

NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2023



NineStar CONNECTION

VOLUME 12
ISSUE 5

STOCKING SAVINGS

Some holiday gift ideas will shed light on your home's energy use
Read more on page 6

WINTERIZING YOUR HOME BEFORE THE BIG CHILL

Steps to take to keep your home warm & comfy this winter

Read more on page 7.

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SEE PAGE 4

FOUR THE FUTURE

PROPOSED TRAINING CENTER CONCEIVED BY FOUR INDIANA SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS RECEIVES MORE THAN \$40M IN LOCAL, STATE SUPPORT



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Ninestar President addresses the need for continued upkeep of utility infrastructure ahead of the winter months. See more on page 8.



OUR EMPLOYEES MAKE THE DIFFERENCE. HERE'S A CUSTOMER REVIEW FOR SARAH BADGLEY .

"SARAH MADE THE PROCESS OF SIGNING UP FOR SERVICE AND THE INSTALLATION PROCESS VERY EASY. I COULDN'T BE HAPPIER WITH THE CUSTOMER SERVICE I RECEIVED AND THE INTERNET SERVICE NINESTAR PROVIDES."

NINESTAR CUSTOMER



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

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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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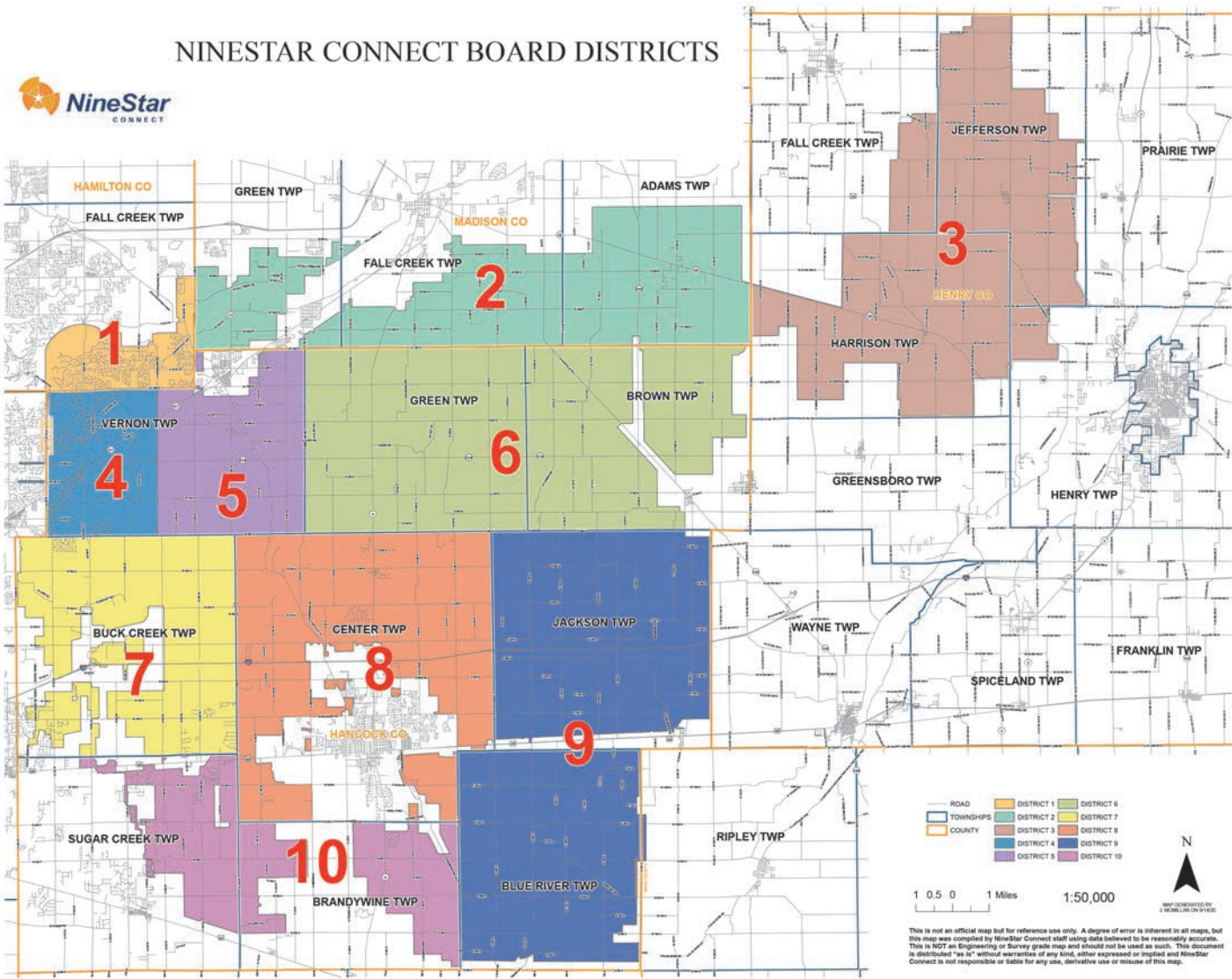
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FOUR THE FUTURE

