



SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 2018

# NineStar CONNECTION

VOLUME 7  
ISSUE 4

## NINESTAR BILLING DEPARTMENT PREPARES GIFT BAGS

The billing department at NineStar Connect recently put together gift bags for patients at Hancock Health Hospital.

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## OPERATION ROUND-UP

See who received funding this past quarter.

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PRESORTED  
STANDARD  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
GREENFIELD, IN  
PERMIT NO. 220

SEE PAGE 4

## *A CENTER FOR INNOVATION* NINESTAR LAUNCHES AN IDEA CO-OP



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COOPERATIVE  
SERVICE DAY  
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NINESTAR  
FILMING  
HIGH SCHOOL  
BASKETBALL  
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On page 7, NineStar employees volunteered their time and skills with various projects during Cooperative Service Day.



OUR EMPLOYEES MAKE THE DIFFERENCE. HERE'S A CUSTOMER REVIEW FOR STEPHANIE CARMICHAEL.

"THANKS FOR ALL YOU DID TO GET US UP AND RUNNING WITH BOTH OF OUR SERVICES. YOU HAVE BEEN A GREAT HELP, STEPHANIE!"



- CUSTOMER FREEMAN

Customer service is at the tips of your fingers. NineStar Connect's tech support call center is open around the clock. 317-326-help [ninestarconnect.com](http://ninestarconnect.com)

STORY IDEA?

Contact David Spencer at [dspencer@ninestarconnect.com](mailto:dspencer@ninestarconnect.com)

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The changing season also can serve as an alarm clock to prepare for what is to come — WINTER!

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 **POWER OUT?  
NO INTERNET OR TV?**  
 **CHECK NINESTAR'S  
FACEBOOK OR TWITTER PAGE!!**

Social Media is exploding and if you aren't checking your laptop, tablet or smart phone for the latest and greatest fads, trends and updates.....you are not living in the 21st century! We have found that posting news about NineStar Connect on Facebook and Twitter has been a successful line of communication for all of our social media followers. Once you "like" our page, you will automatically be notified of any post we share whether it's information about an outage, an event we are planning, local Channel 9 broadcasting or energy information to save you money.

Additionally, if you have a question for us, send us a message. We will research and respond to your question as quickly as possible. We don't want to "leave you in the dark" about any issues or inquiries you might have for us. Our Customer Service has always been a significant piece of what we do and giving you the answers you need is imperative to keeping you knowledgeable and satisfied with our service. To add, when there is that unfortunate outage, your communication to us is just as helpful in determining where the problem is and who it is affecting so we encourage you to share your thoughts.

So if you haven't already, grab your tablet or smart phone and "Like" or "Follow" our Facebook and/or Twitter page. We will do our best to keep you informed and post all the latest details about NineStar Connect news. But don't forget, we still like to hear your voice! When you need answers fast and need to talk to someone, a phone call to our 24/7/365 Support Center is always just a dial away - 317-326-HELP.



