

JANUARY – FEBRUARY 2021



NineStar CONNECTION

VOLUME 10
ISSUE 1

LONGTIME BOARD MEMBER RONNIE MOHR PASSES AWAY

1948 – 2020

Ronnie Mohr served on the Central Indiana Power Board from 1994 to 2010 and the NineStar Connect Board since 2011.

NINESTAR BOARD WELCOMES NEW BOARD MEMBER

Mike Dulin was unanimously selected as the new district one director after director Chris Jeter resigned to serve in the Indiana General Assembly.

SEE PAGE 4 & 5

TOGETHER IN SPIRIT

NINESTAR PREPARES FOR ITS ANNUAL MEETING



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DO YOU HAVE A
STRATEGY FOR
ENERGY
SAVINGS?
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MEET THE
CANDIDATES
PAGE 10 & 11



NineStar lineman assisted the Mount Comfort Corridor Coalition for Smart Growth by installing several of the new Mount Comfort Corridor wayfinding signs. NineStar Connect and Hancock Health paid for the signs to help promote the Mount Comfort Corridor.



OUR EMPLOYEES MAKE THE DIFFERENCE. HERE'S A CUSTOMER REVIEW FOR MATT LAYTON.

"THANKS FOR YOUR HELP, TRULY A PLEASURE WORKING WITH NINESTAR AND THEIR WILLINGNESS TO MEET THEIR CUSTOMERS' NEEDS. YOU ALL SET THE STANDARD WHEN IT COMES TO CUSTOMER SERVICE."



CUSTOMER UNION SAVINGS AND LOAN

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

STORY IDEA?

Contact David Spencer at dspencer@ninestarconnect.com

COVER STORY

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PASSES AWAY

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GET ORGANIZED WITH MARY JANE

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Eight guidelines to help you get your household organized after the New Year.

NINESTAR WELCOMES NEW BOARD MEMBER

Mike Dulin selected as new board member.

PAGE 7



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.



NineStar CONNECTION

The *NineStar Connection* is a publication of NineStar Connect servicing retail and residential customers. Nearly 16,000 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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NineStar Connection

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Director District 1
Mike Dulin