PROPOSED TRAINING CENTER CONCEIVED BY FOUR INDIANA SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS RECEIVES MORE THAN \$40M IN LOCAL, STATE SUPPORT



An illustration of Amplify Hancock, the proposed innovation and education center that will offer technical education training for high school students in Hancock County's four school districts, along with adult education courses from Ivy Tech Community College. Organizers hope for land acquisition to begin for the project this fall.

Four school superintendents in Hancock County, Indiana, four years ago created a vision for high school kids to stay close to home for their education.

That vision has received more than \$40 million in commitments to become a reality.

The superintendents of Southern Hancock County, Greenfield-Central, Eastern Hancock and Mt. Vernon Community school districts created the initial plan for what has become Amplify Hancock, a joint innovation and education center gaining support from a variety of local businesses, government officials and Ivy Tech Community College. The planned 90,000-square-foot facility will provide career and technical education training for the county's high school students and adult education courses by Ivy Tech. Many students in the county's districts currently travel to Indianapolis or New Castle, outside of Hancock County, to pursue technical courses.

"The four county superintendents met in 2019 knowing that, for our students going into technical education, most of them were leaving the county to receive that instruction," said Greenfield-Central Schools Superintendent Harold Olin. "The limitations of the mileage to travel there was keeping our numbers of participating students artificially low."

After a planning delay because of the coronavirus pandemic, the project took shape with support from businesses including Hancock Health, a health care network serving the county; and NineStar Connect, a local electric cooperative providing multiple utility services. Project organizers hired the Veridus Group, a real estate development consulting firm, to support their effort.

Amplify Hancock organizers received \$1.4

million from the Indiana Economic Development Corp. as part of a Regional Economic Acceleration and Development Initiative grant. The funding will support buying land for the new facility, Olin said. The group received additional support from Hancock County Commissioners, who committed \$40 million in tax increment financing funds for the project. A nonprofit board has been created to manage the operations of the facility.

"Amplify Hancock has been an amazing collaboration among many leaders and entities in our county," Olin said. "It is a rare and precious venture when you can get educators, higher education stakeholders, community business leaders and elected officials all rowing in the same direction."

Amplify Hancock will be built near County Road 300 North and County Road 200 West in Hancock County. The location is near Interstate 70, which is undergoing a study to have an additional highway exit created nearby, Olin said. NineStar Connect has started planning for infrastructure at the site.

"Amplify Hancock will have a transformative benefit for high school students and all residents of Hancock County," NineStar Connect CEO Mike Burrow said. "The rapid development of technology and the expansive business growth we've experienced means there are more opportunities than ever before for families right here in our community. Amplify Hancock will provide them with the training and skills needed so they can have an immediate impact and grow their careers here at home."

Amplify Hancock will be located within 13 miles of each county high school, and in the middle of several corridors that have become economic development hotspots, with



Amplify Hancock will offer a range of career and technical courses, including medical assistance. Many students in the four Hancock County school districts currently travel to Indianapolis or New Castle to take such classes.

numerous businesses and neighborhoods under development. The facility will offer a range of career and technical coursework, including classes in radiology, carpentry, welding, aviation, medical assistance, criminal justice and more.

"There are a lot of businesses in the area that can use a facility like this to train their workforce," said Mitchell Kirk, communications director of the Hancock Economic Development Council. "People are certainly taking it seriously. They have faith in it, they see the benefit in it, which are all reassuring."

Amplify Hancock organizers expect to start buying land this fall. They hope that the facility will be completed to offer classes by fall 2026. Meanwhile, the county's school districts have collaborated to begin offering some of the coursework to be offered at Amplify Hancock; students can travel between the high schools to take the career or technical education courses of their choice.

"Our communities are intertwined so much. We have a lot of things that are common goals," Olin said of cooperation among the school districts. "It's really been refreshing to have these collaborations."