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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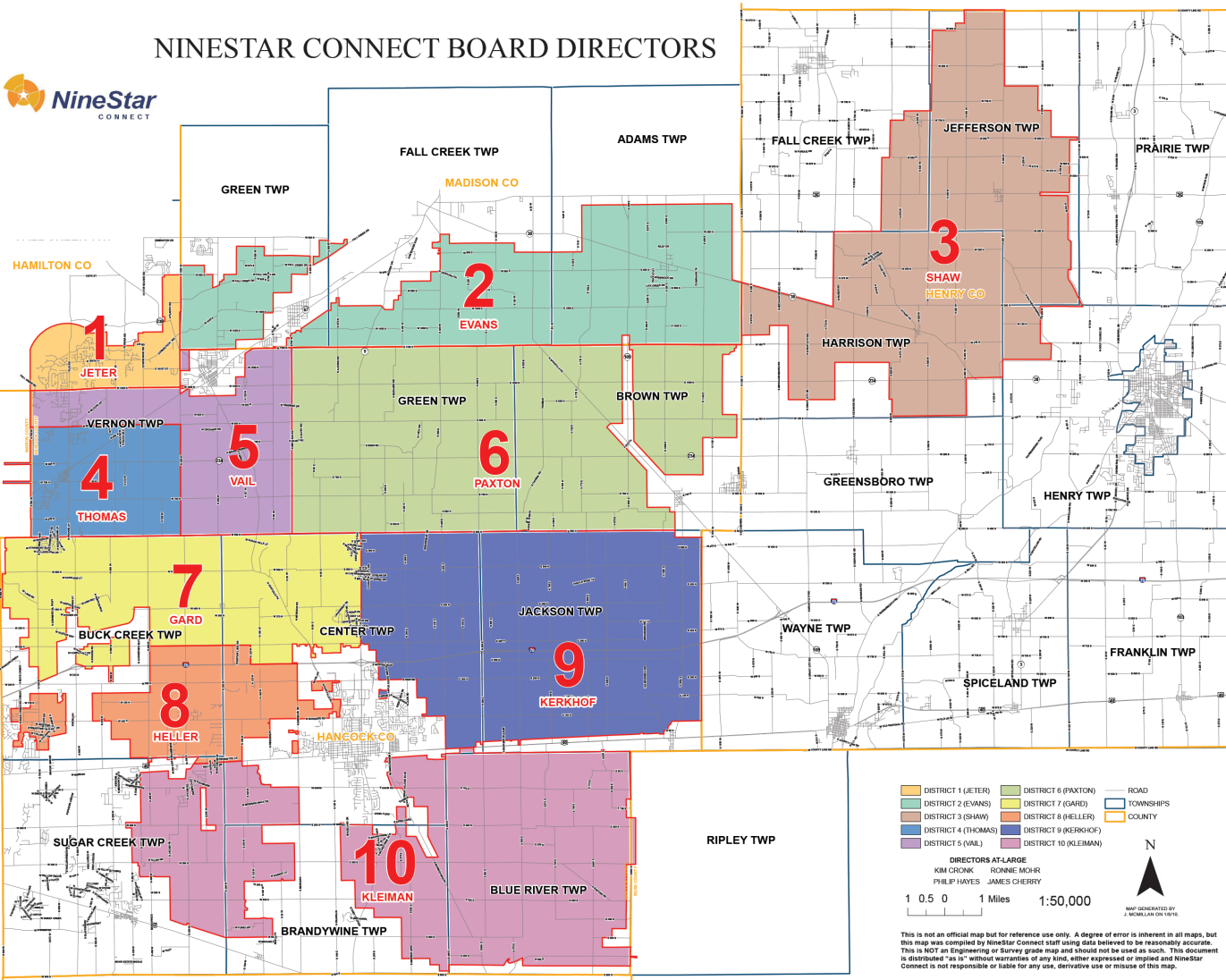
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# IDEA CO-OP LAUNCHES AT NINESTAR'S MAXWELL OFFICE

*READ ABOUT HOW IDEA CO-OP OPENS UP A WHOLE NEW OPPORTUNITY IN OUR COMMUNITY*

BY JULIE YOUNG

How do you attract and retain the best and brightest minds to the heart of Hancock County and then funnel that talent to companies throughout central Indiana? If you are Ninestar Connect, then you launch an Idea Co-op, a state-of-the-art co-working facility where folks can develop the innovative ideas that will shape the 21st Century.

"We wanted to create a forum where high tech people could connect, collaborate, learn new things, and be around like-minded people," said Jill Snyder, Business & Economic Development Director for Ninestar Connect. "With the Idea Co-op, there is now a place to do just that."

Situated on 26 acres just four miles north of I-70 on State Road 9, the Idea Co-op is a collaborative idea and technology center that is conducive to a number of businesses and industries. It not only offers telecommuters

with some much needed office space, but also includes a makerspace to support local demand and interest in specific technologies. It contains an IOT (Internet of Things) lab for Agritech, utility solutions as well as a host of other emerging fields and it also boasts an education center, which will be used to host all types of classes, seminars and training.

"Like every new initiative that Ninestar spearheads, the Idea Co-op is founded on and guided by the seven cooperative principles with an emphasis on education, training and information as well as concern for the community," Snyder said.

With thousands of STEM-related positions open in Indianapolis alone, Snyder said companies are going to have to cast a wider net if they plan to find people to fill those roles and Ninestar wants candidates in Hancock County to be ready.

"We want to give them the tools they need in order to succeed," she said.

The Idea Co-op at Ninestar's north campus offers members a wealth of amenities no matter what kind of job occupies one's time. There is a 50-person education center, open collision space, private offices, conference/meeting rooms, A/V and VR studios, a 3D printing lab and a private phone booth for sensitive conversations. In addition there is a large break room and Corner Café, a fitness and shower facility and of course everything is backed by the fastest broadband available thanks to Ninestar's Gigabit Internet service.

Outdoor amenities include a 40'x40' deck for al fresco meetings and work sessions, 17 tillable acres, an optional outbuilding, plenty of free parking and handicap accessibility across the campus.

