’s been 20 years since Nelson first turned her hobby into her livelihood. When she had “A Perfect Setting, images by tamara,” she was still working 40 hours a week at another job. She felt burned out, and took a break from photography.

But when her daughter was born in 2008, “I didn’t want to go to someone else and spend a lot of money for pictures of her. So I said, ‘Let’s get the cameras back out.’”

When she was 10, Nelson bought her first point-and-shoot camera.

“I just started out wanting to take pictures of the world around me, just life,” she said. She photographed the farm where she grew up, her brothers, and landscapes.

When she upgraded to a 35 mm camera and then to a single-lens reflex camera, “I really got more interested in scenic and abstract photographs.”

But taking pictures of people helped pay for the cameras.

“I don’t advertise. It’s word of mouth,” she said. “I don’t want to step

on toes or compete. I truly love seeing how every single photographer I’ve met, amateur or professional, looks at the world. It’s a great way to see how other people see the world. There are better photographers than me in the area. I know my work is rough around the edges,” which is part of why she named her business “Rustic Road Photography.”

She started taking wedding pictures for friends, but weddings meant a long day, from early-morning pictures of the bridal party getting their hair done to shots of evening receptions, and Nelson didn’t have a second photographer.

“It was great to be part of something so special,” but now she focuses on family portraits, senior pictures, and maternity photos.

She also takes team sports pictures

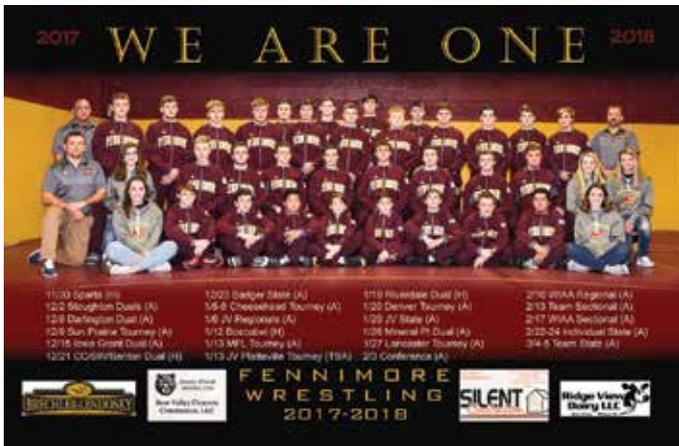
for Fennimore Community Schools.

“I put together the Fennimore Elementary Yearbook. I volunteer through the parent group called FFES and that is my way of giving back to the school. I have had this amazing opportunity to be involved in designing the yearbook for the past five years,” Nelson said. “I do volunteer for churches also. I will take First Communion and confirmation photos for free and give to the families. I think moments like that are very special and parents should not have to worry about taking photos; they should just focus on the moment, itself.”

While digital photography is instantaneous and has benefits like Photoshop, which is popular for photos of teens, “I do miss film. You really had to take a good picture.”



When it comes to “people pictures,” Stitzer photographer Tamara Nelson focuses on senior pictures and family portraits. Some of her nature photography, such as the top photo on the opposite page, has appeared in the SREC Member Photo Calendar.



Stitzer photographer Tamara Nelson donates her time and talent to Fennimore schools by taking team sports photos and designing the Fennimore Elementary School yearbooks (below).

Most photos are in color, but some call for black and white or sepia.

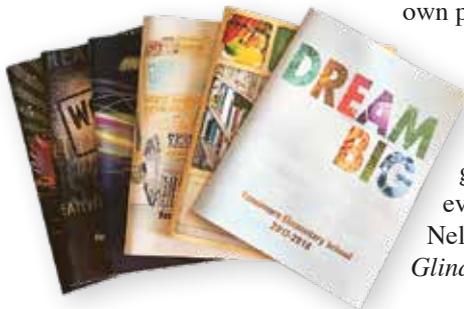
“When I edit each individual picture, it speaks to me. I guess it talks to me,” telling her the best way to present it.

She does not work in a studio, but in parks, off scenic roads, or at a requested location that means a lot to the people being photographed.

“I prefer the outdoor setting,” she said. “I feel like I’m in my element. I feel like I get more honest pictures of someone. For senior pictures, I want them to feel natural and comfortable. When they are comfortable, they are more willing to let their expression tell their story, versus being stiff and frozen.”

She’s had good reviews, but “it’s very hard to put my work out there. It’s just like an art.”

The business allowed Nelson to stay home with her daughter, who has a severe food allergy. Her daughter, Rhiannon, now 10, accompanies her on some photo shoots and takes her own pictures.



“It’s fun to see how she sees the world. It helps me to remember not to get caught up in what everyone else is doing,” Nelson said.—*Mary Glindinning*

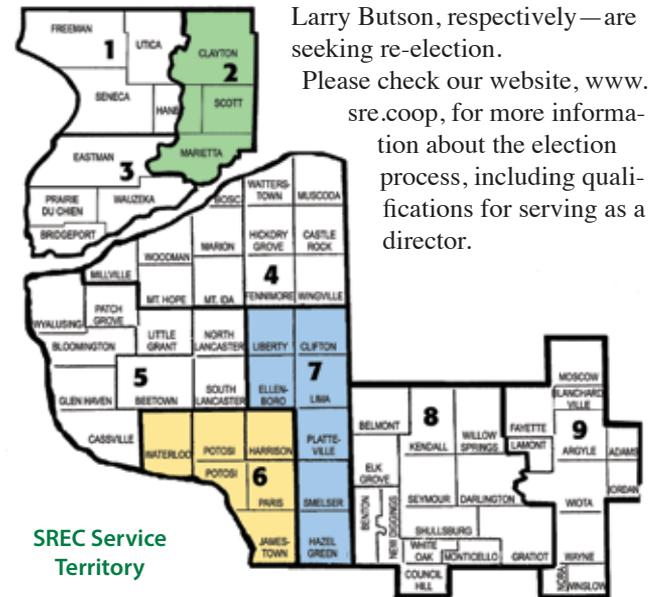
DIRECTOR CANDIDATE PAPERWORK DUE JANUARY 11

If you live in Districts 2, 6, or 7 and you’re interested in running for a seat on the SREC board of directors, act quickly. The deadline for turning in necessary paperwork is Friday, January 11.

Potential director candidates must gather at least 15 signatures for a petition to be eligible to run for a position on the board. Petitions must be received at the SREC headquarters office in Lancaster by 4 p.m. on January 11.

Elections for Districts 2, 6, and 7 will be held at the annual meeting Saturday, April 13, at the Grant County Youth & Ag Building. All three incumbent directors—Sandra Davidson, Don Schaefer, and Larry Butson, respectively—are seeking re-election.

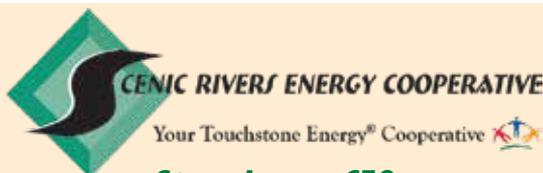
Please check our website, www.sre.coop, for more information about the election process, including qualifications for serving as a director.



SREC Service Territory

A likely story...

Do you know a SREC member with an interesting hobby or business who you would like to see featured in this magazine? Please let us know! Call (800) 236-2141 or email any SREC office at the addresses listed below.



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