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- 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 **3pm on February 9, 2024.**

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Wabash Valley Power news

STOCKING SAVINGS

Some holiday gift ideas will shed light on your home's energy use

This holiday season you'll probably see lots of advertising for "smart" home accessories. Fortunately, you can spend money on some gifts that can lead to long-term savings.

Commercials this time of year highlight all sorts of gadgets. Often, many of these devices are about convenience, such as remotely turning lights and appliances on and off. Fortunately, some devices such as energy monitors and even Wi-Fi outlets and power strips can help you learn about your home's energy use – and, hopefully, lead to better choices that lower your energy use, and with it, lower long-term energy costs.

HOME ENERGY MONITORS

These devices come in two different types. Both types of home energy monitors provide you with helpful information about how your home is using electricity, though there

are unique advantages and challenges to each. One kind monitors each circuit of your home's circuit breaker box to tell you how much electricity is used at each circuit. Emporia Vue is an example of that type of monitor. Circuit level devices are often more challenging to install, but if your circuit breaker box is well-labeled, you can quickly see how much even the tricky appliances are using. The downside is that if there are several small appliances plugged into the same circuit. Those circuit level monitors are not able to separate those smaller loads.

The other type uses electric harmonics and machine learning to detect appliance patterns to "learn" what devices are using electricity in your home. The Sense home energy monitor is an example of that type. The devices utilizing machine learning are usually easier to install, and they have been on the market long enough that they can identify many

common appliances fairly quickly. Monitors using electric harmonics can struggle with some appliances, making it a challenge for the monitor to ever "see" those appliances.

WI-FI OUTLETS AND POWER STRIPS

Wi-Fi outlets and power strips are a way to help you "see" loads the whole home monitors are not able to "see" because of machine learning limitations, or multiple appliances installed on the same circuit. Each home energy monitor has Wi-Fi outlets that are compatible and can shed more light on individual plug use.

These devices will be helpful in making you smarter about your home — because you should be the smart one, not the gadgets plugged into your home. For more energy saving tips and advice, contact Ninestar's Energy Advisor, Matt Strahl, or visit PowerMoves.com.

WINTERIZING YOUR HOME BEFORE THE BITTER CHILL

Is your home and its electrical service ready for winter? The best time to find out is long before you hear about the season's first approaching winter storm, suggests Matt Strahl, Energy Advisor at NineStar Connect.

"Taking a little time to prepare your home for colder weather has many benefits," said Matt. "You'll be more comfortable when those icy winds blow. And, even more important, you'll have the confidence that your house will keep you safe on the chilliest nights."

Matt recommends several simple steps to winterize your home:

- Winterize electrical outlets on outside walls with insulating covers by carefully selecting outlet kits made to fit. Turn off power to each outlet and check for loose wires or connections that could cause shocks or electrocution. If an outlet wiggles or seems to have loose wires, have a qualified electrician repair it.
- Check space heater cords for signs of wear or overheating and make sure the plug fits securely in the outlet.
- Never run cords under carpeting or rugs. Cords can be damaged when people step on them and are a trip hazard. They can also overheat and lead to a fire.
- Make sure trees are properly trimmed and away from your electrical wires. Tree branches can fall and snap your power lines during a winter storm. NEVER approach a downed power line; it could still be energized.
- Check your furnace or heat pump before you need it. A service technician can conduct a thorough check and cleaning. Make sure filters are clean.
- If you notice odd sounds or smells coming from your furnace or heat pump, turn it off and call a service technician. Mechanical problems can lead to fires. Furnaces that use combustion can also release gases, such as carbon monoxide.
- Have working flashlights or battery-powered lamps with fresh batteries on hand in case of a power outage.

"Now is sweater weather," Matt said. "When you feel chilly indoors, putting on a sweater instead of turning up the thermostat a couple of degrees can add up to substantial savings. Each time you turn the thermostat up a degree, you can add as much as 2 to 3% to your heating costs, and you put more wear and tear on your heat pump or furnace."

SOURCE: ESFI, Consumer Safety



STORM KIT: HOME VERSION

Being prepared for the worst is no small feat. You should assemble a storm kit that will get you through at least three days without leaving the house.

HERE ARE SOME ITEMS WE RECOMMEND PUTTING IN YOUR KIT:

- Semi- and non-perishable food items
- Enough water for one gallon per person per day
- Lamps and flashlights (don't forget the batteries!)
- A first aid kit stocked with essentials
- Basic tools
- An alternative heat source, such as a fireplace or kerosene heater

Start preparing your home for winter now and enjoy the comforts of knowing you and your family will be safe from unexpected dangers in and around your home.