Director District 2
Mark Evans

Director District 3
Don Shaw

Director District 4
To be filled March 26, 2021

Director District 5
Steve Vail

Director District 6
Joseph Paxton

Director District 7
Jack Negley

Director District 8
Raymond Kerkhof

Director District 9
Phil Hayes

Director District 10
Shelly Kleiman

AT LARGE

James Cherry
Darrell Thomas

To be filled March 26, 2021

NINESTAR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

DISTRICT 1



MIKE DULIN

DISTRICT 2



MARK EVANS

DISTRICT 3



DON SHAW
RETIRING
MARCH, 2021

DISTRICT 4



TO BE FILLED
MARCH 26, 2021

DISTRICT 5



STEPHEN VAIL

DISTRICT 6



JOSEPH PAXTON

DISTRICT 7



JACK NEGLEY

DISTRICT 8



RAYMOND KERKHOF

DISTRICT 9



PHILIP M. HAYES

DISTRICT 10



SHELLY KLEIMAN

AT LARGE



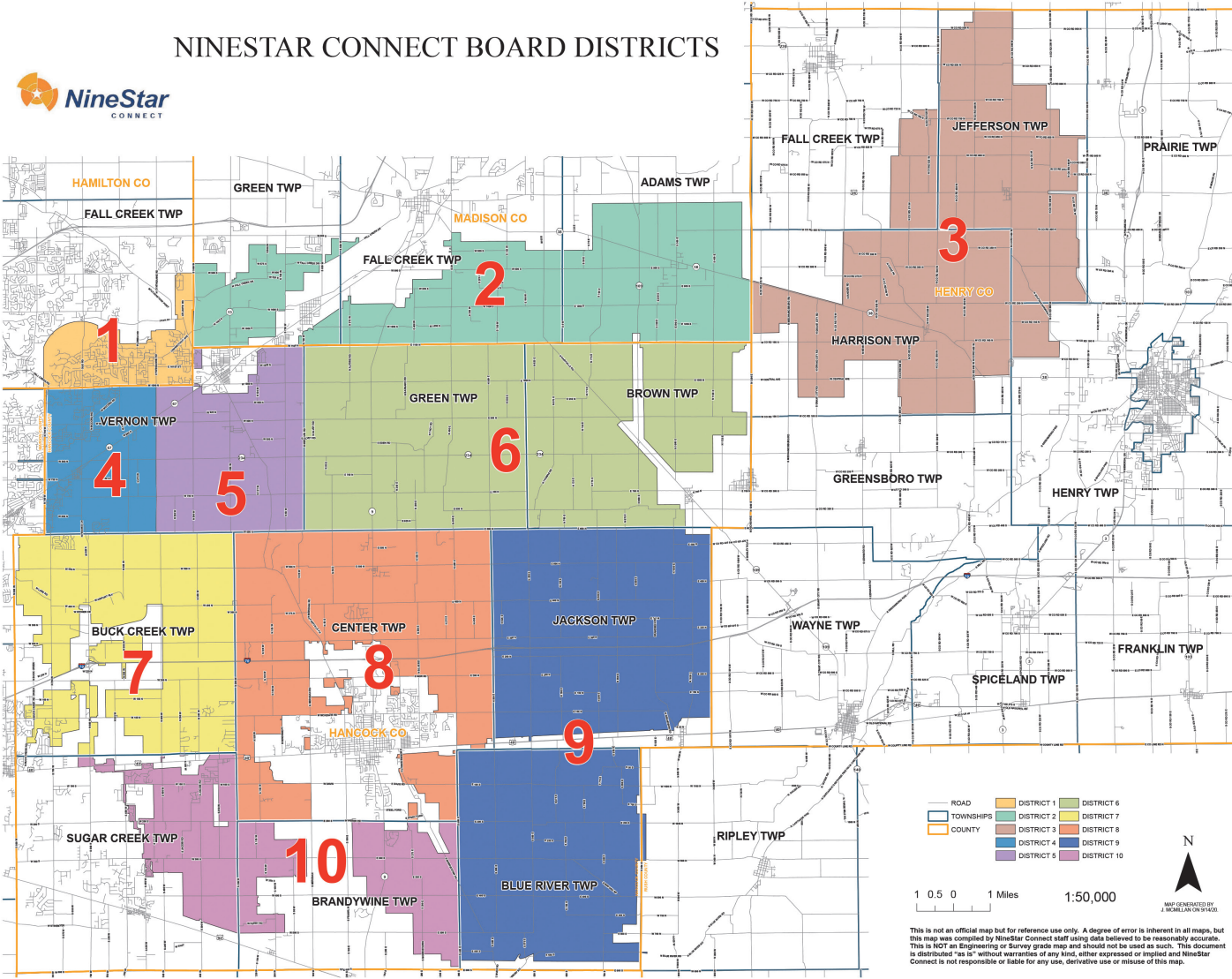
JAMES E. CHERRY



DARRELL H. THOMAS



TO BE FILLED
MARCH 26, 2021



TOGETHER IN SPIRIT

NINESTAR PREPARES FOR ITS ANNUAL MEETING



By Julie Young

At this time last year, the team at NineStar Connect was making plans for the cooperative's annual meeting. The venue was books, the menu was selected, and the program arranged.

Then COVID-19 upended everything.

"Necessity proved to be the mother of invention and we quickly shifted gears to host a virtual event," said David Spencer, director of marketing & public relations for NineStar Connect. "This year we are in the same boat, but this time we had a few more weeks to prepare."

NineStar is excited to announce that this year's annual meeting will be held virtually on Friday, March 26 at 6:00pm and will include everything that members have come to expect over the years – with a few twists. The gathering will feature a performance by the Hancock County Children's Choir, an invocation by a member of the local clergy, the Pledge of Allegiance recited by a class of first graders, the presentation of scholarships and of course the election of NineStar leadership.

"Everyone who votes will receive a \$10 credit on their bill and they will be entered in a drawing for \$5,000

in various cash prizes as well as an additional \$5,000 in merchandise offerings," Spencer said. "However, we must make quorum in order to hold the event at all."

Spencer said that over the past year, utility cooperatives throughout the country have gotten creative when it came to holding their annual meetings. The Richland Electric Cooperative in Richland Center, WI held a drive-in event in the spacious parking lot of its service center. Members stayed in their car throughout the meeting and honked their approval for proposed motions. Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative held their meeting in a drive-in theater in Gibson City where members could listen to leaders talk about the state of the co-op in the comfort of their cars.

While there are a number of ways in which cooperatives can adjust their events, Spencer said NineStar was in a unique position to take their meeting to the next level.

"Most cooperatives do not have a communications component," Spencer said.

This allowed NineStar to expand the way in which they held their

VOTING FOR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Receive a \$10 bill credit and be entered for drawings of \$5,000 in cash prizes and \$5,000 in giveaways.

For a complete list of giveaways visit ninestarconnect.com/annualmeeting

Vote March 1st – 25th

- Online Via SmartHub
Ninestarconnect.smarthub.coop
- NineStar Main Office
2243 E. Main St., Greenfield
Mon.-Fri. 7:30am – 5:00pm
- McCordsville Office
6045 W. Broadway, McCordsville
Mon.-Fri. 7:30am – 5:00pm /
Sat. 8:00am – Noon

Vote Saturday, March 6th

Sulphur Springs/Jefferson
Township Fire Department
8:00am – Noon

View the Annual Meeting

Friday, March 26 at 6:00pm

- NineStar.com/annualmeeting
- NineStar Channel 9
- Vimeo.com/NineStar

meeting while encouraging more members to participate. Spencer said that throughout the broadcast, the viewership vacillated between a couple hundred and over 1,000. Over 500 members voted prior to the broadcast, which was a record and it seemed only natural to do it again when social distancing protocols made an in-person event impractical for 2021.

“We are always looking for new ways to help people learn more about their co-op and while some of our members have come to expect the traditional meeting, the next generation is comfortable with a virtual event,” Spencer said.

A virtual meeting also enables NineStar to do things that they can’t do in a traditional gathering such as getting more community members involved in the presentations and showcasing the new water tower that people may not have a chance to see.

Voting for our 2021 Board of Directors will also be different this year. Members have the option and are encouraged to vote online via SmartHub. “We wanted to give our members another option to vote and with the pandemic still happening, a safer way to vote as well. Members can log into their SmartHub account to vote online. Members who do not want to vote online can still visit a NineStar

location to cast their vote.

While he knows that members will miss the traditional meal supplied by Jonathon Byrd’s Catering, he also knows that everyone appreciates an extra \$10 in these uncertain times. He said things have been rough and right now, it’s hard for people to find ways to trim the budget so \$10 helps. He noted that NineStar also increased the broadband speed for everyone in the service area from March through June in order to get students through


the school year while helping parents who had to work from home.

“We did it again from November to January when classes moved online and the kids came home from college. That’s what you get from a community-focused cooperative. The big boys don’t do that, but we listen to our neighbors and member owners in order to provide for their needs,” he said.

HOW TO VOTE ONLINE

1. VISIT NINESTARCONNECT.SMARTHUB.COOP
2. CLICK ON THE “**VOTE NOW**” BUTTON AT THE TOP RIGHT OF THE PAGE

The screenshot shows the NineStar Connect SmartHub interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with the NineStar logo, links for 'Log Out', 'Help', and 'NineStarConnect Home', and three buttons: 'Pay Now', 'Vote Now' (circled in red with an arrow pointing to it from the text above), and 'Report An Issue/Inquiry'. Below this is a secondary navigation bar with links: 'Home', 'Billing & Payments', 'My Profile', 'Notifications', 'Contact Us', and 'Have a Question? Get Help.'. The main content area has a 'Communication / Alerts' section with a message about NineStar Offices being OPEN. Below that is an 'Account Overview' section showing a 'NINESTAR CONNECT MEMBER' status, a 'Next Due' date of 02/17/2021, an 'Amount Paid' of \$0.00, and a 'Total Due' of \$0.00. A 'Make Payment' button is visible at the bottom right of the account overview.