Snyder said among the markets Ninestar is keen to attract with the Idea Co-op are those associated with the agritech space. Some of the most advanced technology is being developed for the agricultural field and they are excited that their 17 tillable acres will play a role in those advancements. She said one of the first tenants to join the co-op was an agritech company and she suspects it won't be the last to join.

"That is what makes us so unique," she said. "We see the Idea Co-op as an inroad into these emerging fields, a way to train workers for the jobs of the future and keep that talent right here in Hancock County."

In order to foster that talent, the Idea Co-op is offering a "Coder Dojo" the first Saturday of every month for children ages 7-17. The dojo teaches kids how to code in hopes of sparking an interest in the field at an early age. While children can bring their own computers to use during class, others can use computers provided by the Idea Co-op and Snyder said the class is already a big hit with parents who know STEM-related fields are the wave of the future.

"We had one father who brought his children to the dojo because he recognized careers in coding will pay better and be more readily available in decades to come and he wants his kids to have that skill," she said.

Other courses offered at the Idea Co-op include: Building Cisco Service Provider Next-Generation Networks; VMware VShare: Install, Configure, Manage v6.5; and Interconnecting Cisco Networking Devices with more courses to come in the future. Classes are available to the public as well as those with an Idea Co-op membership. For those interested in becoming a member of the Idea



Co-op, there are a number of ways to do so. You can rent a desk in the "collision space" for \$10 per day on an as needed basis or opt for a general monthly membership of \$75 or an upgraded membership for \$250 a month, which gives you a private, dedicated office space that can be locked up at night. All members are guaranteed four hours of conference room space a week, 150 copies/printouts per week, four hours of video/podcast rental space and unlimited use of private phone rooms, outdoor workspace, the corner café, fitness center and free parking. (Rental rates for the education center, warehouse or outdoor space can be requested by contacting the co-op directly.)

"The Idea Co-op opens up a whole new opportunity for folks in Hancock County and is poised to make a big impact," Snyder said. "It's a new way for the Ninestar cooperative to invest in the community that invests so much in us and we are excited to share the space with everyone. We have a number of people who are moving back to the area from the Silicon Valley and we want to keep them here. What better way than through the Idea Co-op?"



# NINESTAR TV CH9 WILL BE VISITING LOCAL HIGH SCHOOLS FILMING BASKETBALL GAMES THIS WINTER. CHECK OUT THE UPCOMING MATCHUPS YOU’LL FIND ON CH9.

With the turning of the season, you will find NineStar TV Ch 9 back on the road visiting local high schools filming basketball games. After wrapping up a successful fall season of fall sports coverage which included; football and volleyball the team now has its sights set on winter sports. The crew’s first game will be on November 7th at Pendleton Heights where they will film the Lady Arabians in action against New Castle.

“We are thrilled to be filming basketball once again. We have so many talented athletes in our area and we are happy to showcase them on Ch 9”, stated Video Producer John Painter from NineStar. “We hope to squeeze in some other sports as time allows”.

Games will be filmed throughout the season and rebroadcast the next day on Channel 9. If the next day is a weekday the game can be seen at 7:00pm. If the next day after the event is a weekend, the games can be seen at 2:00pm and 7:00pm. Please check local listings or the guide on the TV as the schedule can change without notice.

