

OCTOBER - NOVEMBER 2017



# NineStar CONNECTION

VOLUME 6  
ISSUE 4

## FORMER EMPLOYEE PASSES AWAY

Former NineStar employee  
Marilyn Louise Kroeger  
passed away on  
September 18, 2017.

INSIDE

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Burrow discusses increasing  
cable prices, changing  
technology and other options  
available for customers.

INSIDE

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# RESPONDING TO THE NEED



NineStar linemen  
journey to  
hurricane ravaged  
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HEY KIDS,  
FREE HALLOWEEN  
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OUR EMPLOYEES MAKE THE DIFFERENCE. HERE'S A CUSTOMER REVIEW FOR RUSTY.

“RUSTY HAS BEEN AN ABSOLUTE PLEASURE TO WORK WITH. HE IS A TRUE ASSET TO THE COMPANY.”

- CHARLES C.



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ninestarconnect.com

STORY IDEA?

Contact David Spencer at dspencer@ninestarconnect.com

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TOWN HALL MEETING!

October 3, NineStar held their first ever town hall meeting at Eastern Hancock High School.

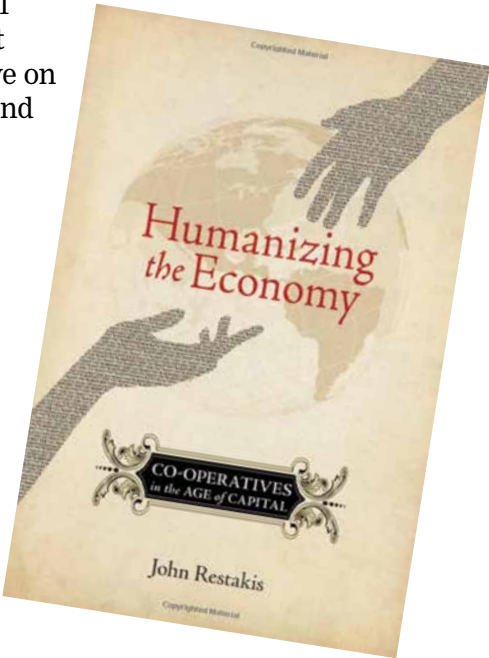
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HUMANIZING THE ECONOMY: CO-OPERATIVES IN THE AGE OF CAPITAL

- BY E.G. NADEAU

John Restakis (executive director BC Co-operative Association) makes an argument for co-operatives as an alternative to the expanding, global, free market economy in “Humanizing the Economy: Co-operatives in the Age of Capital”. Restakis begins by tracing the history of the co-operative movement, then examines several present day co-ops from around the world, including tea co-ops in Sri Lanka and Japanese health and consumer cooperatives. Stories highlight the people involved in these economic democracies to illustrate both the financial and social impact co-operatives have on both individual and communities. Accessible and of interest to the general reader, and the co-op community.

Book review provided by Hancock County Public Library.



The *NineStar Connection* is a publication of NineStar Connect servicing retail and residential customers. Nearly 15,000 families and businesses receive this newspaper as part of their membership. *NineStar Connection* provides news, information and features about people, places and issues related to readers.

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ADDRESS:  
NineStar North Campus  
2331 E. CR 600N  
Greenfield, IN 46140

