



JANUARY - MARCH 2026

NineStar CONNECTION

VOLUME 15
ISSUE 1

OPERATION ROUND UP®

Each quarter a group of Trustees meet and decide how the extra change that is rounded up from customer's bills are dispersed from the applications that are received.

Read more on page 6

OUT & ABOUT!

A showcase of places we've been in the community.

Read more on page 7.

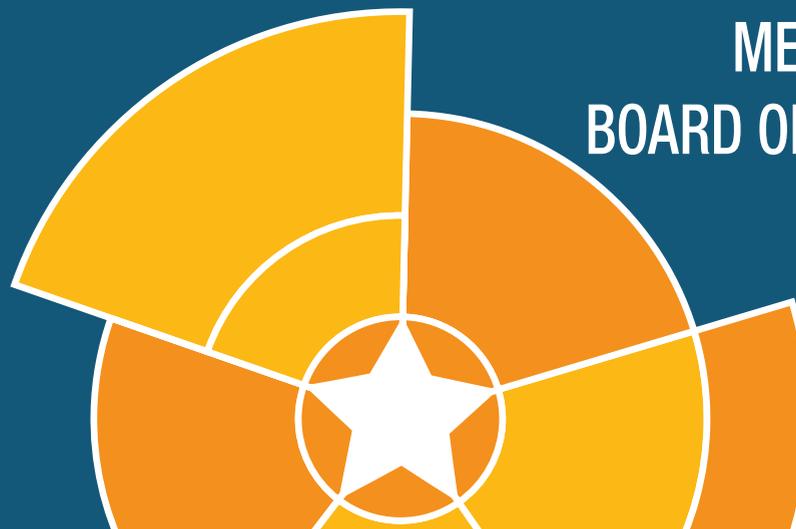
SEE PAGE 4



NINESTAR CONNECT'S ANNUAL MEETING WILL BE HELD MARCH 20TH

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

NINESTAR
LEVELS UP WITH
NATIONWIDE
FIBER GAMING
NETWORK
PAGE 5



MEET THE 2026
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
CANDIDATES
PAGES 10-11



Energy Advisor Matt Strahl visited Thorpe Creek Elementary and presented two electric safety demonstrations to six classes—impacting 160 students.

Learn more on page 7.



OUR EMPLOYEES MAKE THE DIFFERENCE.

EMPLOYEE BRYAN SMITH SPEARHEADED AN EMPLOYEE DONATION REQUEST TO SUPPORT THE HANCOCK COUNTY FOOD PANTRY.

COVER STORY PAGE 4

A Spring Tradition: NineStar Connect's annual meeting will be held March 20th.

NINESTAR LEVELS UP WITH FIBER GAMING NETWORK PAGE 5

NineStar has officially joined the Fiber Gaming Network (FGN), a nationwide gaming platform that connects fiber internet customers from across the country for weekly events.

OPERATION ROUND UP® PAGE 6

Each quarter a group of Trustees meet and decide how the extra change that is rounded up from customer's bills are dispersed from the applications that are received.

OUT & ABOUT! PAGE 7

A showcase of places we've been in the community.

MEET THE 2026 BOARD OF DIRECTORS CANDIDATES PAGES 10-11

the COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLES

VOLUNTARY & OPEN MEMBERSHIP

1



DEMOCRATIC MEMBER CONTROL

2



MEMBERS' ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

3



AUTONOMY & INDEPENDENCE

4



EDUCATION, TRAINING, & INFORMATION

5



COOPERATION AMONG COOPERATIVES

6



CONCERN for COMMUNITY

7



The *NineStar Connection* is a publication of NineStar Connect servicing retail and residential customers. Over 19,000 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.

NineStar Connection, USPS Volume 14 No. 4

Published Bi-monthly. Postage Paid at Greenfield, IN.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: 2243 E. Main St. Greenfield, IN 46140

Annual subscription price is \$3; available to members of NineStar Connect co-operative.