Have a question for NineStar?

It could be answered during the virtual Annual Meeting.
Email your question to annualmeetingquestion@ninestarconnect.com.



2021 Scholarship Program

Providing Fifteen
\$1,000 Scholarships

- As of February 1, 2021, the student's principal residence must be with said student's parent or legal guardian who is a member of NineStar Connect or a customer of NineStar Communications in good standing.
- The student must be a 2020/2021 school year graduating high school student.
- The student must have a minimum cumulative grade point average of 2.75 on a 4.00 scale or its equivalent, at the time of the application.
- Applications must be submitted online or dropped off to NineStar's South Campus by **March 5, 2021**.

Applications can be filled out and submitted online at **NineStarConnect.com**. Paper applications are available at all local high school guidance offices, any NineStar business location or available to download on our website.

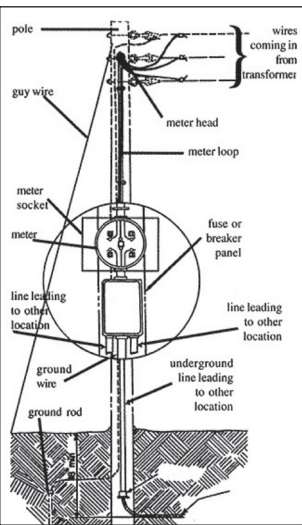
NineStar South Campus
2243 East Main Street
Greenfield, IN 46140

For more information contact
Dominique Egbert 317-323-2103
administration@ninstarconnect.com



MAINTENANCE AND REPAIRS ON YOUR ELECTRIC SERVICE

Transformer poles, meter loops, wires and breaker panels — who is responsible for what?



When storms damage equipment, or when you are planning new construction, it's good to know who is responsible for maintenance and repairs on your electric service.

OVERHEAD ELECTRIC SERVICE

NINESTAR CONNECT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR:

- Wires from the transformer to the meter pole and electrical connections on those wires.
- The meter pole, guy wires, ground wire and ground rod.
- The meter

MEMBERS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR:

- The meter loop, including the meter socket.

- Fuse and/or breaker panels including disconnect switches.
- Wires leaving from the meter pole to services at other locations/ buildings and connections for those wires.

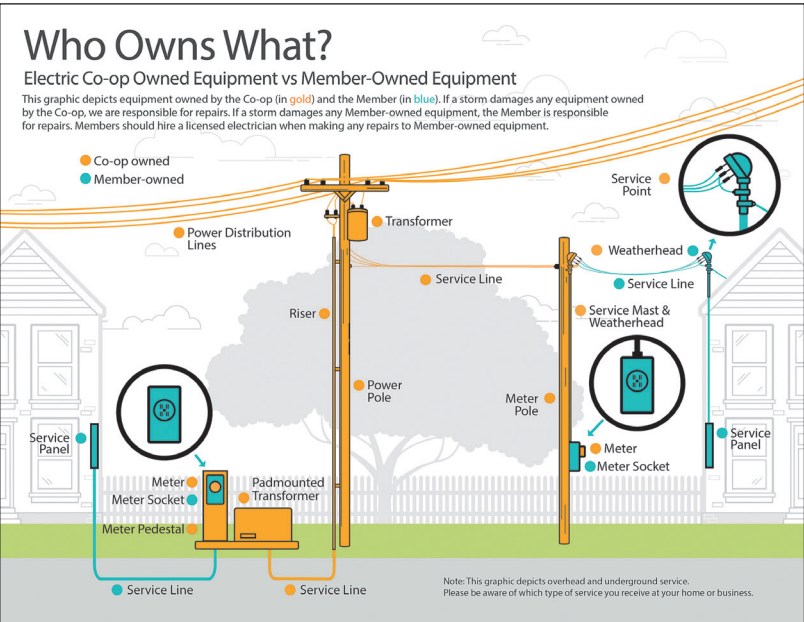
UNDERGROUND ELECTRIC SERVICE

NINESTAR CONNECT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR:

- Wires running from the transformer to the meter location and the connections.
- The meter

MEMBERS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR:

- Wires running from the meter location to other locations and those connections.
- Any disconnect switches, fuse panels or breaker panels at the meter.
- The meter socket and mounting panel.



DO YOU HAVE A STRATEGY FOR ENERGY SAVINGS?

The most common approach to improving energy efficiency is to concentrate on one-time solutions, such as upgrading to a more efficient lighting or heating system. This often puts the focus on short-term savings at the expense of whole-building performance improvement. An organization-wide, strategic energy management program can optimize long-term savings through continuous improvement.

WHY STRATEGIC ENERGY MANAGEMENT?

Each year, energy costs for commercial facilities total about \$180 billion, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. Energy use is a cost worth managing.

Although any organization can benefit from a strategic approach to improving energy efficiency, those that can profit the most include large, energy-intensive facilities such as hospitals, manufacturers, restaurants, hotels, supermarkets and universities. Energy management programs can draw from the experience of individuals at all levels, from facility operations to top management. Strategic energy management may also extend to the supply chain, requiring suppliers to conform to energy-efficiency guidelines.

HOW IT WORKS

Rome wasn't built in a day, and it's not possible to develop a successful energy management program overnight. Careful planning, teamwork and follow-through are necessary. Although every organization is different, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has outlined a seven-step process for continuous improvement.

- 1. MAKE A COMMITMENT.** Successful energy management requires adequate funding and resources for continuous improvement. Form a dedicated energy management team from across departments and establish an energy policy that articulates your organization's commitment to energy efficiency and states clear objectives.
- 2. ACCESS PERFORMANCE.** Gather energy use data and benchmark your facility against similar organizations using **ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager™**. This will help you spot savings opportunities and serve as a baseline to measure progress.
- 3. SET GOALS.** Performance goals guide energy

management activities and serve as the basis for developing strategies, as well as measuring and tracking progress. Goals should be clear, measurable and have a specific target date.