NineStar South Campus  
2243 E. Main St.  
Greenfield, IN 46140

PHONE:  
317-326-3131  
765-533-4303

EMAIL:  
dspencer@  
ninestarconnect.com  
www.ninestarconnect.com

NineStar Connection

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David Spencer

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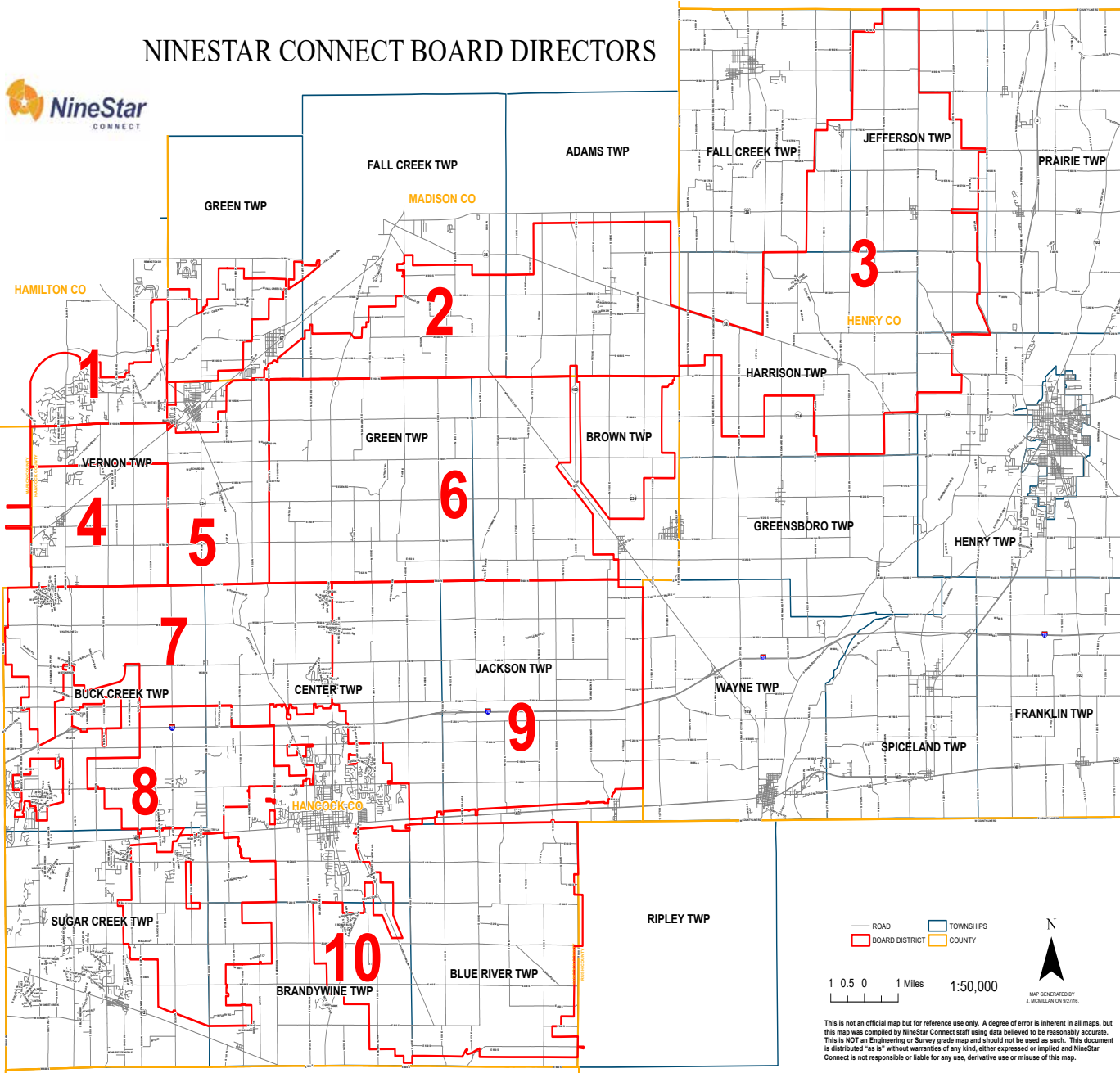
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# RESPONDING TO THE NEED

NineStar linemen journey to hurricane ravaged Georgia and Florida

No matter where disaster strikes, the nation responds and when

Hurricane Irma hit Florida in early September, America's electric co-op army prepared for deployment. Among the professional linemen, engineers and mechanics who were sent to hurricane ravaged areas were two men from NineStar Connect: Linemen Bryan Giddings and Austin Gearlds.

"We keep a running list of who has gone to help in past years, who opted out the last time and who could use the experience," NineStar line superintendent Tommy Nance said. "This time we sent Bryan, who has 20 years experience with the cooperative and Austin who has been with us a year-and-a-half."

Neither man batted an eye about going on the trip because they knew they would be helping people in need. Hurricane Irma was Cape Verde-style, Category 5 storm that was the most severe hurricane to hit the

Atlantic coast since Katrina in 2005. It caused widespread and catastrophic damage throughout its life and was especially strong in parts of the northeastern Caribbean and Florida Keys so both linemen knew recovery efforts would not be for the faint of heart.

Gearlds and Giddings were gone from September 12-19 cleaning up tree limbs and restoring power to communities in Georgia and Florida. Gearlds said the experience was far from easy, but was not as bad as it could have been if they were stationed closer to the coast.

WRITTEN BY

JULIE YOUNG

"We were pretty far inland, so it wasn't that bad," he said. "Don't get me wrong, you could tell there had been a big storm, but we were 40 miles outside of Orlando so it wasn't like we were on the keys. I thought it would be a lot worse than it was."