## ACTUAL FIRST CHANNEL 9 AIRING BROADCAST DATES AND TIMES

DAY	DATE	SCHEDULED AIR TIME ON CH. 9	OPPONENT	LOCATION/HOME TEAM	SPORT	GAMES
WEDNESDAY	7-Nov	7:00PM	NEW CASTLE	PENDLETON HEIGHTS	GIRLS	SINGLE
WEDNESDAY	21-Nov	7:00PM	ANDERSON	PENDLETON HEIGHTS	BOYS	SINGLE
WEDNESDAY	28-Nov	7:00PM	NEW CASTLE	NEW PALESTINE	GIRLS	SINGLE
SATURDAY	1-Dec	2:00PM & 7:00PM	SHENANDOAH	NEW PALESTINE	BOYS	SINGLE
SUNDAY	2-Dec	3:30PM & 8:30PM	MT VERNON	PENDLETON HEIGHTS	GIRLS	DOUBLE
SUNDAY	2-Dec	2:00PM & 7:00PM	CARMEL	PENDLETON HEIGHTS	BOYS	
SATURDAY	8-Dec	3:30PM & 8:30PM	NEW PALESTINE	GREENFIELD C.	GIRLS	DOUBLE
SATURDAY	8-Dec	2:00PM & 7:00PM	NEW PALESTINE	GREENFIELD C.	BOYS	
SATURDAY	15-Dec	3:30PM & 8:30PM	EASTERN HANCOCK	KNIGHTSTOWN	GIRLS	DOUBLE
SATURDAY	15-Dec	2:00PM & 7:00PM	EASTERN HANCOCK	KNIGHTSTOWN	BOYS	
SATURDAY	22-Dec	2:00PM & 7:00PM	NEW CASTLE	MT VERNON	BOYS	SINGLE
SATURDAY	5-Jan	2:00PM & 7:00PM	GREENFIELD C.	MT VERNON	BOYS	SINGLE
SATURDAY	12-Jan	3:30PM & 8:30PM	NEW PALESTINE	PENDLETON HEIGHTS	GIRLS	DOUBLE
SATURDAY	12-Jan	2:00PM & 7:00PM	NEW PALESTINE	PENDLETON HEIGHTS	BOYS	
SATURDAY	19-Jan	2:00PM & 7:00PM	MONROE CENTRAL	EASTERN HANCOCK	BOYS	SINGLE
SUNDAY	20-Jan	2:00PM & 7:00PM	MT VERNON	HAMILTON SOUTHEASTERN	BOYS	SINGLE
SUNDAY	27-Jan	2:00PM & 7:00PM	CARMEL	NEW CASTLE	BOYS	SINGLE
FRIDAY	1-Feb	7:00PM	DELTA	GREENFIELD C.	BOYS	SINGLE
SATURDAY	9-Feb	2:00PM & 7:00PM	MORRISTOWN	EASTERN HANCOCK	BOYS	SINGLE
WEDNESDAY	13-Feb	7:00PM	PENDLETON HEIGHTS	NEW CASTLE	BOYS	SINGLE
FRIDAY	22-Feb	7:00PM	LAWRENCE NORTH	HAMILTON SOUTHEASTERN	BOYS	SINGLE

# NINESTAR BILLING DEPARTMENT PREPARES GIFT BAGS FOR HANCOCK HEALTH

The billing department at NineStar Connect recently put together gift bags for patients at Hancock Health Hospital. The bags are intended for patients receiving chemotherapy treatments at the Sue Wortman Cancer Center. The bags include; lip balm, a note pad, a pen, and hand sanitizer. Darrin Couch, customer billing manager at NineStar, stated “This is something simple we can do as a local company to help those in our community going through something pretty stressful on them and their families.” Couch also came up with the idea to help the chemotherapy patients and helped organize the effort.



# WINNER’S CIRCLE CHALLENGE

Team NineStar pulled out a “sweeping” win as we competed in the recent Hancock Health’s Winner’s Circle Challenge at New Castle Motorsports Park. The Winner’s Circle Challenge raises funds for health-related mission trips for Hancock Health Hospital. This event featured a quadrathlon of competition as teams

fought to win the battle in golf (closest to pin), singles cornhole, slick track and long track go-cart racing. Our NineStar team was not only victorious in the overall competition, but individually won every single event (please note the broom in the picture referring to “sweeping the competition”)! Way to go Team NineStar!



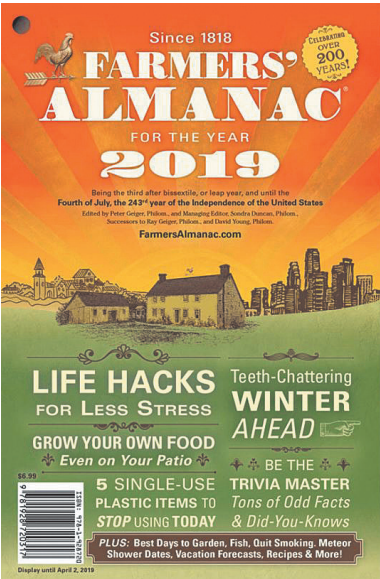
# SOLAR FARM — CUB SCOUT VISIT

NineStar Manager of Electric Operations Tommy Nance and NineStar Energy Advisor Matt Strahl met with Aaron Hilbers, Den leader for the Webelos Pack 770, along with his cub scouts to learn a thing or two about solar energy. The cub scouts had a requirement that they had to have to understand how energy is used in the community. While at our solar farm, Tommy and Matt explained how the solar panels are made, how they convert the sun’s light into electricity, and how the produced electricity makes its way back to the power grid to be used in our homes and businesses.

# COMPLIMENTARY FARMERS’ ALMANACS

Once again NineStar Connect will be providing a limited number of free 2019 Farmers Almanacs to our customers. The almanacs will be available at all four business locations. This includes; Maxwell, Knightstown, McCordsville and Greenfield. While the almanacs are free there is a limited supply and when the supply is exhausted, they are gone. So be sure to pick up your copy early so you

will be able to see what winter has in store for us in East Central Indiana.