4. CREATE AN ACTION PLAN. With performance data and goals in place, develop a systematic process to implement energy-saving measures. Your plan should define technical steps and specific targets, and



determine roles and responsibilities. Update the plan regularly to reflect performance changes and shifting priorities.

- 5. IMPLEMENTATION.** Ensure that the necessary resources are available to carry out measures specified in the action plan and achieve performance goals. Training, incentives and sharing of successful practices are critical to long-term success.
- 6. EVALUATE PROGRESS.** Examine your energy use and compare your performance to stated goals. Review your action plan to identify lessons learned, determined best practices and make adjustments.
- 7. RECOGNITION.** Recognizing achievements is a proven strategy for maintaining program success. Reward those who have helped save energy and achieve results. This will motivate other staff members and bring positive exposure to the program.

For more information and details about each of these steps, see **ENERGY STAR Guidelines for Energy Management**.

NINESTAR BOARD WELCOMES NEW BOARD MEMBER



At their January board meeting, the board of directors of NineStar Connect selected a new member to join their ranks. The vacancy came about when district one director Chris Jeter resigned once he was elected to serve in the Indiana General Assembly. Because Jeter had two years left on his term, the bylaws required the board to appoint a member from district one to fill his unexpired term. Mike Dulin was unanimously selected from a pool of eight highly qualified members to fill the remainder of Chris' term. Dulin is a graduate of the university of Kentucky and is currently the President of Heritage Environmental. He is very involved in his community serving as a board member of the Mary Rigg Foundation, Geist Christian Church and enjoys spending time as a youth sports coach. Mike and his wife, Felicia live in Fishers with their two daughters' Lilian & Madyln.

PAPERLESS BILLING

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

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

Each month we pick a new winner for just choosing to get your billing statement electronically. If you are drawn as a lucky winner, you will receive a \$50 Amazon Gift Card.

Congratulations to our latest monthly winners:

| | |
|----------|---|
| November | Brook Abbott and Damon Macon, Pendleton |
| December | Jeff Bartel, Markleville |

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!

Message from our Chief Technology Officer

WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT IN 2021 AND BEYOND.

As the Chief Technology Officer of NineStar Connect, I am responsible for several things at your cooperative and one of them is staying up to date on new and upcoming technologies (heck, it is right there in my title!). A topic I frequently get asked about is NineStar Connect's television service. Many of our members and customers receive television programming from NineStar Connect and enjoy the service they get. Yet, at the last NineStar Nerd Night of each year I take a moment to share that video rates will be rising in the new year. No one likes to hear that, and I certainly do not like sharing the news. The fact of the matter is that programming costs are consistently rising on a yearly basis and NineStar is forced to pass these costs on to you. I am sorry to say in 2021 there will be an increase in rates again. If you turn on the news, read a newspaper or check your mail, you will find that television providers across the country are in the same boat as NineStar Connect and are having to raise television subscription rates. While NineStar is no different than many other television providers across the nation in having to raise rates, we are a cooperative and one of the missions that employees are tasked with is to find solutions for our members and customers.

Most of the cost of providing cable television service is the programming fees. These fees are what cable television operators must pay the content owners and programmers to carry their channels. I am sure we have all been watching television and seen the scrolling bar across the bottom of the screen that states you may lose this channel if an agreement isn't reached (fun fact: that scrolling bar is called a chyron). This is a relatively common occurrence, in fact, there were at least three such negotiations going on at the same time in the last 60 days that resulted in channels being dropped from some providers. Luckily, NineStar has avoided this situation over the years, but it is possible that we may be put in the position of having to choose rates versus channels. No one wants that fight (especially you, the viewer).

According to Consumer Reports Magazine, cable tv prices across the country went up in 2020 by approximately five to seven percent, will again in 2021, and the annual trend will continue for the near future. Almost two million households switched from traditional television service to streaming in 2020 and those left on traditional television service will have to bear the programming costs increasingly spread among fewer and fewer households. Additionally, content providers routinely require bundling of unpopular channels for the ability to carry one or two popular channels. These additional channels each come with a cost and add to the overall monthly

fees that consumers pay. Studies have consistently shown most television viewers regularly watch less than 15 channels yet most, through bundles forced by programmers, subscribe to 60 or more channels. This generates more revenues for programmers but forces consumers to bear the costs for channels they never watch.

One such solution to the rising costs is streaming video. In 2021, there are many streaming services that will provide you the channels you are after. DirecTV Now, Hulu Live, YouTube TV, and Sling TV are just some of the possibilities. As a cord-cutter myself, I currently use YouTube TV, having recently moved from Hulu Live, along with Netflix and HBO Max to satisfy my television needs. I am a sports junkie, and I am able to get all my college football, basketball, NFL, baseball and other sports needs taken care of via YouTube TV. Plus, with the built-in cloud DVR, if I miss something, I can watch it later. As well, almost all the streaming services have your local channels available, so the Colts games are right there for you as well as your local news. Combine that with offerings from Netflix, Disney+, Amazon Prime, and others and there are a ton of choices to get what you want to see.

As I mentioned above, I am currently subscribed to YouTube TV, but I have tried several of the streaming services and am free to change at any time. None of the current streaming services require a contract, are month-to-month, and offer free trials. You can trial a service at no cost (usually between one week and one month) to see what you like and what works for you and your family. If it doesn't work for you, just cancel it and be out nothing. There isn't anything to lose.

