

JANUARY – FEBRUARY 2022



# *NineStar* CONNECTION

VOLUME 11  
ISSUE 1

## NINESTAR SPEAKS AT YLHC EVENT

NineStar Connect spoke to students assembled for Youth Leadership Hancock County about NineStar's long history in the county as well as the diverse job offerings the cooperative has for students.

Read more on page 5.

## OPERATION ROUND-UP

Congratulations to all of the organizations that benefited from the ORU fund this past November!

Read more on page 9

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SEE PAGE 4

# “MEETING” CHALLENGES

NINESTAR'S ANNUAL  
MEETING SCHEDULED FOR  
MARCH 25, 2022

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Photo from the IEC Annual Dinner. Pictured are: (Left to Right) Ross Ferson, Joe Paxton, Brian Dowden, Charles Kennedy, Scott Hiatt, Ray Kerkhof, Mike Burrow, Phil Hayes, Eric Truitt, Darrell Thomas, Tommy Nance



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

CUSTOMERS RON AND SHERRY DAVIS OF CHARLOTTESVILLE TOOK THE TIME TO INCLUDE A NOTE INSIDE THEIR BILL THIS MONTH. THEIR BILL HAD RECENTLY GONE UP SO THEY CALLED IN TO SEE WHAT THEY COULD DO. MATT WAS ABLE TO TRACE THE PROBLEM BACK TO A FAULTY WELL PUMP THAT CAUSED HIGHER THAN EXPECTED USAGE. "HE WAS VERY HELPFUL AND RESOLVED THE PROBLEM!"



CUSTOMERS RON AND SHERRY DAVIS

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

STORY IDEA?

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

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MEET THE CANDIDATES PAGES 10 & 11

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PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

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POWER OUT?  
NO INTERNET?




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 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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Director District 2 Mark Evans	Director District 10 Shelly Kleiman
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Director District 5 Steve Vail	



# NINESTAR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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DISTRICT 2



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DISTRICT 3



ROBIN RITCHIE

DISTRICT 4



SCOTT PITTMAN

DISTRICT 5



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DISTRICT 6



JOSEPH PAXTON

DISTRICT 7



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DISTRICT 8



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DISTRICT 9



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AT LARGE



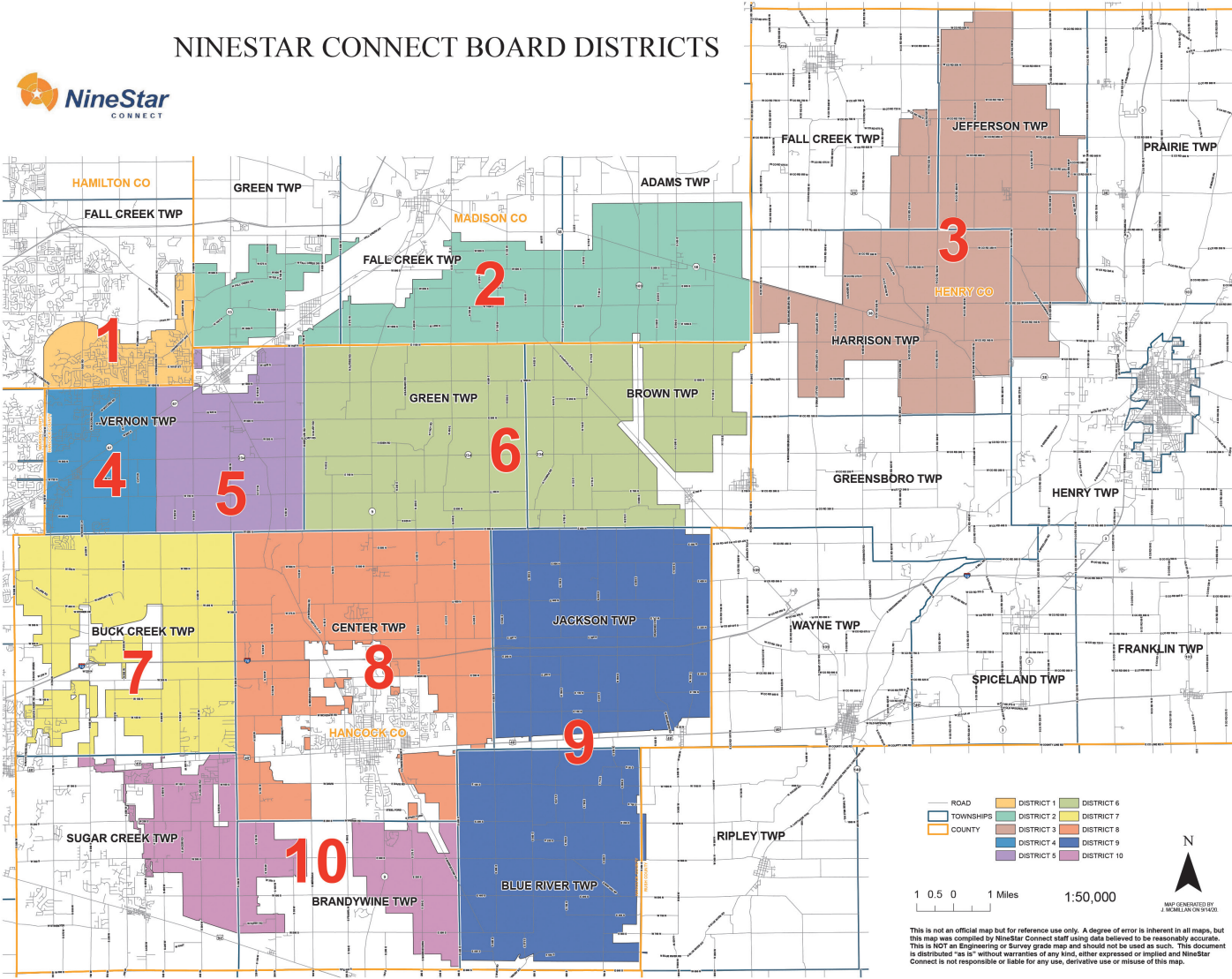
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DARRELL H. THOMAS



TIMOTHY BRYANT



# “MEETING” CHALLENGES

**NINESTAR'S ANNUAL MEETING SCHEDULED FOR MARCH 25, 2022**

By Julie Young

When it comes to NineStar Connect's Annual Meeting, there is no such thing as a “pandemic pass,” so the cooperative is giving members the opportunity to attend the 2022 Annual Meeting on March 25 in person or online.