# NINESTAR PARTICIPATES IN COOPERATIVE SERVICE DAY

NineStar held its Fifth Annual Cooperative Service Day on October 12th. The daylong event provided much needed brawn, support and materials to local projects and by all accounts the day was a complete success. Over sixty of NineStar’s employees volunteered their time, energy and expertise on several important projects in our service territory. 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 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. Kenneth Butler Memorial Soup Kitchen : Painting
- 2. Agape: Landscaping
- 3. Dani’s Dreams: Construction & Landscaping
- 4. Hancock County 4H Ag Association: Painting & Electric work in the 4H Bowl

- 5. Greenfield Central High School: Tree Trimming
- 6. Octagon House: Painting & Installation of a hand rail
- 7. Nameless Creek Youth Camp: Landscaping
- 8. Hancock County Meals on Wheels: Delivery of meals
- 9. Hancock Hope House: Installation of Stalls in Bathroom

Darrin Couch, NineStar’s Customer Billing Manager organized the day’s activities, said “Our employees look forward to this event every year and they sign up quickly when the projects are decided. Everyone enjoys lending a hand to so many nonprofits in our community. I appreciate the fact NineStar gives back to our community and 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

**H**ard to believe we are in the final quarter of 2018. As the weather gets colder, there are a couple of NineStar milestones I want to bring to your attention.

I am happy to report that beginning around the middle of November, NineStar will be returning \$1 million dollars in capital credits to its electric and telecommunications members. These retirements represent the coop's past margins (e.g. profits) which were generated by our members and are now being returned, pro-rata, based on the members usage (patronage) of the coop's services. The more you contributed to the margins by purchasing coop services, the larger your capital credit check. Be on the lookout in November for an envelope marked "Happy Thanksgiving" containing your capital credit check.

Back in 2010, when the directors of both Central Indiana Power and Hancock Telecom were urging their respective members to support the merger of the two coops, they made a commitment that the newly-minted utility coop (eventually named NineStar Connect) would build fiber-to-the-home to each member of the cooperative, as finances permitted. I'm happy to report that by the end of this year, 100% of the members of NineStar Connect will have access to fiber-to-the-home. People who experience fiber broadband quickly recognize it is a superior broadband service. I've heard from many of our members saying it truly changed the way they conduct their daily lives. I'm proud of all of our directors, both current and past, who had the vision to recognize that this was a critical service that all of our members could share, regardless of the other services they might receive from NineStar. I'm also particularly grateful to all of our employees who have made this vision a reality for all of our members.

Next year, we will be welcoming nearly 600

new members to our cooperative when we close on the acquisition of Gem Water utility. Over the upcoming months, we will once again start building fiber-to-the-home to all of these new members as well, as finances permit. We can't really predict what new technologies are coming around in the near or far future. However, we do know today that many of the technological advances we use on a daily basis, no one was talking about 5 or 10 years ago.

Technology increases the pace of change and to be able to stay ahead and take advantage of new technology, businesses and individuals need to have access to fast, dependable broadband connections. Connected communities will be the thriving communities in the future and thanks to the vision and commitment of our board coupled with the hard work of our employees, NineStar will continue to make sure its members have access to the very best of connected utility services we can continue to offer.

Speaking of directors - Fred Powers, a dear friend I've known since I was in elementary school and a former director of our company sent me this story the other day I thought I would share. I'm still scratching my head on this one:

*Seems a Missouri farmer passed away and left 17 mules to his three sons. The instructions in his will said that the oldest boy was to get one-half of the mules, the second oldest one-third, and the youngest one-ninth. The three sons, recognizing the difficulty of dividing 17 mules into these fractions, began to argue.*

*Their uncle heard about his nephews' argument, hitched up his own mule*



*and drove out to settle the matter. Upon arriving at his deceased brother's farm, he added his mule to the 17 in the corral, making 18 total mules. He went to the oldest son first and said your father left you half the mules, so you get nine mules, which satisfied the oldest boy. Next, he went to the second son and said your father left you one-third of the mules, so you get six, which satisfied him. Last, the uncle went to the youngest son and said your father left you one-ninth of the mules, so you get two, which satisfied the third son as well.*

*Finished honoring his brother's wishes, the uncle counted out the mules he had divided - 9+6+2 equals 17. Satisfied he had settled the argument between his nephews, the uncle again hitched up his own mule and returned home.*

I hope everyone has a safe and happy Thanksgiving holiday!