I understand that changing your viewing habits isn't something that is high on most people's lists and when you come home, turn on your NineStar Connect TV service it "just works". I know what you are thinking: "Why should I change and why are you telling me about ways to spend less money with NineStar? You aren't much of a salesman!". As a cooperative we are driven by more than just dollars and cents. Our service territory consists of many areas that the larger, investor-owned utilities would not serve as it just did not make financial sense. In that same vein, my charge is to do what is best for the member, to work to build solutions and options that work for them, and not always worry about just the dollar. Oh, and you are right, I would make a terrible salesman. Just ask...well anyone who knows me.



ROSS FERSON
NINESTAR CONNECT
CTO

One thing that I will warn you before you switch to streaming services is that quality broadband is critical to a positive experience. Think of your internet connection as a water pipe to your house. If more water (internet) is consumed than the pipe can provide, you will have low pressure or a poor internet experience. This will show itself in poor streaming quality. I have personally spoken to more than one person at our Nerd Nights complaining that the picture wasn't very good. Come to find out that they needed to increase their broadband package. Once they increased their speed, they reported all was well. Many people (myself included) have cut their television cord, increased their speed package, and still saved money monthly. NineStar Connect has invested in a high-quality fiber-to-the-home network that is ever expanding. This network is built to handle today's streaming needs as well as the future needs of our consumers. This is best illustrated by our ability to give all of our residential customers gigabit service to their home multiple times in 2020 as we all worked together to get through unprecedented times. Long story short, we can handle whatever speeds you want from us.

To close, NineStar is here for you however you want to consume your television service. Be it via the traditional set-top-box or streaming over the internet, we will make it happen for you. As we strive to be open, honest, and transparent with our members, I felt it was the right thing to do to inform you of what we see coming price wise in the future. Have a great 2021 and I look forward to seeing many of you at our in-person Nerd Nights just as soon as we can safely have them. Remember 317.326.HELP is here to help 24/7/365 and do not hesitate to call.

RONNIE AND SARAH MOHR SHARE PASSION FOR FARMING

Ronnie Mohr passed away December 14, 2020 after a brief illness. He had served on the Central Indiana Power Board from 1994 to 2010 and the NineStar Connect Board since 2011. He was a champion for the coop, a good friend and an even better person. In his honor and memory we are rerunning, with permission, an article which appeared in Indiana Prairie Farmer. This article profiled Ronnie and his wife Sarah when they won the 2019 Indiana Prairie Master Farmer Award. Ronnie loved farming and his family. He will be missed.

BY TOM J. BECHMAN - INDIANA PRAIRIE FARMER

Ronnie Mohr, Greenfield, Ind., says he was 8 years old when he knew farming would be his life's passion. He rented 12 acres at age 14 and was farming with his brothers before he finished high school. When Ronnie married Sarah in 1969, both knew they wanted to farm



for the rest of their careers. They've farmed together, raised a family together and served agriculture together — locally, across Indiana and even nationwide. Now, they've been named Master Farmers together, thanks to their hard work and dedication. The award is co-sponsored by Indiana Prairie Farmer and the Purdue University College of Agriculture.

EARLY START

When Ronnie's father, Maurice, took an off-farm job, Ronnie and his brothers did the farming. He bought his first piece of equipment, a John Deere 45 combine, in 1967 with his father. In 1970, he began farming with his brother. That same year, Ronnie and Sarah purchased their first farm, 70 acres. "Several things stand out which really helped me later on," Ronnie says. "I attended the Purdue University Short Course in 1967, and I picked up lots of good information and contacts through that program. "I also looked up to three people whom I considered as my mentors. My dad was one of them. The other two were Ledward Smith, my ag teacher and FFA advisor at Hancock Central, now part of Greenfield Central; and John Cole, a farmer in the area. They had a great

influence on me and helped me start out on the path that led to where we are today." The Mohrs have two farming entities: R&S Mohr Family Farms Inc. and Circle M Farms LLC. When their sons, Andy and Eric, wanted to farm, Ronnie and Sarah formed Circle M Farms to help the boys transition into the business. Both sons are full-time firefighters. A nephew, Sean Youngclaus, also a full-time firefighter, has joined the operation as well, picking up some of Joe's interest as he looks toward retirement. "With all three being professional firemen and having schedules with large blocks of time off, it really works out well from a labor standpoint here on the farm," Ronnie says. "They can still work off the farm and contribute here as well." Another fireman, Greg Smith, also helps out, Ronnie adds.

Eric and his wife, Lisa, also operate a Beck's seed dealership as part of Circle M Farms. Between the two farming entities, the Mohrs have 20 landlords, with a variety of lease arrangements. "We try to set up an arrangement the landowner is comfortable with and make it work," Ronnie explains.

CROPPING STRATEGY

While the Mohrs had livestock in the past, raising hogs until 1998, they don't have any livestock today. Instead, they typically raise a 50-50 mix of corn and soybeans in rotation. They practice minimum tillage on most ground and no-till on highly erodible land. Typically, they run a vertical-tillage tool over cornstalks in the spring. Following soybean stubble, they run a field cultivator and soil crumbler ahead of the planter for corn.



Their goal is to plant corn and soybeans at the same time, running a 24-row Deere corn planter and a 1790 Deere split-row soybean planter. They operate two combines in the fall, feeding grain into a grain facility that they upgraded recently.

RONNIE AND SARAH MOHR AT A GLANCE
>> AGE: 70 (Ronnie)
>> LOCATION: Greenfield, Hancock County, Ind.
>> STARTED FARMING: Ronnie rented 12 acres at age 14 and started farming with his brothers when their dad took an off-farm job.
>> FARMING ENTITIES: R&S Mohr Family Farms Inc. and Circle M Farms LLC
>> PARTNERS: Circle M Farms includes sons, Andy and Eric; Ronnie and Sarah also farm with Ronnie's brother Joe, who has his own land
>> CROPS: corn and soybeans in 50-50 rotation



>> LIVESTOCK: none today but once raised hogs and cattle
>> TILLAGE METHODS: minimum tillage, including vertical-tillage tool and field cultivator; no-till on highly erodible land
>> CHILDREN: Andy Mohr (Michelle); Eric Mohr (Lisa); Sarah Jo Achor (Gary); 10 grandchildren
>> LEADERSHIP: Ronnie has been on the Land O'Lakes board of directors for 20 years, serving as first vice chairman and Ag Committee chairman. He has served as chairman of the Ag One Co-op Board, now Harvest Land Co-op, for 19 years. He is a 25-year member of the NineStar Connect electric, telecommunications and wet utility board and a member of the Wabash Valley Power Association. He has served 12 years on the Indiana Corn Marketing Council, 20 years in the Indiana Corn Growers Association, and on National Corn Growers Association action teams. He is a former chairman of the Hancock County Soil and Water Conservation District. Sarah has been with Hancock County SWCD for 10 years, serving five years as chairwoman. She is the local Kiwanis chapter secretary and helps with the soup kitchen outreach program at Willow Branch United Methodist Church.