Gearlds and Giddings spent the week setting up poles and restoring sagging or downed power lines to their proper position for those who had already been without power for nearly a week. Although it is the type of work that both are trained to do, it is still extremely dangerous especially in those areas where generators may be connected incorrectly or where they are working with an unfamiliar set up.

Nance said relief experience is an eye opener for crewmembers that go into a disaster area knowing that they have to entrust their lives to other co-ops and crews all working toward the same goal.

"You have to have your ducks in a row and communication is huge in situations like that. You are really relying on other people for your safety and you have to get up to speed on the



territory especially if you are in an area where snakes and alligators are commonplace," Nance said.

Gearlds was a little more pragmatic about the danger. "Let's just say it is less safe than a routine day." He commented.

This was not the first time Giddings deployed to a disaster area in order to help others. He was sent to Alabama a few years ago and said the damage in Florida was not nearly as bad as his previous stint, but he says the damage was much worse in the coastal areas.

"We don't choose what area we are sent to. Indiana Statewide tells us where we are needed and that is where we go, but compared to my previous deployment, this was a lot easier. They had us scheduled to be down there for 14 days, but we were only there a week," he said.

The pair labored in hot, humid conditions, but it was worth it to see the happy grateful expressions on the faces of those residents who were glad to see them arrive and constantly offered them

food and water in return for their troubles. They said that it is a once-in-a-career experience and one that they take a lot of pride in.

"It felt good to know that we were doing our part to represent NineStar and the state of Indiana," Gearlds said.

Giddings concurred. "The point of going is not to get any bragging rights or to have everyone look at you like you are a hero. The point of going is to work yourself out of a job so that people can get on with their lives," he said. "You have to go down there with the right mindset and that mindset is in serving others."

Nance said service is a hallmark of the NineStar mission and something the co-op is known for. He is proud of the men who went to help and said they are heroes to those whose way of life was restored thanks in part to their efforts.

"We're never scared when it comes to providing mutual aid," Nance said. "After all, we never know when the next disaster area could be ours."



## BE WATER WISE

Using water wisely can help your energy savings flow

From showering in the morning to brushing your teeth before bed, people use water throughout the day for a variety of reasons. Often, they are also unaware of the costs that are circling down the drain with it.

The Department of Energy estimates that heating water accounts for about eighteen percent of a monthly utility bill, the second largest household energy expense. Simply considering a few options to cut down on your water use also will reduce your energy consumption, saving you money each month in the process. A few options can go a long way:

**Don't let the water run:** This is the easiest way to reduce costs. People in the shower or washing their hands or dishes at the sink will frequently let the water run. Shutting the water off while lathering up soap or brushing your teeth can significantly reduce the overall amount of water you use each month.

**Lower heater temperature:** Many water heaters come preinstalled at a temperature of 140 F, the Department of Energy reports. The agency advises that reducing your water heater's temperature to 120 F could

# Be Water Wise™

help reduce your energy costs while also slowing mineral buildup in your water pipes. An additional benefit, 120 F is also a recommended safety measure to help prevent young children from burns due to scalding hot water.

**Insulate your water heater:** If you have an older water heater, you should check to see if your water heater has at least two inches of fiberglass insulation. If it has less than two inches, then the tank may be able to benefit from additional insulation from a pre-cut water heater jacket or blanket. The U.S. Department of Energy has more information available on its website, [energy.gov](http://energy.gov)

**Install efficient upgrades:** If you have appliances, faucets, or shower heads that may be due for an upgrade (or you are

doing a renovation), seeking efficient upgrades could help you reduce water use or lower the amount of energy needed to heat your water, saving you money over the lifecycle of the upgrade. Low-flow shower heads and faucets reduce the amount of water used compared to their conventional counterparts, while appliances such as dishwashers, water heaters and washing machines with an Energy Star label will save you on energy costs.

NineStar Connect can provide additional support on these and additional steps you can take to help reduce your energy use, which will save you money in the long run. Contact Matt Strahl, the NineStar Energy Advisor today at 317-326-3131.

## WABASH VALLEY POWER ANNOUNCE COMMUNITY SOLAR INITIATIVE

Solar energy continues to gain in popularity, yet the most commonly known program, rooftop solar, is not for everyone. While costs of rooftop and ground mounted, solar systems continue to decrease, they still average \$8,000 to \$20,000 to install. Many homeowners can't afford that kind of investment, and those who rent or lease often don't have the option.