# OPERATION ROUNDUP

NineStar Connect's Operation Round-Up Committee meeting was held on August 2nd at the company's headquarters. The purpose of Operation Round-Up is to accumulate and distribute funds for charitable purposes to groups/organizations within the NineStar service territory. The source of these funds is the membership of NineStar Connect electric and communications customers who voluntarily "round up" their bill to the next highest dollar. The money is accumulated by the co-op and transferred to the NineStar Community Trust. Each quarter a group of Trustees (NineStar customers who volunteer their time to serve on this committee) meet and decide how the funds are dispersed with the applications that are received. Here are some organizations that benefited from the ORU fund this past quarter:

**Cornerstone Robotics** – Cornerstone Robotics is a Christian home schooled robotics program. It introduces science and technology in a fun and exciting way. It also helps with teamwork and public speaking skills. This robotics team travels locally and across the state for various competitions. ORU provided funds to help with the necessary equipment and tools for this new team. The first

competition is set for November of 2018. Operation Round-up trustees approved \$2000.00 to this organization.

**Girl Scouts of Central Indiana** – The Girl Scouts of Indiana serves nearly 29,000 girls in 45 central Indiana counties. This includes 24,965 girls in the seven counties that NineStar serves. Girl Scout Camp Ada was in need of a new commercial freezer and hardwired fire alarm system. With the \$5100.00 that ORU funds provided, they are able to make these purchases for their camp.

**Greenfield Central Band Boosters** – The Greenfield Central Band Boosters were looking to purchase a set of Timpani drums. With the growth of the band in recent years, the need for new instruments has superseded the purchase of new Timpani. With the opportunity to purchase a nearly new set, the ORU trustees have approved a matching amount of \$5,000.00 to help with this costly purchase of Timpani drums. This amount will be provided once the band raises the first \$5000.00 in their endeavor.

**Hancock County Search Dogs** - Hancock County Search Dogs is dedicated to the promotion of bloodhounds to help law enforcement locate missing persons. The \$5000.00 that was approved by the ORU Board

of Trustees will help this organization with implementing a children's program focusing on safety along with each child receiving a DNA kit in the event that a child's DNA is needed by police.

**Hancock County Veterans Park** – The Veterans Park is located adjacent to the Hancock County Courthouse and has received thousands of visitors, families, veterans and school children. It serves as a memorial and celebration to every man and woman who has served in the military and proves to be an inspiration to our youth to one day serve as they recognize the courage of those that served before them. The ORU Board of Trustees approved \$1750.00 for maintenance of the park with landscaping and tree removal.

For ones that want to send in an application for Operation Round-up dollars, the next application deadline is February 7th. Applications can be downloaded from our website at [www.ninestarconnect.com](http://www.ninestarconnect.com) under the Community tab.

If you or someone you know (must be a NineStar customer) would like to serve on the Board of Trustees, please email [OperationRoundUp@NineStarConnect.com](mailto:OperationRoundUp@NineStarConnect.com) or call 317-323-3087.



## NINESTAR CONDUCTED ANOTHER POWER HOUR MEETING AT THEIR CORPORATE OFFICES ON OCTOBER 10TH

NineStar played host to nearly sixty members on October 10th, when they conducted yet another educational workshop at their corporate offices in Greenfield. The Power Hour included dinner, giveaways and door prizes. The evening's educational component centered around SmartHub. SmartHub is NineStar Connect's free online bill payment system for both Electric and Communication customers. If you are new to paying your bill online, you will need to create a SmartHub account. Some of the benefits of creating a SmartHub Account and using it to pay your NineStar bill include:

- Sends an email notification when a new bill is generated. The email includes a link for easy navigation to your billing information. You can use SmartHub to review account information and pay your electric and/or communications bill, or you may choose to pay in a different manner
- Allows you to pay electronically using a VISA, Mastercard, American Express or Discover card or an electronic check transaction

- Displays posting of payments in real time
  - Provides current and historical billing information and payment history
  - Outlines usage in graphs
  - At this time the Electric Division only includes a free app for smartphone or tablet. Download it by searching "SmartHub" on either Apple Store or Android Market. Once the app is open, type in NineStar Connect as the provider. The login information is the same for both the web and the mobile app
  - Allows you to enroll in Paperless Billing
  - Let's those with multiple accounts pay with a single payment
  - Provides an easy way to report an outage. This feature works especially well for members with multiple accounts.
- The next Power Hour member meeting is tentatively set for April 23, 2019. Invitations will be sent to all members in early April.