MEET THE CANDIDATES

DIRECTOR, DISTRICT #3

DAVID GRATNER



BACKGROUND: David Gratner has been a NineStar Cooperative member since 1992. He graduated from New Castle High School and received a Bachelor Degree in Anthropology from Indiana University. He owns his own business and is a member of the Central Indiana Real Estate Investors Association. David has many skills which include business management, problem solving, working with local churches and community organizations. He was the Owner/President of the New Castle KFC that was sold after 48 years and owned an income recovery business with Howard Schultz and Associates. David was the President of the KFC Central Indiana Advertising Cooperative encompassing 62 stores. He served on the Board of Directors of the Great Lakes KFC Franchisee Organization for eight years. While owning the New

Castle KFC, he was a main sponsor for the Mayberry in the Midwest events. Currently he serves on the Grants Committee for Henry County Community Foundation and does research as a volunteer for the Minnetrista Cultural Center in Muncie. He organizes TED Talk meetings in New Castle. David enjoys Astronomy and built his own telescope at the Adler Planetarium in Chicago.

CANDIDATE STATEMENT: My wife and I reside in Sulphur Springs and have delighted over the last four years at the young families moving here. One reason they moved here is due to NineStar putting in fiber optics for the internet service. After visiting the impressive “ideas” facility off of State Road 9, I so appreciate the continuous forward-thinking of the company. I remember a quote I once read, “If you coast, you go downhill”. I am always learning new information in this vastly changing world of ours. Over the last year I visited the Fishers “Internet of Things” and the 1150 Academy to keep up on new technologies. I feel my strongest strengths are dealing with people (managed 30 people and served 2,000 to 3,000 customers a week), customer service and continuing my education. Being a part of this board is an exciting opportunity.

DIRECTOR, DISTRICT #3

ROBIN RITCHIE



BACKGROUND: Robin Ritchie has been a cooperative member since 2015. She has a Bachelor Degree in Business from Indiana University and a Master of Library Science (MLS) also from Indiana University. She currently is employed with the New Castle — Henry County Public Library as a children’s assistant. She was previously employed at AT&T/Lucent Technologies as a software associate/systems consultant. Robin is a 2001 graduate of Leadership Hancock County, Dale Carnegie Training of Central Indiana. Robin and her husband David live in Middletown.

CANDIDATE STATEMENT: While employed at AT&T/Lucent and the Courier Journal my main focus was customer service. Working together with my team and the client’s team to implement the installation of telecommunications equipment and software upgrades. This involved an understanding of the client’s business needs, the needs of team members and working together to complete the project. Working at the library I have learned a lot about the needs of our patrons and conditions present in the community. I am a team player and the knowledge and experience I gained in my career journey will help me develop an understanding of the needs and expectations of our community and make informed decisions for the direction of NineStar Connect. I am eager to learn more in serving the people in our communities.

DIRECTOR, DISTRICT #4

SCOTT PITTMAN



BACKGROUND: Scott Pittman has been a cooperative member since 2016. He has his Bachelor Degree in Youth Ministry from Olivet Nazarene University, his Masters in Ministry Leadership from Indiana Wesleyan University and His MBA from Indiana Wesleyan University. He currently works at Indiana Wesleyan University as the Director of Enrollment Staff Development. Previously, Scott was a Corporate Representative at IWU, an Office Claims Adjuster at Farmers Insurance and an Associate Youth/College Pastor at the Church of the Nazarene. Scott is Corporate Trainer Certified and is a current member of the Association for Talent Development. He is an appointed member of the Guiding Coalition for the Student Experience at Indiana Wesleyan. He is also an ordained elder at the Church of the Nazarene. In his free time, he is an active volunteer

with Harvest Church and coaches youth sports. Additionally, Scott and his wife Amanda own two businesses based out of McCordsville, Pittman Technologies and Indy Laundry Fairy. They are Hoosiers by choice, moving back to Indiana in 2016, after having lived in Indiana from 2002-2009. Scott and Amanda live in McCordsville and have four children; Isabella (15), Bianca (13), Jacob (9) and Maezie (5). Scott and his family are committed to Hancock County and having their children graduate from Mt. Vernon schools.

CANDIDATE STATEMENT: As a corporate trainer and talent development professional, I am vested in developing people and organizations. I have been a part of non-profit leadership for most of my career and understand the value that cooperatives provide in improving the quality of life for their members. I am invested in Hancock County and desire to give long-term leadership to the community in which I live, and make a positive impact on my friends and neighbors. NineStar Connect is an innovative organization in an industry that is seeing rapid changes, and I believe I can help give strategic direction for the future, while staying committed to the legacy of service that NineStar Connect embodies. As a lifelong learner, I would serve the board with an attitude of learning, growth, and innovation. It would be an honor to represent my community by serving on the NineStar Connect Board of Directors.