“After two years of virtual meetings, we are creating a hybrid meeting so that everyone can take part how they wish,” said David Spencer, director of marketing and public relations for NineStar Connect. “I’m sure many of our members have been vaccinated and boosted, however, we thought it was important to give members a choice as to whether or not they came out to Greenfield Central High School’s Fieldhouse or tune in from the comfort of their home.” The 2021 annual meeting saw a higher engagement with members who voted online but other members wanted a return to the cooperatives social event of the year.

Of course, it’s never easy to plan an informative and engaging annual meeting, but the COVID-19 pandemic has made it extra challenging for the cooperative. However, it is a challenge that NineStar is more than willing to meet. It merely takes vision, ingenuity, and some old-fashioned guesswork.

From March 1-24, members will have the opportunity to cast their vote for the NineStar board of directors online and choose to RSVP for the annual meeting. Once they have voted our members have the option of selecting a \$10 bill credit or attending the meeting in person and can request meal tickets for a delicious dinner provided by Jonathon Byrd’s Catering. It is important to remember all voting will take place online prior to the meeting.

“Once again, the menu will include fried chicken or baked tilapia (for those who prefer fish or observing Lent), mashed potatoes, corn, green beans, cole slaw, dinner rolls, drinks, and cherry cobbler or chocolate cake for dessert,” said Regina Bever, NineStar’s vice-president of administration. “Jonathon Byrd’s is always a big hit with our membership, and we are proud to partner with them again.”

Due to the hybrid nature of this year’s event, the annual meeting will look a little differently than it has in years past. There will be no onsite childcare or complimentary pizza party however, there will be door prizes that members will be eligible for whether they attend in person or online.

“We want people to feel comfortable and to be socially distant so there won’t be Bingo or any educational seminars to highlight new products or services,” Spencer said. “This will be a pared down affair while doing all of the necessary things that we have to have for it to qualify as an annual meeting.”

The announcement of scholarships, Operation Round Up Report, and other cooperative milestones will be pre-recorded and mixed in with the live announcements and will be replayed online starting on Sunday, March 27th at 6:00 pm on NineStar’s website and other video platforms. These added elements are not

required by law and Spencer feels that the co-op will still host a dynamic event that the membership can enjoy.

“If you look at what a lot of co-ops have done during the pandemic, they have really had to get creative in terms of their annual meetings,” Spencer said. “Some have held drive-in meetings, drive-thru meetings, etc. but NineStar is in the fortunate position of having video capability and a talented team to help edit and bring it all together.”

And NineStar is no stranger to offering quality video content to engage with its membership and keep them informed of the co-op’s happenings. Over the years, NineStar has offered power hours, town halls, and other events that have been streamed so that those who can’t make it to an in-person event, can still take advantage of the content. As more people opt for online content, Spencer said it is a natural segue for the annual meeting even though the in-person event has historically been a popular draw.

“It is a nice evening out for our members and in previous years, the annual meeting easily garnered attendance of 1,000 people,” Spencer said. “Our members are very connected to the cooperative as well as the community and everyone knows that the annual meeting is a great time to celebrate all that is going on at NineStar, but unfortunately we haven’t been able to do that in a while. This year’s hybrid annual meeting is a great opportunity to gather together in such a way that allows everyone to participate!”

## NINESTAR CONNECT'S ANNUAL MEETING

**VOTE FOR BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**MARCH 1<sup>ST</sup> - 24<sup>TH</sup>**

Receive a \$10 Bill Credit or Dinner at the Annual Meeting and be entered for \$5,000 in cash prizes and \$2,500 in giveaways.

**ANNUAL MEETING  
IN-PERSON**

- ★ Friday, March 25th
- ★ Greenfield Central High School
- ★ Registration & Dinner 5:00pm - 6:00pm
- ★ Business Meeting - 6:00pm
- ★ You must RSVP during voting to attend.

**ONLINE**

- ★ Sunday, March 27th
- ★ [vimeo.com/ninestar](https://vimeo.com/ninestar)
- ★ [ninestarconnect.com/annualmeeting](https://ninestarconnect.com/annualmeeting)

## JUDY COLLINS REMEMBERED



Former Hancock Telecom employee Judith Ann Collins, of Willow Branch, Indiana passed away on Wednesday, August 25, 2021. She was born July 10, 1947, in Belleville, Illinois to the late Robert Smith and Bernice (Mueller) Warden.

She married Tom Collins on June 4, 1988 and together they raised their family in the Willow Branch area on the family farm. Judy was dedicated to her family and cherished the time she spent with them. After thirty-one years of dedicated service to Hancock Telecom she retired to enjoy and help care for her grandchildren.

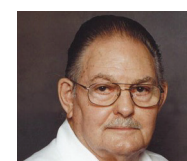
Judy was a long-time member of Willow Branch United Methodist Church where she was active as the president of the United Methodist Women, a Sunday school teacher, and volunteered for vacation bible school. She was a member of the Country Harmony Extension Homemakers, a frequent volunteer of the Kenneth Butler Memorial Soup Kitchen and the Hope Center, Indianapolis. In addition, she formerly served on the NineStar Connect Operation Roundup Board where she provided valuable insight and administration of grant funding to the community.

Judy will be remembered for her infectious smile, genuine love for people and her wonderful hugs.

She is survived by her husband, Tom Collins; children, Tina (Jeff) Daffron, Tracy (Jobie) Whitaker, John Collins, and Aaron (Susan) Collins; grandchildren, Brittany Smith, Morgan Collins, Delaney Collins, Makenna Collins, Taylor Stonecipher, Jarrod Daffron, Tori Daffron, Jayden Daffron, Jaret Whitaker, Tylar Whitaker, Harrison Collins, Hayden Collins, Hudson Collins and 2 great grandchildren; brothers, Bary Smith, Gary Smith; and sister, Mary Kopf; sisters-in-law, Janice Smith, Marilyn Smith, and Carol Smith; and brother-in-law and sister-in-law, Jim and Susan Cherry.