# NEW SMART TECHNOLOGY CAN SAVE YOU ENERGY — AND MONEY!

**A**s technology transforms the way we live, appliances have evolved as well. New smart, internet-enabled appliances keep you comfortable, while other upgrades also reduce your energy use to save you money. As more internet-enabled technology becomes available, it's important to see how these devices' energy use compares to your current equipment. Different appliances will vary in their efficiency; fortunately, the internet capabilities allow you to monitor many of these appliances' energy use. Some items that you may want to consider:

## LED LIGHTING

This is the easiest addition to your home that can quickly pay for itself. Energy Star rated lightbulbs use at least 75% less energy, and last 25 times longer than incandescent lighting, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. A smart phone can operate some newer LED's such as Phillips Hue bulbs. Even basic LED bulbs help savings quickly add up!

## SMART THERMOSTAT

If you frequently change the settings on your thermostat, you can cause your HVAC to work more than needed, wasting energy and money. Smart internet-enabled thermostats, such as Nest

and Honeywell WiFi Smart Thermostat include tools such as energy reports and smart phone controls. Some even learn your routine, resulting in optimized comfort while more efficiently using electricity.

## WHOLE HOME ELECTRIC MONITORS

You can now monitor your energy use in real time! NineStar offers the ability that breaks down your daily energy use. In addition, new monitors such as Curb Sense are Wi-Fi enabled to provide real time data and energy use. This knowledge can help you take steps to conserve electricity, saving money.

## WATER HEATERS

A variety of water heaters exist, and their energy efficiency varies as well. The U.S. Department of Energy includes valuable information to consider, such as its uniform energy factor (UEF). The UEF is the updated measurement to determine a water heater's overall efficiency, according to the Energy Star website. Some newer water heater models also include internet connectivity to monitor your energy use and make adjustments. Fortunately, NineStar Connect, your local cooperative, offer Power Moves rebate of \$400 on heat pump water heaters with a UEF of 2.0

or greater that replace existing traditional electric tank water heater, or a heat pump water heater installed in a new home. Visit [www.powermoves.com](http://www.powermoves.com) for details.

## ADDITIONAL APPLIANCES

Tech evolutions have led to more efficient washing machines, clothes dryers, dishwashers and more. Selecting an appliance based on its efficiency will help you save money over the product's lifecycle. Many new efficient models are also internet-enabled, allowing you to monitor your appliance's energy use or even connect to a smart home system to provide greater energy monitoring or analysis. Look for the blue Energy Star label to be sure your new appliance meets energy efficient standards. New smart appliances and devices can help lead to long term energy savings while maintaining your comfort, and adding savings to your bank account! Visit [www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov) for details about energy efficiency, including information on products that meet Energy Star criteria. You can also learn more ways to save with a home energy audit. Please contact NineStar Connect at 317-326-3131 and ask for our Energy Advisor Matt Strahl for more information.

## NINESTAR TO MANAGE FIBER OPTICS IN SHELBY COUNTY

More businesses and homes in Shelby County could receive high-speed fiber optic internet service as a result of a new agreement between a local government agency and a provider already operating in the county.

Shelby County Fiber Optic Board (SCFOB), which owns existing fiber optic cable in the county, and NineStar Connect signed an agreement on Sept. 18 with the intent of dramatically expanding access to fiber throughout the county.

"This will help attract businesses that need a solid, high-speed fiber connection," said SCFOB President Rob Nolley. "For the home, it is important because it will help us attract new citizens who like the idea of having high-speed fiber without data limitations."

Hi-speed connectivity holds potential to enhance livability for residents of apartments and condominiums under consideration in downtown Shelbyville, Mayor Tom DeBaun said. Co-working spaces also would benefit from fiber, DeBaun added.

Currently, eight strands of fiber run through the main downtown area of Shelbyville and extend along Interstate 74 to Indianapolis. None of the fiber goes to homes. NineStar manages fiber in the Shelby County community of Morristown.

NineStar, headquartered in Greenfield, Ind., approached Shelbyville officials approximately a year ago with a proposal to manage fiber optic cable in the county and aggressively expand access. NineStar replaces the prior provider, Lightbound LLC. NineStar can sell services on the fiber, and will help market both the fiber and economic development.

Under the 20-year agreement, NineStar plans to first expand into areas with high potential for business growth, and then push into homes. The SCFOB might consider helping cover costs of extending fiber to certain areas with high potential for economic development, Nolley said.