DIRECTOR, DISTRICT #4

EDWARD WALLPE



BACKGROUND: Edward Wallpe has been a cooperative member since 2009. He earned his Bachelor of Science degree from Purdue University, School of Agriculture, with a major in Animal Sciences, focusing on Business, and Sales/Marketing. He currently works for Eli Lilly and Company as a Global Finance Consultant. During his 27 years at Eli Lilly, he has held positions in Global Government Transparency and Reporting, Global Strategic Sourcing, Purchasing Department Head, and Sales and Marketing; he has also worked as a Senior Account Executive at Farm Journal. Edward specializes in collaboration, communication, inter-personal skills, supervision, financial controls/auditing, contract and financial negotiations, business case development and evaluation, project management, spend/category management, and Six Sigma, a data driven decision making process. He is a very active Hancock County 4-H parent, as well as a Certified 4-H Shooting Sports Instructor. He is a supporter of Meals on Wheels, a member of Holy Spirit at Geist, and the Catholic Order of Foresters. Edward is a member of Alpha Gamma Rho (social and professional agricultural fraternity), and Alpha Zeta (agricultural honorary society); he was also a 10 year 4-H member, Junior Leader, and a member of the Future Farmers of America. Edward and his wife, Glenda, reside in McCordsville and have two children: Kalin and Miles.

CANDIDATE STATEMENT: Born and raised on a third-generation farm in Northwest Indiana (Benton County), our operation included a Holstein dairy farm, which has since become a producer of corn, soybeans, and beef cattle. As a consumer of NineStar services, I have personally experienced the continued improvements and advancements in technology that have occurred throughout the years in the community where I live and raise my family. My experiences have not only been positive, but those of continued commitment to its members while improving quality of life and giving back. Based on these experiences, I would be excited to continue the NineStar Connect legacy by serving on the Board of Directors, bringing my business management experiences, fiduciary responsibilities, and leadership skills, as the company continues its journey of innovation and delivering value to its members. I appreciate the opportunity to represent our members, as well as your support as a NineStar Connect Director.

MEET THE CANDIDATES

DIRECTOR, DISTRICT #5 STEPHEN VAIL



BACKGROUND: Stephen Vail has been a cooperative member since 1983. Steve earned his Bachelor of Science Degree in Agriculture Economics from Purdue University and his Masters in Organizational Development from Ball State University. He is currently Owner/Operator of ETL Group/J & D Vail Inc. For 19 years, Steve worked at Hancock Regional Hospital in various administrative positions and 11 years as a Senior Loan Officer for Farm Credit System. Steve's extensive finance background as well as training in lean process improvement methodologies have served him well on the NineStar Board of Directors. Steve currently is a County Commissioner appointee to the Hancock County Redevelopment Commission and is a 31 year member of the Rotary Club of Greenfield. Additionally, he recently completed a 6 year term on the National Rural Utilities Finance Corporation (CFC) Board. He also served on the Indiana Electric Cooperatives Board for 8 years. Steve and his wife Shelley reside in Greenfield.

CANDIDATE STATEMENT: The service territory of NineStar Connect is poised for tremendous growth over the next few years. Given that we are a community-based organization, we are committed to building and maintaining infrastructure that elevates the quality of place and quality of life in our larger community. Growing up and living in Hancock County my entire life, I have always had a passion for serving in roles that move our community forward in positive ways. Strong leadership and an eye to the future has positioned NineStar Connect to be a trusted and respected voice in how our future opportunities are both recognized and then acted on in a way that honors the history of our community as well as seizes upon the benefits that growth brings. I want to be part of this continued community conversation and believe that my experiences and skillsets can add value to those efforts.

DIRECTOR, DISTRICT AT-LARGE #2 TIMOTHY BRYANT



BACKGROUND: Timothy Bryant has been a cooperative member since 1991. He has his Bachelor's degree in Engineering from Purdue University (West Lafayette) and his MBA from Indiana Wesleyan University and is a SHRM Certified Professional. He is currently the Managing Director at IT Synergistics, LLC. Previously, he was VP of Administration for the Indiana Blood Center. Tim has over 25 years of experience in the executive management field specifically working for non-profit and small businesses serving as CEO/CFO/CIO roles. He has also worked and reported directly to a board of directors, so he understands the responsibilities and nature of that interaction. Tim is a member of New Palestine United Methodist Church (past treasurer and Sunday school teacher); County Chairman for FRNA (advancing 2nd Amendment rights); past adjunct faculty for IUPUI; volunteer for the Indy 500 Festival/Mini Marathon. Tim and his wife Susan have lived in Hancock County for over 30 years and raised three children: Erin, Matthew and Lauren. Additionally, Tim and Susan have six grandchildren.

CANDIDATE STATEMENT: I've known NineStar for 30 years, both professionally and as a customer. These experiences give me a thorough understanding of NineStar's offerings and management. I value three qualifications for this role. *Commitment* — I understand the time needed, and I'm ready for the challenge. *Skills* — A candidate should have skills that align with a director role. Having both engineering and management degrees combined with over 25 years senior-level management allow me to bring both governance and technical experiences that align with those of a community board. I currently report to a corporate board, so I understand the oversight required of a board. *Community* — Finally, a candidate should have a good sense of community. My wife and I committed to raising a family in this community, and I want to give back the time and talents I have. I will work hard to continue the community efforts NineStar has worked to establish.