Judy was laid to rest in McCray Cemetery, Wilkinson, Indiana.

## MARION MYERS REMEMBERED



Former Hancock County REMC lineman, Marion W. Myers, of Greenfield Indiana passed away Friday, December 17, 2021. Marion was born in Georgetown, Ohio on March 3, 1937, to Robert “Clay” and

Marybell (Hatten) Myers. He graduated from Corydon Central High School. Upon graduation Marion served in the Air Force for four years. He married Barbara Fink on May 3, 1958.

He worked for Hancock County REMC for 34 years as a Journeyman Lineman/Forman. Marion was a longtime member of The Eagles and The Moose in Greenfield. He enjoyed reading, gardening, and traveling.

He is survived by his sons, Robert Myers (Lisa Wable) and Charles (Christy) Myers; daughters, Kathy (Ray) Todd and Beverly (Stephen) Keesling; sister, Gail Mitchell; nine grandchildren; four great-grandchildren, and three great great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his parents; wife, Barbara; brother, Joseph Myers; brothers-in-law, John Fink, David Fink, Don Mitchell, and Robert Kneary; and sister-in-law, Terry Fink.

Jeff Conley, Vice President of Operations at NineStar Connect remembered Marion as a dedicated employee that always wanted the best for the crew he was leading. Conley finished by saying Marion taught him a lot as he was the Line Forman when Conley was hired.



## NINESTAR'S AUSTIN GEARLDS GRADUATES



Austin Gearlds graduated January 8th from Indiana Electric Cooperatives' apprenticeship program, Rural Electric Apprentice Program (REAP). REAP is a four-year program that professionally trains apprentice lineworkers from across Indiana. Graduates complete 576 hours of classroom-related study and 8,000 hours of on-the-job training at their electric cooperative. Students also complete four additional classes through Ivy Tech Community College. Upon completion of the program, graduates earn an Associate of Applied Science and a journeyman lineman certificate. NineStar's Vice President of Operations Jeff Conley said, "I am very proud of Austin and what he has accomplished. He is an asset to NineStar."

## NINESTAR SPEAKS AT YOUTH LEADERSHIP HANCOCK COUNTY EVENT



On December 7th NineStar Connect Marketing Director David Spencer spoke to students assembled for Youth Leadership Hancock County. The event, held at the Hancock County Boys and Girls Club had thirty two students representing all four Hancock County high schools. Spencer spoke to the group about NineStar's long history in the county as well as the diverse job offerings the cooperative has for students. He encouraged them all to get an education, continue on their path of leadership and come back to Hancock County to start their careers.

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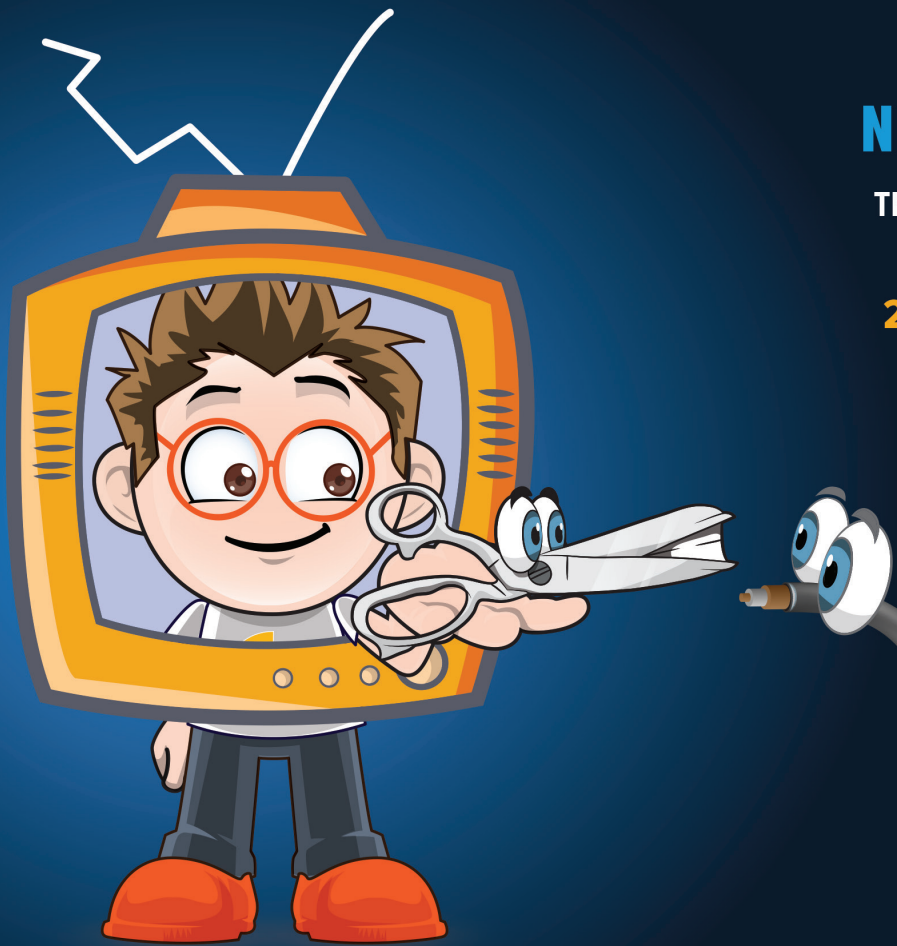
**Congratulations to our latest monthly winners:**

November	Shayan Shamsaie, Fishers, IN
December	Greg and Christina Pearson, McCordsville, IN

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# WHO SAYS BREAKING UP IS HARD TO DO?

## Learn How to “Cut the Cord” and never look back!



### JOIN US FOR THE NINESTAR NERDS STREAMING SESSIONS


The Nerds will cover the basics of streaming, review a variety of options and show you how to setup streaming services.