But Wabash Valley Power, a not-for-profit wholesale provider of electricity, and several of its local electric cooperatives; including NineStar Connect are launching a new community solar program that offers co-op members an easier way to purchase their electricity from larger, utility-scale arrays. The "Co-op Solar" program will begin with 5 arrays across the organizations' 3-state footprint and will be expanded as all shares have been purchased by co-op

members. Construction of the three new arrays and acquisition of the 2 existing systems will be complete by the third quarter of 2017, adding 1.7 MW of solar power to the generation portfolio. Interested co-op members should contact their local electric cooperative to learn when the program will be available in their area.

Solential Energy Solutions, in Carmel, Indiana, was selected for construction and installation of the three new arrays, which will be located at local electric cooperatives in Indiana, Illinois and Missouri. "Spreading the arrays out over a 3-state geography gives members the best opportunity for capturing the most sun due to weather diversity, and allows the arrays to produce the most electricity collectively," stated Andrew Horstman, project manager for Wabash Valley. "It may be raining on the arrays in Indiana,

but the sun may be shining in Missouri or Illinois."

Solar energy shares not purchased by local cooperative members will remain in Wabash Valley's overall power supply portfolio. Wabash Valley began its investment in alternative fuels in 2006, with the development of its landfill-gas-to-energy program, now one of the largest programs of its kind in the Midwest. Additionally, the company contracts with wind developers in Illinois and Iowa and with local dairy farmers in Northern Indiana who are producing electricity from cattle waste. Wabash Valley sells the majority of its renewable energy to outside parties, using the revenue generated to offset its wholesale electric rates to its local distribution cooperatives, and therefore does not claim it in its generation portfolio.

If you would like to learn more about

solar energy and how you can participate in the program contact Darrin Couch at NineStar Connect. He can be reached at 317-326-3131.



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# NINESTAR AWARDS SEVEN OPERATION ROUND UP GRANTS

**N**ineStar Connect's Operation Round-Up Committee meeting was held on August 3rd at the company's

headquarters. Here are the organizations that benefited from the ORU fund this past quarter:



INDIANA WOMEN IN NEED FOUNDATION



WEIR COOK MEMORIAL PROJECT



MAXWELL INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL

## NAMELESS CREEK YOUTH CAMP

Located in Eastern Hancock County and their mission is to increase the appreciation of nature and the enjoyment of the outdoors by creating year-round recreational, educational, and camping opportunities for the youth, families, and communities of Hancock and surrounding counties. The ORU committee awarded the camp \$4,000 to go toward the funds necessary to install a septic system for their new lodge and event center.

## INDIANA WOMEN IN NEED FOUNDATION

While located in Indianapolis, I.W.I.N provides services for women battling breast cancer and their families within the NineStar territories. To this end a \$5,000 grant was made to this foundation.

## HANCOCK REGIONAL HOSPITAL FOUNDATION

The Foundation was awarded \$3,000 by the ORU committee to provide free massages to patients, their caregivers and staff with the priority being given to cancer patients. All massages will be conducted by a licensed massage therapist trained in oncology massage.

## WEIR COOK MEMORIAL PROJECT

The purpose of the Weir Cook project is twofold. One is a place to house the historic artifacts of Colonel Weir Cook and the second is to provide a place for veterans to gather to receive services such as advocacy, coordination with USO efforts and care for PTSD. The project was awarded a grant of \$3,893.

## HANCOCK COUNTY PIONEER CEMETERY COMMISSION

This award of \$1,560 will be used to partner with a local boy scout troop to clear debris and clean the Mt. Gilead/Reeves cemetery.

## MAXWELL INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL

This award of \$2,363 will go towards the school's efforts to purchase an online Math & Language Arts program called ixl.com. The software will enable instructors to track students' progress and display proficiency scores in the state standards reports. The program will be utilized by all 150 fifth graders.