# NINESTAR SUPPORTS IMAGINATION LIBRARY

During the Imagination Library Giving Week held annually in September, NineStar Connect and its employees donated \$680 to the program that puts books in the hands of Hancock County’s youngest residents. These funds will be matched \$0.50 on the dollar by Hancock County Community Foundation. The Imagination Library program sends children a book each month, until they reach kindergarten age, to encourage early reading between the child and their family.

# CO-OP LIVING WITH MARY JANE CAMPING WITH KIDS

Camping has always been a favorite fall activity for my husband and me. Before children, we’d load up the Jeep every Friday evening and head for our favorite camping spot. It was a great way to unwind after a stressful week at work, catching up with each other while gazing at the stars. Now that we have kids, we still enjoy camping, but we’ve had to rethink our strategy just a bit. Think you’re ready to “rough it” with your ruffians? Here are a couple of rules to remember before you head out:

**Rule #1: Something always goes wrong.** And I do mean always. Like the time a tornado blew through the county where we were camping, potty-training toddler in tow. The campground lost electricity and promptly closed and locked all the bathrooms. Yikes!

**Rule #2: Equipment fails.** Think the end of October is too late in the year to go camping with kids? No worries, we thought. After all, the camper had a propane heater. And it worked great, too—until the middle of the night when the propane ran out. We spent the rest of the weekend huddled together in sleeping bags and quilts.

**Rule #3: Rodents!** I’ll never forget waking up to the

sound of a mouse foraging through the camper in the middle of the night. My husband caught it with a Pringles can, threw the can out the camper door, then casually told me, “I’m pretty sure I got it. Stay here with the kids while I run to the restroom, will you?” What do you mean, pretty sure?!

**Rule #4: When it rains, it pours.** Once, we didn’t even bother to set up our tent in the monsoon, switching our reservation to a small cabin instead. It was soooo worth the extra money. The kids still remember sleeping in bunk beds built into the walls.

Yes, almost every time we’ve camped, things have gone wrong. But as I look back, I realize that’s part of the fun, testing our stamina and creativity. I wouldn’t trade those memories for all the weather-perfect, rodent-free campgrounds in the world! (Well, maybe just the rodent-free ones.)

*Mary Jane Bogle is a part-time writer and full-time mom. While her mother-in-law declares she was “born in the wrong century,” she remains steadfastly committed to seeking a simpler, more self-sufficient way of life.*



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# WITH COLDER TEMPERATURES RIGHT AROUND THE CORNER, BE PREPARED AND PREP YOUR HVAC SYSTEMS NOW

**T**he cooling temperatures and kids once again climbing the school bus steps to head to school mean that fall is quickly approaching! The changing season also can serve as an alarm clock to prepare for what is to come – winter. Early fall is the perfect time to prepare your heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) system for winter. Many HVAC contractors

are not as busy in the early fall as they will be during the winter months, when they receive more emergency service calls. As a result, you're more likely to get a timely response, and perhaps even get a special rate on service. Some steps you may want to take include:

- **REPLACE YOUR FURNACE FILTER.**

The changing seasons can serve as a reminder that it's time to change your furnace filter. This is a fairly easy step, and can help keep your furnace clean. A dirty furnace filter can plug up the airflow of your system, making your home uncomfortable and shortening the furnace's lifespan at the same time.

- **GET A SYSTEM INSPECTION.**

Early fall is a perfect time to schedule an inspection of your HVAC system. This could include a tune-up to ensure that your system is optimized to perform as best as it can. Preventative maintenance frequently can be more affordable than having to pay for an emergency house call when your system goes out! During an excellent "clean and tune," a technician will pull the blower from your system and use water or a cleaner to remove the dirt that made it past the furnace filter.

- **CONSIDER AN UPGRADE IF ONE IS NEEDED.**

If you have an older or underperforming system, you may want to think about a replacement. While not cheap, it may ultimately be a better option than having to keep making needed repairs on an inefficient system. If you choose to upgrade your system in the fall, HVAC contractors may be running seasonal discounts. Of course, your local electric cooperative offers POWER MOVES® rebates for qualifying efficiency upgrades that will help you save more on energy costs. Contact NineStar's Energy Advisor Matt Strahl for details at 317-326-3131.

Taking the time in the fall to prepare your heating system can lead to a warm, more comfortable winter! It also can help your HVAC system run more efficiently and last longer. You always can contact NineStar Connect, your local electric cooperative, to inquire about a home energy assessment, which would provide details on your whole home's energy use and give suggestions on steps you can take to improve your home's energy usage and efficiency. You also can visit [www.ninestarconnect.com](http://www.ninestarconnect.com) for more information.