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

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

NineStar McCordsville Office
5985 Main St.
McCordsville, IN 46055

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

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

NineStar Connection

EDITOR
David Spencer

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Director District 1
Charles Kennedy

Director District 2
Mark Evans

Director District 3
Robin Ritchie

Director District 4
Scott Pittman

Director District 5
Jan Cochard

Director District 6
Joseph Paxton

Director District 7
Jack Negley

Director District 8
Raymond Kerkhof

Director District 9
Phil Hayes

Director District 10
Thomas Ordning

AT LARGE

Richard Griffin
Susan Bodkin
Timothy Bryant



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

NINESTAR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

DISTRICT 1



CHARLES KENNEDY

DISTRICT 2



MARK EVANS

DISTRICT 3



ROBIN RITCHIE

DISTRICT 4



SCOTT PITTMAN

DISTRICT 5



JAN COCHARD

DISTRICT 6



JOSEPH PAXTON

DISTRICT 7



JACK NEGLEY

DISTRICT 8



RAYMOND KERKHOF

DISTRICT 9



PHILIP M. HAYES

DISTRICT 10



THOMAS ORDING

AT LARGE



RICHARD GRIFFIN

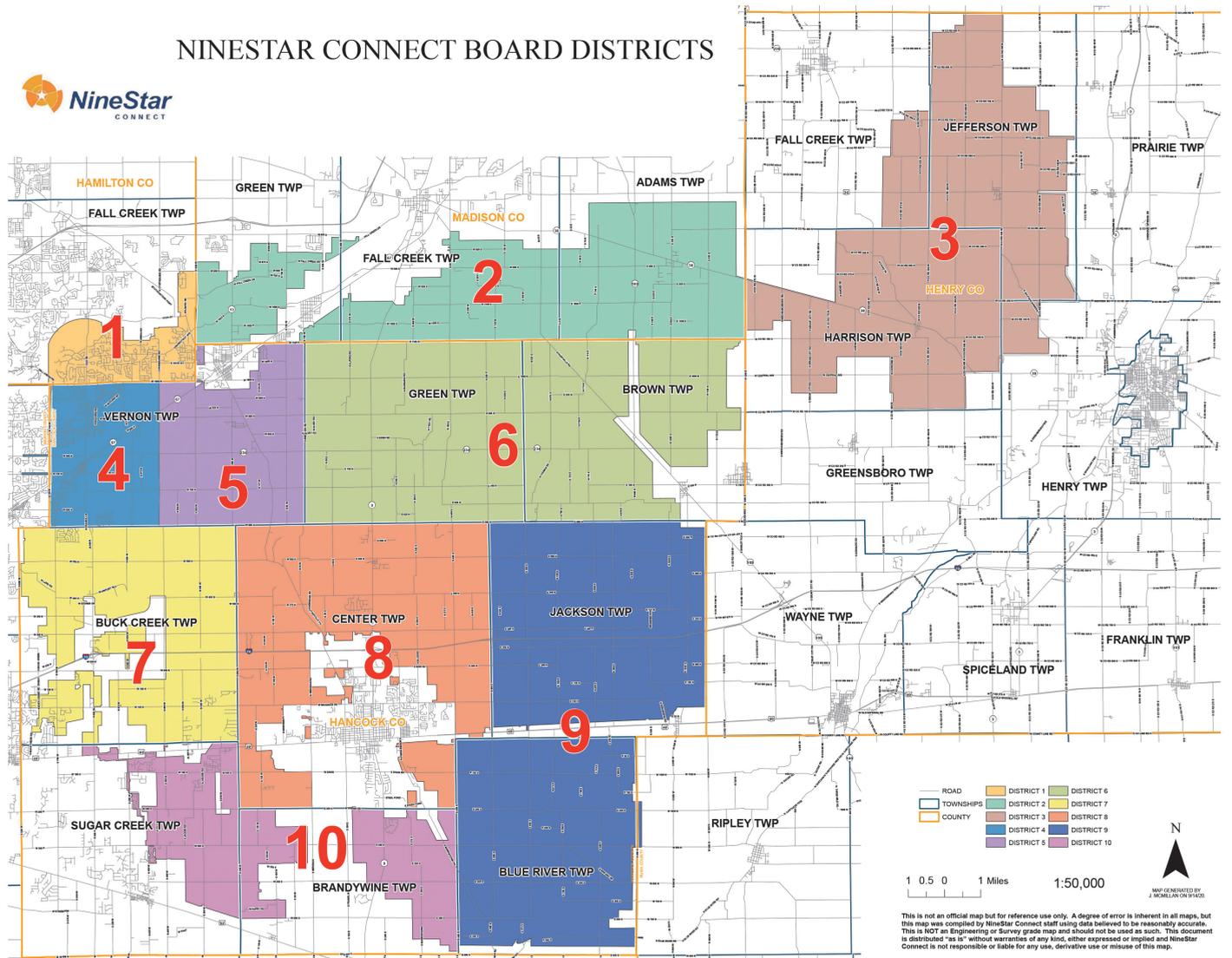


SUSAN BODKIN



TIMOTHY BRYANT

NINESTAR CONNECT BOARD DISTRICTS





NINESTAR CONNECT'S ANNUAL MEETING WILL BE HELD MARCH 20TH

By Julie Young

NineStar Connect will once again gather its membership for its annual meeting on March 20, returning to the Greenfield-Central High School Performing Arts Center, located at 810 N. Broadway in Greenfield.

Last year marked the cooperative's first annual meeting at the newly opened venue, and the response from members was overwhelmingly positive.

"We had such a great response from our membership on both the location and the state-of-the-art auditorium that we decided to bring it back again this year," said David Spencer, NineStar Connect's director of marketing.

According to Spencer, the theater provided an ideal setting to share NineStar's story and celebrate the cooperative's successes with its members.

"The auditorium not only seats 1,600 people, but it also comes equipped with its own production system, which eliminates the need to hire an outside company to set up chairs, a stage, and A/V equipment," Spencer said. "It's also a beautiful venue, so why not let everyone enjoy it?"

The evening will begin with check-in