#### 2nd QUARTER NERD STREAMING NIGHTS – 6:00 pm

■ April 11	■ May 9	■ June 6
■ April 25	■ May 23	■ June 20

NineStar Connect | 2243 E Main Street | Greenfield

**You must RSVP to attend these events.**  
To RSVP visit: [ninstarconnect.com/nerds-night-rsvp](https://ninstarconnect.com/nerds-night-rsvp)  
or please call: 317-323-2192





# President's Message

## Looking Beyond 2022

By Michael R. Burrow, President & CEO

As we begin 2022, NineStar continues to be hyper-focused on what lies ahead well beyond the next twelve months. Every year, more of our members are asking us about green energy and what NineStar's carbon footprint is as concerns over climate change continues to grow in the public eye. As with most things in life, answers are not as simple as they seem they should be.

NineStar is a distribution cooperative which means that we do not generate any of the power we distribute and sell to our members (the one exception to that statement is that NineStar does have a small 1.5 acre solar farm at the northwest corner of 600N & 600W in Hancock County). All the power we supply to our members is generated by our wholesale power supplier, Wabash Valley Power Alliance which itself is a cooperative in which NineStar is a member. Wabash was an early investor in renewable power and continues to invest in wind and solar renewables along with landfill gas. Nevertheless, you won't see Wabash promoting its renewable investments because it sells its renewable energy credits ("RECs") on the open market to large corporations who seek to promote utilizing green renewable energy – something that many investors in publicly traded companies are expecting more and more. When Wabash sells its REC's, it generates additional income to reduce its wholesale power bill to its members (a good thing) but in the process, it cannot publicly declare how much of its portfolio is green or claim to be a green energy provider. And by extension, neither can NineStar.

Most people never have a reason to stop to consider that the electrical grid in the United States is largely interconnected with all different sources of electric generation putting energy on transmission lines to meet the power needs of consumers at any given moment. The electricity from a renewable windfarm in northern Indiana mixes with and is indistinguishable from the power that is generated from a coal plant in southern Indiana. So with about 22% of the total energy currently on the electric grid coming from renewable sources, how can a company claim to be 100% green?

Companies that want to be known for utilizing only green energy largely go out on the market and purchase REC's from renewable power generators even though the green energy being placed on the grid likely isn't the specific power the company purchasing the REC's is consuming. As more companies want to be green, that increases the cost of the REC's and creates further economic incentives to build more renewable energy generation sources. Quite simply, that is the free market and capitalism at work.

As demand for renewable energy continues to grow, power generation companies are naturally moving away from carbon-based generation to greener energy sources even without specific government regulations mandating it. I say that last statement with some amount of trepidation given that so much of the nation's energy policy has had heightened political scrutiny over the last decade that doesn't often reflect the reality of what is actually occurring in our energy markets. Many coal-producing areas of the United States including southern Indiana were adamantly opposed to "clean coal" initiatives and "carbon tax" regulations that were proposed during the Obama administration. Even though the subsequent Trump administration scrapped those initiatives and regulations, we saw more coal power plants retired during the four years of the Trump administration than were retired

during the previous eight years of the Obama administration. Despite whipsaw regulations that created a lot of uncertainties within the larger power industry, energy markets were largely driven by the reduced cost of natural gas that came with advanced fracking methods, which created an abundance of natural gas and made power production from coal more costly. Change, it seems, was occurring regardless of what the regulations were dictating.

Most people who are currently involved in energy production in the United States today believe that the current trend away from carbon-based fuels to generate electricity will continue and even accelerate. That worries me for reasons that I don't have the room to expand on in this article. Regardless of whether we support or oppose the trend away from carbon-based power generation, we all need to recognize that this will come at a price which is why our NineStar board and management spend so much time attempting to understand the larger trends in energy as well as making sure we are planning prudently and keeping our members educated and informed.

Today, Indiana is generating 20% less power than it did in 2005 which largely comes from the retirement of the coal power plants mentioned above. And while there have been large investments in renewable energy in our state, it seems unlikely that Indiana will ever become a major supplier of either solar or wind generated power over the next several years to equal its prior energy output from coal plants. For example, under current solar technology, it takes about 100 square miles of solar to equal the energy output of a medium size coal plant. If a company is going to invest money to build a 100 square mile solar farm, it seems more likely it will do so in a state where the sun shines much more frequently to maximize the amount of energy that is generated in order to maximize the return on its investment. Although I must admit that I may be a bit biased as I write this looking out my office window at another cloud-filled, Indiana January day.

Of course, where renewable energy is being generated historically doesn't have large transmission access – that is, as new solar and wind generation does come online, we are finding that the transmission grid that connects these newer, greener forms of generation to large portions of energy consumers is either not adequately sized or even non-existent.

The Midcontinent Independent System Operator ("MISO") is the Carmel, Indiana non-profit, member-based organization that is responsible for operating the power grid across 15 states in the middle portion of the United States (including Indiana), as well as the province of Manitoba in Canada. Its main role is to make sure that electricity is delivered reliably, dependably and in the most cost-effective manner for residents in its large footprint. How well MISO choreographs the balance and timing of generation resources to the need for power by consumers will dictate whether we always have lights when we flip a switch or whether we see rolling brown outs or black outs like have been experienced in recent years in states like California, Texas and New York.

Admittedly, MISO is spending a lot of time worrying about



reliability as it sees coal plants that have dependably generated baseload power 24/7/365 regardless of weather conditions being retired and replaced with renewables that are much more susceptible to the vagaries of wind and clouds. As part of its reliability planning, MISO is estimating that over the next 20 years, several billion dollars of transmission investments will need to be made in the middle part of North America to ensure that adequate and proper transmission infrastructure is built that can move energy from where these new renewable power sources are being (and will be) generated to where it is needed by consumers. This is no small task by any measure and will take time and careful planning by all stakeholders within the greater power industry to avoid missteps like we witnessed in Texas last February.

Of course, the money for these new transmission investments will come from electric ratepayers like you and me. There is no doubt that moving away from carbon-based energy production will put significant upward pressures on rates even though the actual cost per kilowatt to generate the power may actually be less with renewables.

This is why NineStar is putting so much effort to making sure its members are educated on the current trends and investments being made in the larger energy markets and developing rate strategies that send proper price signals to our members to ensure they can make informed decisions on when electricity is most cost effective to use. This will become even more critical as we witness what likely will be a significant increase in adoption and usage of electric vehicles in the upcoming years. Most folks are focused on how EV's will change transportation in the United States but let there be no doubt that EV's will have a substantial impact on our interconnected electric grid and what power companies both large and small do to adapt to this new energy load. The more we can encourage consumers to shift power usage off peak, the more we can maximize the efficiencies of our distribution system which in turn helps to reduce the impact of future rate increases for our members.