## RUSHVILLE POLICE DEPARTMENT

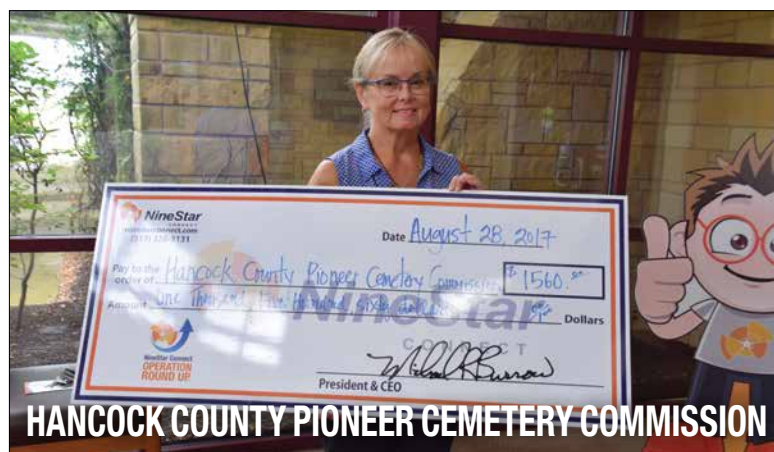
A grant of \$5,795 was awarded to the Rushville Police Department. The monies will be used to purchase a vehicle mounted video camera paired with a body camera and microphone system. It is the department's hope that the purchase of this equipment will help with transparency and the public's trust as well as be utilized for training and education.



NAMELESS CREEK YOUTH CAMP



HANCOCK REGIONAL HOSPITAL FOUNDATION



HANCOCK COUNTY PIONEER CEMETERY COMMISSION



RUSHVILLE POLICE DEPARTMENT

# NINESTAR PARTICIPATES IN COOPERATIVE SERVICE DAY

**T**he Fourth Annual Cooperative Service Day was held on October 13th and by all accounts the day was a rousing success. Over fifty of NineStar's employees volunteered their time, energy and expertise on several important projects. Cooperative Service Day is part of the Indiana Electric Cooperative's Statewide Day of Service, which is held annually in October. NineStar helped several nonprofits with projects that they otherwise wouldn't be able to complete on their own. Below is a list of organizations and projects the NineStar team lent a hand to:

1. Hancock County Arts Council: Build an art show display on the patio
2. Greenfield Parks & Recreation: Painting bollards, posts, benches & fences along the Pennsy Trail
3. Harris Elementary: Planting trees around the playground area
4. McCordsville: Mulching the town hall walking path
5. Dani's Dreams: Spreading mulch and planting a butterfly garden near Zion Lutheran School
6. Hancock County 4H Ag Association: Relocating flag poles and cutting down trees
7. Hancock Hope House: Building shelving and install a WiFi system
8. Hancock Co. Pioneer Cemetery Commission: Clear, remove and burn brush
9. Habitat for Humanity: Paint exterior of home on Tague Street.



Regina Bever, Director of Administration and supervisor of the day's activities, said "We look forward to this event every year and this year was no different. It's wonderful to assist organizations that do so much for the folks in our community. I love that I work for a company that sees the value in helping others. I want to thank all the employees that volunteered this year. We couldn't do this without them!"



# President's Message

For those of you wanting the Cliffs Notes version of this month's message, here it is:

1. Video content providers are raising the cost of carrying their programs.
2. NineStar video rates will be going up in 2018
3. You have alternatives and there is something you can do.

Most members and customers of NineStar Connect mistakenly believe that the company makes a huge profit (margin) in selling video services. Nothing could be further from the truth. Over the years, content providers like ESPN, Discovery, Scripps and Disney have not only slowly ratcheted up their rates, but they have also created multiple channels that are effectively force bundled on companies and hence our subscribers. These content providers also force many of their channels into the lowest video tiers to insure the most subscribers are forced to take their channels. In short, most video content providers are truly killing the goose that for so many years has laid the golden eggs for their industry. And it will be technology that ultimately brings them down.

Today, most people my age and older can be best described as "linear television viewers." That is, we know that our favorite show comes on at a certain time each week and we tend to schedule our lives around that time if we want to watch that show. Younger viewers are breaking that mold and are quickly becoming what we know as "on-demand television viewers" where they watch their favorite television shows when it is convenient to their schedules.

Technologies like our current DVR's (does anyone remember video cassettes?) have been around for many years and they were pioneers, of sorts, to this television time shifting. However, with high speed broadband, today's video consumers can break the chains of DVR's and access many of their favorite shows and movies via the cloud. Both Netflix and Hulu have been very successful in creating platforms where consumers will pay a monthly subscription to be able to watch other provider's content at their convenience rather than the network's schedule.

Although it might be difficult to believe, 40-50% of NineStar's total bandwidth from the internet on any given night is coming from Netflix. If that statistic doesn't tell you what the future holds, nothing will.