and dinner from 5 to 6pm. Dinner will once again be provided by Jonathon Byrd's Catering and will include fried chicken or baked tilapia for those who prefer fish or are observing Lent, along with mashed potatoes, corn, green beans, coleslaw, dinner rolls, beverages, and cherry cobbler or chocolate cake for dessert.

"Jonathon Byrd's has always been a favorite of our membership, and we're happy to have them be part of this annual event again," Spencer said.

The business meeting will follow at 6 p.m. in the Performing Arts Center auditorium and will include a question-and-answer session with the president/CEO and board chairman, presentation of reports, and the election of directors.

Voting is open to members from March 2 through March 19 at noon and can be completed online using a secure SmartHub login or in person at one of NineStar Connect's offices. Members who vote will be eligible to receive either a \$10 bill credit or dinner for themselves and their immediate family on the night of the meeting. All voting members will also be entered into a drawing for \$7,500 in cash prizes. Members do not need to be present to win.

Members planning to attend the meeting in person must RSVP online at www.ninestarconnect.smarthub.coop or at one of NineStar Connect's offices, located at 2243 E. Main St. in Greenfield or 5925 W. Broadway in McCordsville.

Members who are unable to attend in person will have the opportunity to view the meeting live on NineStarNow.com.

Spencer said providing multiple ways for members to participate reflects the cooperative's commitment to transparency and accessibility.

"Throughout the year, NineStar offers various information about the cooperative on our NineStar Now app," he said. "It only makes sense that our annual meeting is accessible in multiple ways."

"For 130 years, we've worked hard to keep our members engaged and informed about what's happening at their co-op," Spencer added. "Even as people's schedules get busier, voting participation has continued to increase. Our members appreciate that we honor tradition while embracing new tools to keep them connected."

NineStar Connect's Annual Meeting

WHEN:

Friday, March 20, 2026

WHERE:

Greenfield-Central High School Performing Arts Center

TIME:

- Check-in and dinner: 5–6 p.m.
- Business meeting 6pm

VOTING & RSVPS:

March 2–March 19

(Voting closes on March 19th at Noon)

VOTE ONLINE:

Scan the QR Code or visit ninestarconnect.smarthub.coop

VOTE IN PERSON:

- 2243 E. Main St., Greenfield (Mon-Fri 8am-5pm)
- 5985 Main St., McCordsville (Mon-Fri 8am-5pm & Sat 8am-Noon)

Cash prizes available to both in-person and online participants.