*A message from our  
Vice President of Legal  
& Data Analytics*

*April  
Fisher*

**GREETINGS MEMBERS,**

I thought I would take a moment to introduce myself since I'm still relatively new to NineStar Connect. My name is April Fisher, and I currently serve as the Vice President of Legal and Data Analytics. Having only been with NineStar for about 11 months now, I am by far the newest member of the Senior Leadership Team by at least ten years. Additionally, based on my past experience as a deputy prosecuting attorney and as a town manager, some may find it odd that I am now working for a rural utility cooperative. However, communities have been at the heart of all of my past experience. Starting with my college internship with a community development corporation, to my time as a community prosecutor, and then to my work as a town manager, building and strengthening communities has always been a passion of mine. From that perspective, NineStar's dedication to the communities it serves makes it an ideal place for someone like me to work. I feel very lucky to be part of the work we do here.

As so many of you know, the western part of Hancock County is experiencing record growth, and there is no indication it will slow down any time soon. So while I spend a good amount of time working on legal issues, as well as community and economic development, my role at NineStar serves another very specific purpose - to head up a data analytics program. At a time when things are happening so rapidly, and many decisions must be made quickly, NineStar knows those decisions need to be based in real-time data.

Over the last decade, the use of data has become a necessary tool for businesses that want to succeed. Gone are the days of boards of directors or CEOs making decisions based off gut instincts or intuition. Of course, NineStar is a cooperative, which makes us very different from your average for-profit business; however, our use of data analytics is still instrumental in determining how to best serve our members. And rest assured, that is the only thing we are using your data for, and it is our policy that we will never sell your personal data.

Just as data has changed how we make decisions, other things have changed about the communities we serve and how we serve them. As mentioned above, the western part of Hancock County, as well as the areas we serve in Fishers, are growing rapidly. It's important that we remain flexible and adaptable so we can respond appropriately to changes in those areas. However, many of the areas we serve remain very rural, and we have to be sure we are still responding to the needs of those areas, as well.

In addition to providing fiber and electricity, we have also expanded into water and wastewater over the past



APRIL FISHER

few years. There are some things that are universal about water and wastewater. For the most part, everyone wants safe drinking water and clean, unpolluted waterways. However, how that happens is different in the suburban communities we serve than it is in the more rural areas. In the suburban areas, it's about building new infrastructure to new development. In rural areas, it's about addressing failing wells and septic systems that were built well before we understood the public health indications of raw sewage entering into our groundwater and public waterways.

In addition to finding ways to use data to help make decisions about how to best serve all of our cooperative members, no matter where they choose to live or work, I also spend a large amount of my time making sure we are taking advantage of current funding opportunities. As many of you know, there has been a lot of discussion about infrastructure funding lately. The first opportunity came from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), which provides funds for improvements in water, wastewater, and broadband infrastructure, among other things. These funds are being pushed down from the state through local governments and programs like the State Water Infrastructure Fund (SWIF) and the Regional Economic Acceleration and Development Initiative (READI). More recently, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act was passed. In addition to providing funding for improvements in water, wastewater, and broadband, it will also provide funding for upgrades to the electric grid and investments in electric vehicle infrastructure.

As a provider of electricity, broadband, water, and wastewater, what we are seeing now in terms of changes and opportunities will likely prove to be a critical moment for our cooperative in the years to come. While that can sometimes seem daunting, it's also a very exciting time to work at NineStar. I'm glad to be part of it and excited to see the impact it has on how we serve our members for years to come.

**NINESTAR CONNECT DIRECTORS ACHIEVE  
NATIONAL CREDENTIAL**

Darrell Thomas & Jack Negley from NineStar Connect recently received the Credentialed Cooperative Director certificate from the National Rural Electric Association (NRECA). An ever-changing business environment has imposed new demands on electric cooperative directors, requiring increased knowledge of changes in the electric utility business, new government skills and a solid knowledge of the cooperative principles and business model. NineStar Connect has a commitment to work through NRECA to sharpen this body of knowledge for the benefit of their electric cooperative consumer owners.

The NRECA Credentialed Cooperative Director (CCD) program requires attendance and demonstrated understanding of the basic competencies contained in five core courses:

- Director Duties and Liabilities
- Understanding the Electric Business
- Board Operations and Process
- Strategic Planning
- Financial Decision Making



We salute Darrell & Jack for their continued dedication to NineStar Connect and we congratulate them on this national achievement.



**Kellee Johnson** joined NineStar in January of 2007 as a billing employee. Today Kellee is one of NineStar's Staff Accountants. Her daily responsibilities consist of Accounts Payable and billing reconciliations. Kellee's favorite part of her job is making sure bills are paid on time and are accurate. Kellee jokingly said "I tell people I see the money going out, never in".

Some of Kellee's work accomplishments includes creating company activity codes; going paperless and improving the flow on how the company handles the reconciliation of bills. Another achievement Kellee is most proud of is graduating from college through NineStar's company tuition program.

Challenges Kellee face in her position are the tracking of expenses across all NineStar's divisions and the constant payments needed. Kellee said that the way she keeps up quality work is by organizing and creating her tasks and functions in a certain order, which maximizes her time and productivity. During the pandemic Kellee was able to work remote and doing so helped streamline more tasks which helped increase productivity as well. She said if they had not accomplished going paperless in accounting, working remote wouldn't have been possible.

*"Behind every good Business is a Great Accountant". These words could not be more true about Kellee. She strives for excellence in her work every day. As the longest tenured employee in the Accounting department, she is a wealth of knowledge and I depend on her to get the answers we need to prepare accurate, timely and transparent financial statements".*

- Controller, Jill Martin

In Kellee's spare time she loves participating in church activities, sit by campfires, reading, and spending time with her husband and grandkids. Kellee is married to Mark, and they have a daughter Laura, son-law Aaron, son Stephen, and 3 grandchildren.