DIRECTOR, DISTRICT AT-LARGE #2 STEPHEN SANDEFUR



BACKGROUND: Stephen Sandefur has been a cooperative member since 2002. After high school, Stephen went to Purdue University, School of Engineering & Technology. He received his Bachelor Degree in Construction Management while obtaining Associate Degrees in Civil Engineering and Architectural Engineering. He acquired his MBA w/Management Specialization from Indiana Wesleyan University with a 4.0 GPA in 2009. Stephen is currently a Senior Consultant/Program Manager for BPM Associates in Fishers, where he is a partner. Previously, he has worked at NGC Corporation, Global Performance, Verkler Incorporated, Duke Realty Corporation, F.A. Wilhelm Construction and Hagerman Group. All previous positions held were in management roles such as business development, project manager, director of construction & field services, general contracting and structural and architectural engineering and lead management. Stephen has led and supervised large projects in his career such as a Honda plant, Boeing 787 plant, Gary Chicago International Airport Runway Expansion Program, Eli Lilly Pharmaceutical Expansion, Indiana State Library and Historical Bureau, Toyota Automotive Plans & Guardian Fiberglass Plant, Multiple K-12 School Projects, Indiana Governor's Residence Addition and Eiteljorg Museum Connector to WRSP Underground Parking Garage to name a few. He has several certifications and achievements to his name including an LEED AP BD + C (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design), Healthcare Construction Certificate (HCC), American Institute of Architects (AIA) First Place Architectural Champion for the State of Indiana in 1990 and AGC (Associated General Contractors) Future Leaders Organization; Education Forum and Member Services Committee Member. Steve has volunteered multiple years for Habitat for Humanity, Rebuilding Together and was a mentor at Pike High School assisting students who are interested in architecture, engineering and construction. He loves to coach all sports, particularly basketball. Steve has lived in Hancock County for nearly 19 years. He plans on being in Hancock County until at least his retirement and wants to do what he can to set an even better place for people to work and live. Steve and his fiancé Michelle have been engaged since May 2020. He has two children; Ariana and Marilyn and will be a stepfather to Austin and Alivia. He resides in Greenfield.

CANDIDATE STATEMENT: My goal is to serve the community I love, built a home 19 years ago and where my children go to school. Proficient, dynamic, goal-driven, MBA educated, LEED Accredited and Healthcare Certified Professional that wants to utilize my executive leadership, management and operations experience; and put those to work representing the NineStar members. On large and small projects, I have efficiently and effectively managed personnel, costs, quality, service and schedule while maintaining a safe and productive environment. I have over 24 years of professional experience, strong and diverse education (4 degrees), multiple certifications, vision and leadership, have delivered success in the past and will work to bring synergy to the board. Whether I am leading a team or working on my own, I will deliver professional results for the board's challenges. Utilizing my skills and contributing to the future success of NineStar Connect & its members is my goal.

DIRECTOR, DISTRICT AT-LARGE #2 CURT STEPHENSON



BACKGROUND: Curt Stephenson has been a cooperative member since 1991. Curt graduated from Ball State University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration. He was self-employed for many years before selling his business to a bank holding company and later becoming the President/CEO. During his thirteen year tenure, he lead the expansion and growth of this profitable and successful business, and in 2015 was involved in the transition to a top 10 national brokerage firm where he was the Indiana Regional President until his recent retirement. Over the years, Curt has been a successful business owner/entrepreneur and President of publicly traded (Nasdaq) company and was Director at First Merchants Bank. He currently serves as Vice Chairman of Madison County Board of Zoning Appeals and was previously a board member at South Madison Community Foundation. Curt and his wife Betty reside in the Pendleton area and have three adult children; Blake, Chase & Spencer who are Butler and Purdue graduates, respectively.

CANDIDATE STATEMENT: As a member, like you, I will help oversee that our continued growth and expenditure of our capital are invested wisely to better our lives both today and tomorrow. The importance of growth and expansion are vital to sustain any organization but is also a balancing act. Effective board leadership should always be looking forward and providing a strategic plan and vision for the company. Leaders know the only thing that is constant is change. Nothing stays the same and unless you remain active and diligent, you can help direct your organizations trajectory and control the outcome. If you support proactive leadership and believe the membership would benefit from 35+ years of corporate finance and risk management experience, I would be honored to serve and represent all members on the NineStar Connect Board.

CO-OP LIVING WITH MARY JANE

GETTING ORGANIZED FOR GOOD

BY MARY JANE BOGLE

Getting organized is always a top resolution for the New Year. Many people read books and blogs by organization gurus. Others scour Pinterest for the latest organization tools, only to find themselves frustrated, sometimes living in more chaos than when they started. If you are struggling to keep that New Year's resolution, you're not alone. It's not uncommon for people to try repeatedly to bring order to the chaos, especially if you struggle with ADHD or suffer from compulsive shopping. That doesn't mean you can't conquer the clutter, however, especially if you follow some basic tips.

1. DISCOVER WHAT SPACE IS IMPACTING YOUR LIFE IN THE MOST NEGATIVE MANNER AND START THERE. For some, it might be a kitchen so cluttered that you never even cook in it anymore. Others might benefit from a clutter-free bathroom or revamped bedroom closet, helping you get ready for work quickly and efficiently.
2. LIMIT YOUR TIME ON SOCIAL MEDIA. Many times, rather than getting inspired by ideas on social media, most people feel worse than when they started. We all know what a time-waster social media can be, and your space and budget might look completely different from your favorite blogger. So feel free to get ideas, but be sure to personalize those options for your own space and life.

3. WRITE DOWN YOUR ORGANIZATION GOALS. Brain research shows that if you actually write down your goals, you're much more likely to actually follow through and implement those ideas.
4. BREAK DOWN THE PROCESS INTO BITE-SIZED CHUNKS. Too often, people pull out everything from a closet or craft room, only find themselves even more overwhelmed than when they started. Instead, consider sorting and purging one chunk at a time. If you're cleaning a clothes closet, for example, focus on just one category, such as shoes, or pants and jeans.
5. BUY...AND USE...A TIMER. For most people, the biggest challenge is just getting started. That's why it's a good idea to work in short segments, with five-minute breaks scheduled in. Just remember that you can do anything for 25 minutes.
6. AVOID UNNECESSARY TRIPS AROUND THE HOUSE. Too many times, people return items to other spaces, only to get distracted and never return to the task at hand. You can avoid this problem by placing a laundry basket in the door of that room. Simply place items that go somewhere else in the basket and return them all once the room is clean.
7. WHEN SORTING, USE BINS WITH LIDS. Planning to give several items away? Put them in a box with a secure

lid. That way, you won't be tempted to pull them back out again.

8. KNOW WHEN TO HIRE A PROFESSIONAL. Sometimes, the best course of action is to make an investment in yourself and hire someone who can help you set up a system that you can actually maintain. Just a few sessions with a professional can help you beat that clutter habit for good.