Have a question for NineStar? Submit questions to annualmeetingquestion@ninestarconnect.com by **March 10** for a chance to have them answered during the meeting.



NINESTAR LEVELS UP WITH **NATIONWIDE FIBER GAMING NETWORK**

Gamers in the NineStar community have something new to get excited about. NineStar has officially partnered with Fiber Gaming Network (FGN), a nationwide gaming platform that connects fiber internet customers from across the country for weekly esports tournaments, virtual game nights, and livestreamed events. Even better, access to Fiber Gaming Network is completely free for customers with NineStar Internet.

Through this partnership, every gamer in a NineStar household can participate at no additional cost. Players can register in advance to compete in popular titles like Fortnite, Rocket League, Minecraft, Super Smash Bros. Ultimate, Apex Legends, and more. Customers can also tune in to livestreamed events, connect with fellow gamers, and enjoy opportunities for fun giveaways and exclusive content. It is another way NineStar continues to add value to its fiber internet service.

This partnership highlights what NineStar's fiber network does best: delivering the speed and reliability gamers need for a smooth,

competitive experience. Ross Ferson, Vice President of Business Development, Innovation, and Technology at NineStar, shared that the company is excited to offer customers a unique gaming experience that fully leverages the power of NineStar's fiber network. With Fiber Gaming Network included as a benefit of NineStar Internet, customers can compete with players from across the country while enjoying seamless online performance at home.

Fiber internet plays an important role in online gaming performance. Studies show that fiber can be up to ten times faster than cable and offers lower latency, resulting in less lag and more responsive gameplay. By offering Fiber Gaming Network as a complimentary benefit to its internet subscribers, NineStar continues to reinforce its commitment to providing high quality service that supports how customers live, work, and play.

FGN is equally enthusiastic about the partnership. Robert Gilbert, co-founder of Fiber Gaming Network, noted that NineStar is uniquely positioned to be an esports leader in the community and that FGN is excited to bring added value and exciting gaming opportunities to local players.

Customers with NineStar Internet can learn more and create a free account by visiting ninstarconnect.com/fiber-gaming-network.

GAME ON! A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO JOINING FIBER GAMING NETWORK

Fiber Gaming Network offers virtual esports events featuring all your favorite games every single week. **And accounts are free for our subscribers!** Here's how to get in on the fun.

- STEP 1: CREATE YOUR FREE ACCOUNT
Go to FiberGamingNetwork.com and select **NineStar Connect** from the dropdown to register as one of our customers. Or, if you're joining via a local high school, click "Sign Up with Invite Code" to use the code provided by your school.
- STEP 2: CONNECT YOUR DISCORD
The Fiber Gaming Network Discord is where you'll find communication and details for individual gaming events.
- STEP 3: ENSURE DISCORD NOTIFICATIONS ARE TURNED ON
This is how we'll send you instructions for getting into the lobbies and notify you that it's almost time for your match. It's also the best place to ask the FGN staff any questions that arise!
- STEP 4: REGISTER FOR EVENTS IN THE FGN PORTAL
Once you've registered there, we'll generate everything you need to join and send it to you in Discord.
- STEP 5: LOG ON EARLY AND GET READY TO PLAY!
We host check-ins for weekend tournaments at the start of the event, but you can log in early for any event to send us questions and connect with fellow gamers in Discord.

Still have questions? Contact the FGN staff in Discord. We're available and always happy to help.

WE'VE GOT THE NETWORK YOU BRING THE SKILLS

>>>>

**ALL CAN PLAY.
THE BEST WILL WIN.**

GET IN THE GAME <<<<

EST 2003

JULY 26-29, 2026

AN EXCITING SUMMER CAMP FOR SIXTH GRADERS!

Campers will learn about electricity, try cool camp activities, and make new friends!

CANOEING • ROCK CLIMBING • ZIP LINING • ARCHERY • SWIMMING

NineStar
CONNECT

APPLY NOW!

Visit CampKilowatt.org to apply by May 1, 2026!

QUESTIONS?

Contact Marketing at marketing@ninstarconnect.com or 317-326-3131



NineStar Connect 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 Operation Round Up fund in the fourth quarter of 2025:

ACADEMY PLACE APARTMENTS - \$3,500.00

Funding to install building-wide wireless internet access and security equipment.