# ATTENTION NINESTAR SECURITY CUSTOMERS:



Just like your cell phone, your alarm system uses cellular technology to communicate your alarm signals. Due to changes from the cellular carriers, the communicator in your security system **NEEDS TO BE UPGRADED.**

The U.S. Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has ruled that ATT wireless carriers will no longer be required to support 3G wireless networks after February 2022.

With the looming date of February 22nd for the 3G/4G sunset, NineStar is going to offer another discounted option to ensure that your security system continues to be monitored. We will offer a discounted phone line for those customers living in a NineStar serving area. We will discount both the monthly line charge (\$25.00 instead of \$50.00) as well as the one-time installation (\$62.50 instead of \$125.00)


What steps you will need to take: Please contact our business sales department by telephone at **317-323-3081** or email at [support@myninestar.net](mailto:support@myninestar.net) to discuss which upgrade is right for you. Please call as soon as possible to avoid a possible disruption of services as we have been experiencing backorder issues from the manufactures on replacement equipment.

# MT. VERNON BOWLING TEAM DONATION



Recently, NineStar made a donation to the Mt. Vernon Bowling Team. Pictured above is the 2021/2022 team members. We wish them continued success during their season.

## NINESTAR BLOG



[www.ninestarconnect.com/blog/](http://www.ninestarconnect.com/blog/)

**By Matt Young**  
Support Center Technician

# LIFESPAN OF A COMPUTER

Most people buy a computer hoping to use it for a very long time, however, computers are not meant to last forever. Of course we generally do not think about upgrading or replacing our computers until there is an issue with it. So here are a few things to consider before making a new investment:

**Lifespan**  
**Useability**  
**Upgradability**  
**Lifespan**

The average lifespan of a computer is three-to-five years and it is measured by a variety of factors including environmental conditions, usage patterns, and computing needs. Many computers will last far longer than this, and

could go a decade or more if properly maintained.

**Environmental Factors**

Where the computer is used can reduce its usable life. Computers require a cool environment to keep internal components cool and functioning properly. Dust and debris can also build up on the fans and vents which can prevent proper airflow to cool the computer. So to help a computer have a healthy lifespan, it should be placed in a room that is cool and as dust free as possible.

**Usage**

How a computer is used can also decrease its lifespan. Computers that are always running tend to have more wear leading to more component failures (i.e. hard drives and fans) in less time. Laptop computers that are used without external power run the risk of battery failures. Batteries can only be charged so many times before they start losing their charge and need to be replaced. Typically, after a few hundred charging cycles, the amount of battery power begins to drop considerably.

**Maintenance**

The good news is that some basic preventative maintenance can extend the lifespan of a computer. Taking the time to clean out the dust and debris from fans and vents to allow proper airflow can make a big difference. Also, connecting your computer through a UPS (Uninterruptible Power Supply) can protect the device from power failure issues.

**Useability**

The typical end to a computer's life comes when the processing speed and/or memory becomes insufficient to run modern software properly. As the computer

industry progresses and computing power increases, so does software's capability to utilize it. Over time, this will make older computers obsolete. Therefore, many businesses will plan on replacing their computers every so many years.

This does not mean that you must replace an older computer if it still operates as you need it to though. If it still runs the software that you need it to, then it could be worth upgrading instead of replacing.

**Upgradability**

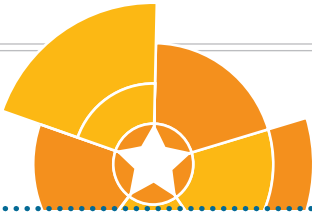
If your computer is a few years old but still runs well, then upgrading may be a good option to extend its life and usability. Typical upgrades would include hard drive, memory, video card, and possibly the processor. If the computer still has an older physical hard drive, upgrading that to a new Solid-State Drive would offer a big performance boost. Solid-State Drives offer faster access speeds over the older physical hard drives. Upgrading the memory will also increase performance especially if you typically run multiple programs at the same time. Depending on the use of the computer upgrading the video graphics card may also help increase the computer's performance.

**Final Thoughts**

To recap, computers typically last a few years or more depending on use and your computing needs. It is up to you to decide when to replace or upgrade. If the computer is still running without any issues after a few years than you probably do not need an upgrade yet, but maybe it could use a cleaning just to keep it working properly for a few more years.



# OPERATION ROUND-UP



Each quarter a group of Trustees (NineStar customers who volunteer their time to serve on the ORU committee) meet and decide how the extra change that is rounded up from customer's bills are dispersed from the applications that are received. Here are the organizations that benefited from the ORU fund this past November:



AGAPE THERAPEUTIC RIDING RESOURCE  
- \$5,000.00 - - - - -

BLUE ANGEL CONNECT  
« - - - - - \$3,000.00

FRIENDS OF HANCOCK COUNTY, CASA  
- \$5,000.00 - - - - - »

GREENFIELD VETERANS HONOR GUARD  
- - - - - \$1,600.00 -

HANCOCK 4 KIDS  
- \$6,000.0 - - - - - »

HANCOCK COUNTY CHILDREN'S CHOIR  
« - - - - - \$2,000.00

HANCOCK COUNTY EXTENSION  
HOMEMAKERS  
- \$2,000.00 - - - - -

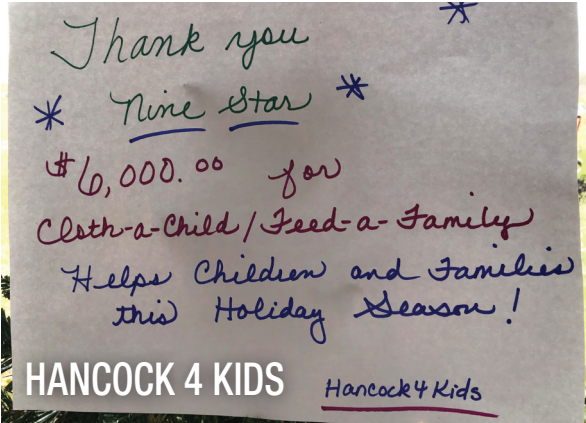
MORE THAN CONQUERORS  
« - - - - - \$5,000.00

NEW PALESTINE INTERMEDIATE  
ROBOTICS  
- \$600.00 - - - - -

NEW PALESTINE JUNIOR HIGH ROBOTICS  
- - - - - \$600.00 -



FRIENDS OF  
HANCOCK  
COUNTY, CASA



HANCOCK 4 KIDS



MORE THAN CONQUERORS



Hancock County Childrens  
Choir presenting NineStar's  
George Plisinski a plaque  
for sponsoring the 11th  
annual Light the Lights  
Concert.