President's Message

By Michael R. Burrow, President & CEO

No one could really fault you if you missed one of the more significant news stories over the last few weeks. Modern news organizations struggle at times with the loudest and most sensational items drowning out critical, though often less flashy, items that can impact our day-to-day lives far greater than some of the stories with sensational headlines designed to draw in readers.

Last month, a federal agency that most Americans have never heard of issued a dire warning on the status of North America's electric grid for the upcoming winter months that even surprised me. Regulators at the North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC for short) warned that half of Americans are at risk of blackouts over the winter months. One could easily dismiss such dire statements if we had not already witnessed examples of this over the last few years – most notably in February 2021 in Texas with Winter Storm Uri when tens of thousands of Texans were without power during a particular cold snap that ended up a fiasco of financial hardship for many electric consumers and triggered bankruptcies for some power companies.

I am fortunate to have occasions to go to Washington, DC to have conversations with members of Indiana's Congressional Delegation. A few years ago, I was struck by the candor of a now former member of Congress when he indicated that it was about time Americans had "an adult conversation" about infrastructure. Although he no longer serves in Congress, what he said was absolutely correct and continues to resonate with me.

It goes without saying that no one wants to pay more taxes or pay higher utility bills. Nonetheless, we must recognize that if we don't make regular investments for both maintenance and upgrades in our shared infrastructure systems, we all will suffer collective consequences when they begin to fail from neglect. Of course, my focus is on utility infrastructure,

but one needs only to go to the website of the American Society of Civil Engineers (asce.org/topics/report-card-for-americas-infrastructure) to recognize that there is a lot of critical facilities that have been neglected for many years and a whole generation of Americans that hasn't paid their fair share of maintaining and upgrading our collective infrastructure. And to be clear, the generation of Americans I'm saying didn't do their part is my generation. Consequently, we are leaving our children and grandchildren a Sophie's choice of either paying more taxes and larger utility bills or facing a declining quality of place and life.

Of course, not all news is bad news. When we speak of infrastructure, we are inherently talking about a web of interconnected systems designed to work in harmony for the collective good. So while collectively, our national road system might be suffering, roads and streets in a particular locale might be quite good and well-maintained because local leaders had the courage to do their part to make sure proper infrastructure investments were made in their particular area.

For example, the City of Greenfield should be commended for the long-term, multi-year investments it is making in both water and sewer infrastructure. These very large projects include construction of new water and wastewater treatment plants, and a new large water tower, and will position the city to ensure a high quality of life for both current and future residents for decades to come.

Similarly, NineStar Connect has been very deliberate about making investments in our local utility infrastructure. Utility infrastructure investments are always inherently long-term investments and need to not only meet the needs of our current members and customers, but also those of future members and customers. Since 2011, NineStar has invested over \$160 million in electric,



Michael R. Burrow

fiber optic, water and sewer infrastructure. Just like Greenfield, we also continue to make infrastructure investments every year, so our community doesn't fall behind and to ensure a quality of life and place for our children and grandchildren.

Do these infrastructure investments impact the rates you pay for utility services? Absolutely. However, the impact on rates is far less than what they would be if the attitude of decision makers were to defer needed repairs and upgrades - essentially kicking the can down the road to the next generation.

We are all in this boat together. Infrastructure networks are interconnected and interdependent on one another. Investments in NineStar's local electrical distribution system cannot guarantee that power won't be interrupted due to inadequate investments in generation or transmission upstream of our local system. Nevertheless, the good stewardship we are providing today with the infrastructure decisions we do control will go along way to the goal of continued reliability and affordability of our services today and into the future.

I always welcome your feedback and questions. Feel free to e-mail me at president@ninestarconnect.com

NINESTAR TO INTRODUCE NEW TIERED RATES FOR WATER SERVICE

NineStar Connect first started offering water service in 2016. Since that time, we have been fortunate enough to not pass a rate increase on to our members. In the past seven years, demand on the system has increased due to the large amount of growth within our service territory. Because of this growth, improvements are continually being made and as a result, the time has come to introduce a new water rate structure.

This new rate structure will include four tiers and will be based on water consumption. The new tiered rates will take effect starting in January with members seeing changes on their February bills. Those who use more water or less water will be charged accordingly. Much like we encourage our electric members to be conscious about how they use electricity, we hope the new rates will encourage water conservation and hopefully reduce demand. The increase will be slight in terms of dollars as most residential members using 3,000 to 5,000 gallons a month will see an increase on their monthly bills of \$7.00 to \$8.00.