All of this brings me full circle with this story. Early in 2018, NineStar's video subscribers will see yet another increase in their charges for video services. Those are not coming from NineStar's desire to make more money. As a non-profit utility, all of our profits (margins) are allocated back to our members based on their usage of any given service. The increases in video pricing is coming about from increases in charges our content providers charge us for their signals. Our subscribers are frustrated due to the increasing costs and NineStar is frustrated because no matter how well we manage and run our video business, there is nothing we do that can impact the ever-rising price of the video programming.

Note that I have used the word "frustrated" and not "helpless."

Technology is quickly tearing down the monopolies that video content providers have had over the last two generations of viewers by allowing them to bypass middlemen like NineStar and go directly to the content providers they want to watch. Over the next decade, it is perfectly conceivable that NineStar will be out of the video/cable TV business as we know it and that is perfectly fine with us. That's why I have charged our technology staff to engage members and customers on their video options and educate them on what we know as "over-the-top" video options where they bypass NineStar video services altogether.

Many of our subscribers will find by increasing their broadband speeds and subscribing to various over-the-top services like Roku or Apple TV, they will be able to experience a high quality, custom tailored television service at a better value than what they are paying



now. The key to that video experience will be access to high quality broadband which is why NineStar has invested so much in fiber optics over the last few years to insure that our members and customers can access high speed bandwidth.

NineStar's technical staff hosts Nerd Nights where they discuss changing technologies and provide lessons on how best to utilize them to your advantage. I encourage everyone to attend these free sessions to learn more about over-the-top video and other options to leverage the broadband you have available to you.



## NINESTAR HOLDS TOWN HALL MEETING

A NineStar town hall meeting was held on October 3, 2017 at Eastern Hancock High School. The meeting, a first of its kind, was conducted to give members of the cooperative updates on recent activities with the utility. In addition, it offered a chance for those in attendance to ask questions of the management. "We were thrilled to offer members a chance to ask unlimited questions because time is so limited at our annual meeting we can only answer

a handful." Stated Jim Cherry, Chairman of the Board. Mike Burrow President and CEO of NineStar added, "I thought every question asked tonight was thoughtful and showed how engaged and knowledgeable our members are with their cooperative." The town halls will continue on a frequent basis with the next one occurring on December 7th at Maxwell Intermediate School. Please check your mailbox in November for information and reserve your spot.

# NINESTAR PARTNERS WITH HEARTLAND FILM

NineStar has begun a unique partnership with Heartland Film, best known for their festival, which takes place each October at Indianapolis venues. Heartland Film was looking for new ways to promote the movies, filmmakers and general activities surrounding their growing list of Indy and regional events. NineStar approached the festival and has brainstormed several ways to do just that. Specifics are still in the works for how the two sides can benefit from the partnership.

To start NineStar will have a presence at the opening night event and will also be showing trailers from this year's movies on Channel 9. As new developments occur we will share them with you on Channel 9 and NineStar's Facebook page.

"Heartland Film is thrilled to partner with a fellow nonprofit like NineStar Connect to provide quality services and experiences to the community," said Heartland Film Director of Film Programming & Marketing Greg Sorvig. "Just as NineStar provides advance communications services to unserved and underserved areas, Heartland Film showcases impactful movies that often touch on the lives and



stories of the underserved. We look forward to providing NineStar customers with independent film content from the Heartland Film Festival in the near future." This year's festivals run from October 12 to 22. For more information on movies and their locations visit Heartland's website at [www.heartlandfilm.org](http://www.heartlandfilm.org).



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### >> What's on that pole?

This illustration shows basic equipment found on electric power distribution poles. Not all poles have all this equipment on them. They vary according to location and the service they provide.

- >> Primary wires run on top. Each usually carries 7,200 volts of electricity from a substation.
- >> A crossarm holds power lines, allowing required clearances between lines.
- >> Surge arresters protect the transformer from lightning strikes.
- >> A secondary service drop carries 120/240-volts of electricity to the end user. It has two "hot" wires from the transformer, and a bare neutral wire connected to the ground wire on the pole.
- >> Telephone and cable TV lines are typically the lowest wires.
- >> A head-high "birthmark" shows the size of the pole, as well as where and when it was made.
- >> 40-foot poles are sunk six feet into the ground.
- >> Insulators (made of porcelain or a composite) prevent energized wires from contacting each other or the pole.
- >> The neutral wire acts as a line back to the substation and is tied to ground, balancing the electricity on the system.
- >> Transformers convert higher voltage electricity from primary wires to lower voltage for use by consumers.
- >> Guy wires help stabilize poles. They also are connected to the pole's ground wire.
- >> Pole ground wire—running the length of the pole—connects to the neutral wire to complete the circuit inside the transformer. It also directs electricity from lightning safely into the earth.
- >> Co-ops are responsible for keeping vegetation around poles trimmed to avoid interference with the electric system.