ANIMAL OUTREACH OF SHELBY COUNTY - \$1,500.00

Funds for two community accessible microchip scanning stations in Shelby County to help with lost pets.

EASTERN HANCOCK WRESTLING - \$5,000.00

Funds to help purchase new wrestling mats for the wrestling room.

LOVE INC, OF GREATER HANCOCK COUNTY - \$5,000.00

Funds to update all the computers and monitors for the staff and volunteers.

MEALS ON WHEELS OF HANCOCK COUNTY - \$10,000.00

Funds used to subsidize meal costs to those clients that can't afford the cost of daily meals.

SHARES INC. - \$10,000.00

Funds used to purchase 23 new staff computers to replace their old ones that couldn't upgrade to Windows 11.

THE CARY CENTER - \$3,750.00

To help support their new child advocacy center that provides a safe, welcoming space for abused children.

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 an application for Operation Round-up dollars, the next application deadline is April 3, 2026. Applications can be downloaded from our website at www.ninestarconnect.com under "About" and then "In the Community".

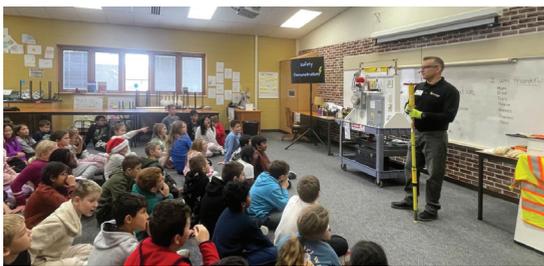
If you have any questions about the ORU program, please email OperationRoundUp@NineStarConnect.com or call 317-323-3087.

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL OF THE FOURTH QUARTER ORU RECIPIENTS!



OUT & ABOUT

THORPE CREEK



Energy Advisor Matt Strahl visited Thorpe Creek Elementary and presented two electric safety demonstrations to six classes—impacting 160 students.

VETERANS



NineStar Veterans being honored on Veteran's Day. From left to right: Rusty Hansen (U.S. Navy Reserves), Jason Warrick (U.S. Navy), Payden Boughton (U.S. Marines), Travis Short (U.S. Army National Guard), Dave McCord (U.S. Air Force), Craig Cusenz (U.S. Air Force), and Kinch Waldrep (U.S. Marines).

NOT PICTURED:
Ryan Bewley (U.S. Army), Robert Simpson (U.S. Navy), Justin Messer (U.S. Army), and Cody Lewis (U.S. Army).

OPERATION ROUND UP



Four Operation Round Up trustees completed two terms (six years of service) on the committee. Thank you to Tim Plank, Martel Plummer, John Collins, and Karl Kleinbub!

REAP



Troy Sorrell and Brandon French completed the Rural Electric Apprenticeship Program to become NineStar's newest Journeyman Linemen. Jeremy Pike, Manager of Material and Fleet, also graduated through the non-indentured program.

DONATION



Employee Bryan Smith led a fundraiser among NineStar employees to support the Hancock County Food Pantry. With NineStar matching all employee donations, we were able to donate \$6,750.00!

WESTON ELEMENTARY



Energy Advisor, Matt Strahl, visited Weston Elementary to give an electric safety demonstration. He met with three classes—reaching a total of 75 students—and taught them important tips for staying safe around electricity.

TECHNOLOGY SEMINAR



NineStar hosted a Technology Seminar that focused on cyber security.

President's Message

By Michael R. Burrow, President & CEO

NineStar Connect is a proud cooperative utility and follows the seven cooperative principles in everything it does in service of its members. The fifth principle is that of Education, Training and Information. We make efforts to educate, train and inform our members, elected representatives and staff in order for them to be better able to understand the operations of the co-op, including those things that are happening outside the co-op's local control that can also impact how the co-op provides services. Chalk this column up to one of our efforts to educate our members in 2026.