There is never a good time to increase rates. With the current economy and the prices of labor, materials, and construction continuing to increase, we feel we must plan accordingly. As always, if you have any questions or concerns, please contact us directly at 317-326-3131.



RESIDENTIAL WATER RATES

Monthly Meter Charge \$24.55		
	Usage per Gallon	Monthly Rate
TIER 1	0-2000	\$0.00730
TIER 2	2000-4000	\$0.00737
TIER 3	4000-10000	\$0.00744
TIER 4	10000+	\$0.00759



SIGN UP

Those who receive services from NineStar can “round up” their monthly bill to the nearest dollar.



ROUND UP

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IMPACT

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ANOTHER WAY YOU CAN HELP?

Volunteer as a trustee and be a decision maker on where your ORU dollars are going. Call 317-323-3087 or Email operationroundup@ninestarconnect.com today!



OUT & ABOUT

COOPERATIVE SERVICE DAY

On October 13th, NineStar Employees took part in NineStar’s annual Cooperative Service Day. Employees worked throughout NineStar’s service territory to work on various community projects.

THIS YEAR’S PROJECTS INCLUDE:

- **PENNSY TRAIL** - Cleaning up a section of the trail.
- **NAMELESS CREEK CAMP** - Fence removal, barrier installation, pressure washing deck, clearing fallen trees.
- **HANCOCK COUNTY FOOD PANTRY** - Stain and seal privacy fence.
- **SHIRLEY COMMUNITY VISIONARIES** - Post hole digging.
- **EASTERN HANCOCK SCHOOLS** - Upgrade press booth rooftop and safety railing.
- **BENTLEY’S BUDDIES** - Stain and seal deck.



GREENFIELD TRUNK OR TREAT



On October 26th, NineStar employees Christa Riggs and Erika Whittington passed out candy at the Greenfield Parks Department Trunk or Treat event. Over 5,000 community residents attended the event.



INDIANA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES

Indiana electric cooperative leaders participated in the Bell Leadership Institute Achievers course. This life-changing course is designed to help individuals lead with a deep understanding of personal strengths, weaknesses, and motivations. NineStar’s own, Darrin Couch, attended the course.

INDIANA CONFERENCE FOR WOMEN

Twelve NineStar employees attended the 2023 Indiana Conference for Women. The conference is the largest one-day professional development conference in the Midwest.





2023 - 2024 BASKETBALL SCHEDULE RELEASED

NineStar Now has released the 2023-2024 basketball schedule. These games will be aired live on NineStar Now. To subscribe, visit ninstarnow.com.

BOYS BASKETBALL

DAY	DATE	OPPONENT	LOCATION	TIME
SAT	DEC 2	ANDERSON	NEW CASTLE	7:30PM
FRI	DEC 8	MT VERNON	PENDLETON HEIGHTS	7:30PM
SAT	DEC 9	CONNERSVILLE	PENDLETON HEIGHTS	7:30PM
TUE	DEC 12	GUERIN CATHOLIC	PENDLETON HEIGHTS	7:30PM
FRI	DEC 15	YORKTOWN	GREENFIELD CEENTRAL	7:30PM
FRI	JAN 5	MT VERNON	GREENFIELD CEENTRAL	7:30PM
FRI	JAN 12	MONROE CENTRAL	SHENANDOAH	7:30PM
FRI	JAN 19	DELTA	PENDLETON HEIGHTS	7:30PM
FRI	JAN 26	GREENFIELD CEENTRAL	PENDLETON HEIGHTS	7:30PM
THUR	FEB 1	NOBLESVILLE	MT VERNON	7:30PM
THUR	FEB 8	DELTA	NEW CASTLE	7:30PM
TUE	FEB 13	NEW CASTLE	PENDLETON HEIGHTS	7:30PM

JAN.
24

FEB.
20

APPLY NOW!

INDIANA
ELECTRIC
COOPERATIVE

PAGE DAY

SPEND A DAY AT
THE STATEHOUSE

WITH STUDENTS FROM
AROUND THE STATE

See the Senate in
action.

Tour the Statehouse.

Pass your own
legislation during
a mock bill activity.

APPLY BY JAN. 5

IECPageDay.org

REQUIREMENTS:

You must be
available Jan. 24 or Feb. 20 and
have reliable transportation to and
from the Indiana Statehouse that
day. The program is open to high
school students. Please confirm
with school administrators, but
Page Day is considered an excused
absence in most instances.

IEC

INDIANA ELECTRIC
COOPERATIVES

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NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2023 11

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