## LONGTIME NINESTAR EMPLOYEE JEFF JONES RETIRES

**O**n September 30th, longtime employee Jeff Jones retired thus drawing a close to a twenty-eight-year career with the company. Jones, was hired in 1989, into what was then Hancock County REMC by operations manager Mike Renfro. His first job with the company was as a grounds man, but he rose through the ranks becoming an apprentice linemen and then a lineman. When asked what, he would miss most working

with the company Jones said the customers he served for so many years and the people he worked with on a daily basis. Even though he will be retired Jones plans to stay active by helping his dad on the farm and still assisting the Hancock County 4H as the swine superintendent. Jeff also plans to relax and spend time with his wife, two grown children and his grandson. Congratulations on a well-deserved retirement Jeff!



## FORMER EMPLOYEE MARILYN LOUISE KROEGER PASSES AWAY

**M**arilyn Louise (Pollert) Kroeger, age 86, of Greenfield, passed away on Monday, September 18, 2017. She was born January 20, 1931 in Seymour, Indiana to Carl F. and Mabel (Moorman) Pollert. She graduated from Shields High School in Seymour, Indiana in 1949. She worked at Seymour Hardware as a bookkeeper and stock room

clerk. She married Howard F. Kroeger in Seymour on June 27, 1952. They were stationed in Waco Texas during his time in the Air Force, then moved to Bloomington Indiana. The family moved to Greenfield in February of 1970.

After raising three children, Debbie, Tom, and Susan, Marilyn worked for several Greenfield area businesses including real estate and floral shops. She

became a Utility Accountant at the Hancock County REMC, working there for 18 years before retiring. After retiring, Marilyn worked tirelessly as a volunteer at Faith Lutheran Church where she maintained membership for 47 years. She sang in the choir, played in the bell choir, and participated in the Womens' Group. Her favorite retirement activity was her volunteer work in the Hancock County Memorial

Hospital gift shop, where she served for 11 years.

Marilyn's husband Howard Kroeger preceded her in death in May of 2016. She is preceded in death also by a sister, and two brothers. Marilyn is survived by her three children, Deborah A. Dishman of Greenfield, Thomas H. (Nancy) Kroeger of Franklin, TN, and Susan L. (Joe) Yochum, of Vincennes, IN. She leaves nine

grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.

Visitation was held on Friday, September 22, 2017, from 6:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. at Faith Lutheran Church, 200 W. McKenzie Road, Greenfield, IN 46140. The funeral was held on Saturday, September 23, 2017. Rev. Wm. Daniel O'Connor officiated with burial following at Park Cemetery in Greenfield.

## PAPERLESS BILLING

**E**ach month we pick a new winner for just choosing to get your billing statement electronically. If you are drawn as a lucky winner, you have the option of choosing a \$50 Netflix Gift Card, \$50 Hulu Gift Card or a Roku.

Congratulations to our latest monthly winners:

### JULY

Roger Tomes of Fishers Fire Tablet

### AUGUST

Paul Spitzner of McCordsville Fire TV

### SEPTEMBER

Casey Shull of Greenfield Netflix Gift Card

Paperless Billing is the easiest, cheapest way of paying your bill each month. Please feel free to give one of our Residential Service Consultants a call at 317-326-3131 to help you set up if needed. It will be a call you are glad you made!

Enroll in Paperless Billing Today and you could be our **NEXT BIG WINNER!**

**\*Enroll in Paperless Billing for a chance to win a Roku, \$50 Netflix or \$50 Hulu gift card!**



*\*Drawings Monthly*



HAPPY HALLOWEEN!