The purpose of the Operation Round Up program 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 service 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.

For ones that want to send in an application for Operation Round-up dollars, the next application deadline is April 8, 2022. Applications can be downloaded from our website at [www.ninestarconnect.com](http://www.ninestarconnect.com) from the "In the Community" tab.

If you have any questions about the ORU program, please email [OperationRoundUp@NineStarConnect.com](mailto:OperationRoundUp@NineStarConnect.com) or call 317-323-3087.

Congratulations to all of November ORU recipients!



# MEET THE CANDIDATES

VOTE MARCH 1<sup>ST</sup> - 24<sup>TH</sup>

Receive a \$10 Bill Credit or Dinner at the Annual Meeting and be entered for drawings of \$5,000 in cash prizes and \$2,500 in giveaways.

Vote online at

[ninestarconnect.com/smarthub.coop](http://ninestarconnect.com/smarthub.coop)

or visit our Main Campus or McCordsville office during normal business hours.

To learn more visit

[ninestarconnect.com/annualmeeting](http://ninestarconnect.com/annualmeeting).

## DIRECTOR, AT-LARGE 3 SUSAN BODKIN



**BACKGROUND:** Susan Bodkin has been a cooperative member since 1985. She graduated from Greenfield-Central High School and Purdue University and has a Bachelor of Science Degree in the School of Agriculture. She is currently the Hancock County Surveyor. In the past, she has worked as a technician and weed specialist for Hancock County Soil and Water Conservation. She specializes in leadership and teamwork, construction plan reviews and the general knowledge of Hancock County, especially drainage. Susan is a member of Willow Branch United Methodist Church serving as trustee, secretary, and has been on several different committees. She has volunteered at the Kenneth Butler Memorial Soup Kitchen and Hancock Regional Hospital and assists with the Hancock County 4-H Sheep show. Susan and her husband David currently reside near Wilkinson. They have a son Joe who is married to Chelsea and grandson Brecken.

**CANDIDATE STATEMENT:** I would like to serve as director of NineStar Connect because I have worked in this community for over 37 years and have gained extensive knowledge in working with people and development. I would like to continue to serve my community and feel like this is an excellent opportunity. I am conservative minded but understand and embrace new adventures. My experience working in drainage and Regulated Drains allows me to understand the water and sanitary divisions of NineStar Connect. I have worked in government which has allowed me to gain knowledge in planning for development and utilities needed to provide services to these areas. In addition, I understand the guidelines that must be followed. I understand the rural atmosphere and the concern of urban growth and industrial change. My knowledge and understanding would be an asset to the Board.

## DIRECTOR, AT-LARGE 3 JEFF CORNS



**BACKGROUND:** Jeff Corns has been a cooperative member since 2003. Jeff is a graduate of the University of Iowa with a Bachelor of Science in Geography (GIS) and is a certified GIS Professional (GISP). He is currently the President & COO of Schneider Geospatial, a company he has been with for 20 years. Previously, he was the COO of ProMap Corporation. Jeff has 25 years' experience in executive management, with an emphasis in technology serving state & local governments and utilities. He has also served on several commercial, non-profit and industry boards of directors. Jeff's company (Schneider Geospatial, the creator of the popular Beacon™ web portals for local governments) has provided geospatial consulting services to NineStar Connect for several years and was recognized as "Corporate Innovator of the Year" by TechPoint. Jeff is a member of the parish at St. Simon the Apostle Catholic Church and is currently on the Board of Directors of TechPoint. Jeff and his wife Marcy reside in McCordsville and have four daughters: Isabelle, Maggie, Greta and Annie.

**CANDIDATE STATEMENT:** My desire to serve as a director stem from three main areas, how impressed I am with NineStar, a belief in community service, and the opportunity to give back to an organization that has helped improve our quality of life. First, as I've gotten to know NineStar over the years, I've been impressed with the focus on innovation and customer service. We are raising four daughters with a strong sense of community service, and my background in business, technology, and strategic planning provides me a way to serve my community as a NineStar board member. Lastly, NineStar's fiber to the home program has allowed us to live and raise a family on a rural acreage while still allowing us to work from home and school when needed. Serving on the board is a way for me to give back to an organization that has helped improve our quality of life.

## DIRECTOR, AT-LARGE 3 TIMOTHY DEHRING



**BACKGROUND:** Tim Dehring has been an Indiana resident for 36 years and a cooperative member since 2019. He graduated from the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee with a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering and a Master of Science in Management from Purdue University Calumet. He is currently retired but had a lengthy career as an operational and engineering executive with NiSource, a very large electric and gas utility business. Tim has extensive strategic, financial, regulatory, safety and infrastructure experience in our industry as well as prior experience in board service and leadership. He owns and operates a part-time consulting business that serves the energy industry. Tim formerly was board chair for Midwest Energy Association and the Nature Works Conservancy District. He was also a former board member for the American Red Cross of Northwest Indiana and for the Tradewinds Rehabilitation Services. Tim has been married to his wife Martha for over 39 years with two married children and two grandchildren who all live in this area.

**CANDIDATE STATEMENT:** I have always believed that one should use their professional talents for the benefit of their employer, their industry, and their community. While now retired, my career has spanned approximately 40 years in the utility industry. Over this period, I have held numerous technical, operational, and executive positions for a very large electric and gas utility. I have served the broader industry and my community through board membership and leadership roles for an electric and gas energy association and a local conservancy district. These experiences have developed extensive industry knowledge, but more importantly, they have provided a deep understanding of the value these services provide for our members and communities. I believe that our cooperative, NineStar Connect, is committed to providing the best service and value for our members and would very much enjoy the opportunity to serve all of you by making this talented board of directors even stronger.



# MEET THE CANDIDATES

## DIRECTOR, DISTRICT #2 MARK EVANS



**BACKGROUND:** Mark Evans has been a cooperative member since 2000. He graduated from Ball State University with a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, Mid-America College of Funeral Service – Associate of Applied Science Funeral Service. He is currently a Contact Representative with DFAS (Defense Finance and Accounting Service). He also serves as Clerk-Treasurer for the Town of Markleville. He was the former Branch Manager at First Merchants Bank, Regions Bank. Serving as Clerk-Treasurer and a background in banking provides the knowledge and skills to make critical decisions, while managing public funds, budgeting and analytics. Mark has volunteered in the past for South Madison Community Foundation Grant Committee, United Way Day of Caring, United Way campaigns, Habitat for Humanity, 500 Festival Education Day and Regions Bank Diversity Council. He is a member of East Side Church of God in Anderson, IN and member of Markleville Masonic Lodge #629. Mark and his wife Laura have two children, Andrew and Gabby, and resides in Markleville.

**CANDIDATE STATEMENT:** Having served as a Board Director since 2008, I bring knowledge and understanding of NineStar Connect prior, during and after the merger of Hancock Telecom and Central Indiana Power that only a handful of existing directors have. One reason I want to continue as a director is that there will be 7 directors with less than 2 years' experience with NineStar. In my opinion, it is critical to have some directors with history and experience with NineStar to continue the vision of serving our members. Secondly, I enjoy serving people, as I serve the Military Service Members through my career now with Defense Finance & Accounting Service, and the residents of the Town of Markleville as the Clerk-Treasurer. I believe I have served and represented all members of NineStar with their best interest in mind and look forward to continuing to serve our members.

## DIRECTOR, DISTRICT #6 JOE PAXTON



**BACKGROUND:** Joe Paxton has been a cooperative member since 1974. Joe graduated from Greenfield-Central High School and attended Purdue University. He is self-employed as a farmer-owner-operator of Paxton Enterprises which manages 2400 acres of farmland. He is currently a member and on the Board of Directors for Farm Bureau Incorporated. He is also a member and past trustee of Eden United Methodist Church. Joe and his wife Patty have two grown children, Michelle Hasty and Joe Paul Paxton and four grandchildren.

**CANDIDATE STATEMENT:** Over the past 17 years, I have had the privilege to represent our cooperative. I take great pride in representing my community as a director. In my tenure, I have seen two outstanding cooperatives merge into one nationally recognized organization. NineStar's future is bright because of the employees, but also because of the unique relationship among directors and member-owners of our cooperative. Looking forward, there will be some challenges with our highly regulated environment, but with my years of education and experience as a director, I am confident this cooperative will continue moving forward as a leader in the industry. I am focused on the future and want to continue to serve to all NineStar members.

## DIRECTOR, DISTRICT #9 PHILIP HAYES



**BACKGROUND:** Philip Hayes has been a cooperative member since 1976. He graduated from Greenfield-Central High School and then Purdue University with a Bachelor of Science in Industrial Management with a minor in Computer Science. He is currently retired. For 23 years, he worked at Naval Air Warfare Center as a Program Manager, Ground Based Systems. He was a Business Manager of Manufacturing & Depot Operations at Raytheon Technical Services, LLC for 14 years. Combined, Phil has had over 37 years working in the defense industry focused on design, development, production, and repair of military hardware. Phil's specialized training consists of Cooperative Board leadership and continuing education with NTCA (Rural Broadband Association), IEC (Indiana Electric Cooperatives), Statewide Association of REMC's, NRECA (National Association of Rural Electric Cooperative), Alliance of Indiana Rural Water Association, Aces Power Marketing Risk Management Training, National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation Certificates, Credentialed Cooperative Director, Board Leadership Course, numerous Broadband Core Curriculum Courses. Phil also represents NineStar on the Wabash Valley Power Alliance (WVPA) Board of Directors (23 member REMC's from 3 states) and he currently serves as WVPA Board Chairperson, including the Executive Committee. He is keenly aware of upward pressure on WVPA's wholesale power rates and his goal is to influence WVPA's rate setting process by balancing NineStar's member interests and WVPA's financial viability. He also serves on several NineStar committees including executive, finance, technology and is Governance Chairperson. Phil is a member of Willow Branch United Methodist Church including Sunday School Teacher, Finance & Paster Parish Chairperson, Member Prospect Lodge #714 F&AM, life member of Purdue Alumni Association and member of Greenfield Kiwanis. Phil resides in Wilkinson with his wife Pamela. They have a son, Brandon (Becky) and two granddaughters, Sydney and Aubrey.

**CANDIDATE STATEMENT:** I am fortunate to have participated in the formation, growth, and development of NineStar Connect. The CEO, staff, and directors are a team engaged in a long-term strategy to ensure NineStar members have access to the best possible utilities. I believe that quality-of-place is an essential ingredient in where people choose to live and I enjoy being a part of NineStar's endeavor to be a solutions provider for our members and customers. These are exciting times with new and prospective economic opportunities that will rely on the infrastructure investments NineStar is making. Progress is sometimes slower than I prefer, but doing the right thing is not easy. I am proud of what NineStar is accomplishing and I welcome the opportunity to carry the tradition forward representing the members of NineStar.

## DIRECTOR, DISTRICT #10 THOMAS ORDING



**BACKGROUND:** Thomas Ording has been a cooperative member since 2019. He has Bachelor of Arts in Accounting from Ohio Northern University and his Master of Science in Tax from University of Cincinnati. He is currently Director of Tax at Wabash National Corporation. Previously, he worked as a Senior Director at RSM LLP and a Global Director of Tax and Assistant Secretary for Remy International, Inc. Thomas is a Certified Public Accountant in Indiana and Ohio. At RSM LLP he was a Subject Matters Expert for Accounting for Income Tax and was a member of Washington National Tax. He has experience in acquisition and integration of acquired business and has participated in 50+ due diligence projects for acquisition or divestitures. Thomas and his wife Lorinda reside in New Palestine.

**CANDIDATE STATEMENT:** I believe the knowledge and experience I have accumulated over my career would be beneficial to NineStar Connect in operations, planning and long-term goals. During my career I have worked with senior management and boards on various projects and transactions including mergers, acquisitions, and divestitures, plant and business expansions, and equity and debt offerings. The accomplishments above have provided me with diverse experiences that I believe has given me insights to assist in steering the future of NineStar Connect.

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NINESTAR CONNECTION