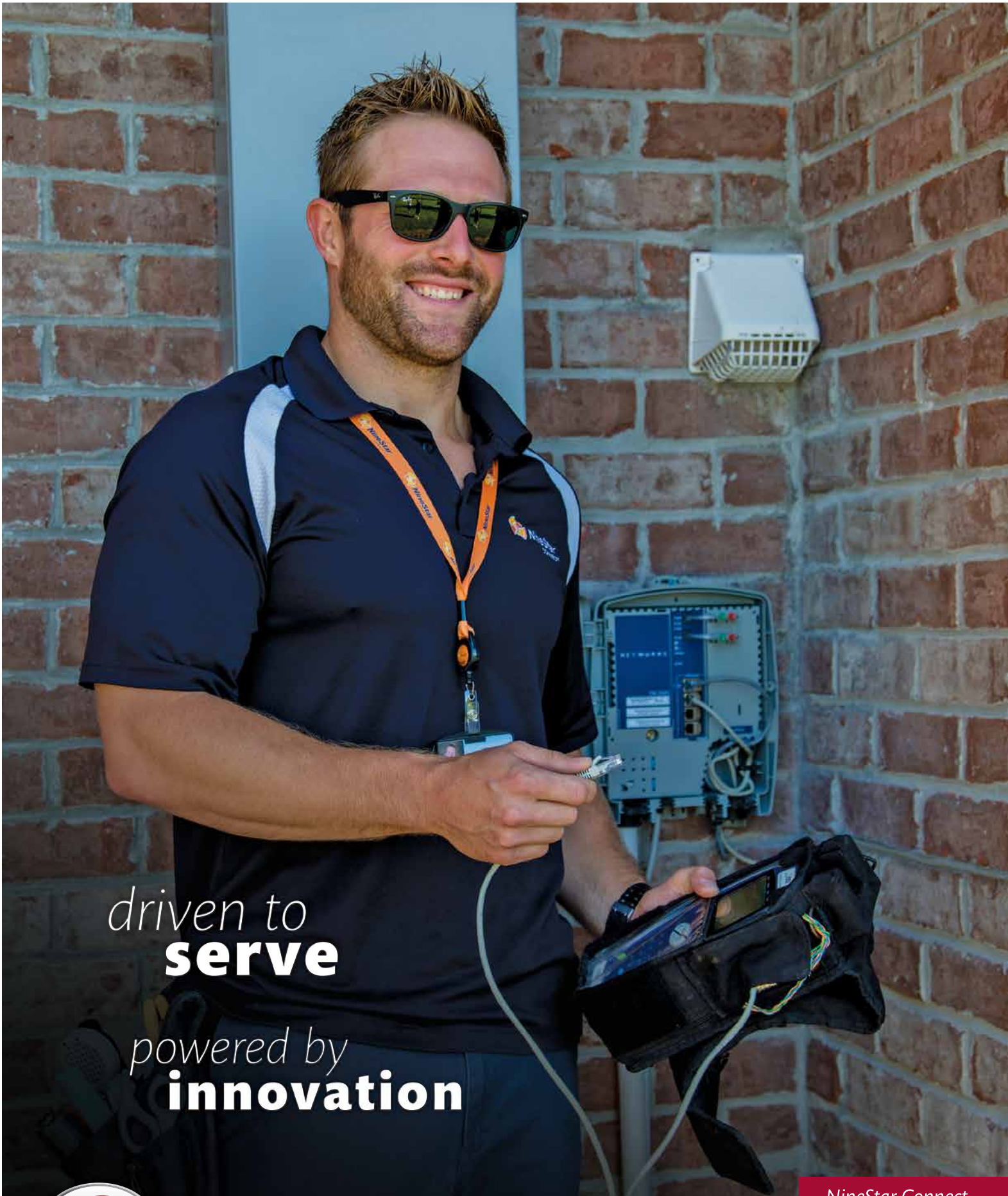
# NINESTAR FrankenNerd HALLOWEEN MASK CUTOUT



**J**ust in time for Halloween it's your child's very own Ned The Nerd Frankenstein mask! Affectionately known as FrankenNerd! Wearing the mask is easy, first help your child cut out the mask. Then have them wear it nerd side out. Here's How: cut along the dotted lines. Tie a string to one side of the mask. Cut string to fit your child's head then attach to the other side. All the boys and ghouls at NineStar hope you have a safe Halloween!

# NINESTAR PRESIDENT SELECTED TO SERVE ON STATEWIDE BOARD

NineStar President & CEO, Mike Burrow, has been appointed to serve on the board of directors of the Indiana Exchange Carriers Association (INECA). INECA is an association of small, community-based independent telephone companies in the state of Indiana. Its member companies are dedicated to the promotion of state-of-the-art telecommunications facilities and services throughout rural Indiana. The purpose of INECA is to advocate for its member companies on federal and state issues, to educate government leaders as well as the public at large on the importance of modern telecommunications to rural communities and to ensure that voice, broadband and video services comparable to those available in urban and suburban areas are available in the rural areas of Indiana at affordable prices. Burrow previously served on the board from 2001-2006 and was chairman in 2003-2004.



*driven to*  
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