As I sit at my desk writing this column, I would note that the Indiana General Assembly is discussing legislation designed to address rising utility bills, mostly focused on the rates charged by the state's electric utilities. Over the last three years, I have been sharing my growing worries with NineStar's board of directors that politicians would eventually feel compelled to take action on electric rates given how rapidly they have been rising since 2020. Given that I reached my adulthood during the late 1970's and early 1980's, I tend to subscribe to a general belief that 'less government is better government.' Nonetheless, I cannot fault our state legislators for wanting to respond to growing constituent concerns about how quickly electric rates in the State of Indiana have been rising over the last half decade.

First, while NineStar's electric rates have increased during this same time period, I am happy to report that over the last 20 years, NineStar's rates have increased less than the rate of inflation. Most of the concern over rising electric rates cited by the General Assembly comes from investor-owned utilities who have been experiencing annual rate increases two and three times the rate of inflation. Historically, cooperative electric rates were higher than investor-owned electric utilities largely because the co-ops are smaller and serve less populated areas of Indiana. Today, with the large rate increases experienced by investor-owned utilities, we are seeing where rates between the two different electric utilities are rapidly becoming on par with one

another.

So why do Hoosiers find themselves where we are today, knowing that Indiana used to have some of the lowest electric rates in the nation? From my perspective, it is a combination of factors that have come together to create a perfect storm of sorts for both electric utilities and their ratepayers.

Indiana's historically low electric rates can be credited to a single word: Coal. As recently as 10 years ago, most of the state's electricity was generated by coal-fired generation plants. Growing concern over rising temperatures driven by atmospheric carbon in the early 2000's led to environmental regulations that effectively phased out coal-fired generation and also discouraged any new investments in technology to reduce carbon from fossil fuels generation. Today, coal generates less than half of the nation's electricity and it continues to decline, even with more favorable environmental regulations currently coming out of Washington, D.C.

Let me emphasize that I do not intend this column to attempt to take sides in the larger environmental debate over the causes of global warming and whether it is causing climate change. I would only suggest that had the environmental regulators proposed regulations that would have had a longer-term horizon, I suspect that technology and very smart people would have had the time to come up with solutions to reach that goal. My criticism with environmental regulators and their attempt to migrate to a zero-carbon energy grid was that the timetables to get there were far too short, given the long-term historical investments energy companies had made in fossil fuel generation. The cost of those generating plants are effectively amortized and baked into consumer rates based on what is considered a normal useful life of the plant. If the plant's life is cut short due to environmental regulations, the cost of the investment has to be recovered over a shorter period of time which translates to higher rates. Compound that with the rate recovery needed for new investments in greener generation to replace the carbon-based generation being retired early and you effectively get a "double-whammy" on electricity rates. Had regulators



grandfathered then current coal plants allowing utility companies to phase them out over their useful lives, it would have allowed a more orderly transition to zero-carbon generation and not created some of the rate shock many consumers are now experiencing.

But wait, there's more to this confluence of factors contributing to this perfect storm. After almost two decades of fairly flat electricity usage, we are seeing a rapid increase in electric consumption since the Covid pandemic that started off the current decade. Let's peel back the onion to try to better understand why electricity usage is increasing so much in the last 5 years.

A lot of focus has been placed on the rapid rise of data centers that are needed for artificial intelligence and national security to name the two most cited reasons for data centers. I must confess that I am very much like an average consumer when I hear that a certain data center development will use X amount of megawatts of power. It is very hard to put that into perspective to understand just how much power one of these can use. Here's a comparison that most will better understand: A data center that has been approved and is currently in development in Indiana is forecast to consume electricity equal to the output of somewhere between one and a half to two Hoover Dams. THAT is a lot of power which is why it is easy to understand why data centers have been turned into the poster child of some of our energy woes. In fairness, however, they are not the only reason for the growth in electric usage. There has been a massive effort to 'onshore' manufacturing previously sent overseas. New factories means modern manufacturing which translates to more computers and more robots that use massive amounts of electricity. Grocery stores have greatly expanded their refrigerator and freezer sections which significantly increases their electricity consumption (often 2x) as well as creating more food distribution warehouses that require massive amounts of power to stay cool. Of course, many more consumers have switched to electric vehicles for transportation and a lot of public transportation is now also electric. I could go on but what I am trying

to suggest is that we are in the midst of a electrical renaissance of sorts where multiple factors are contributing to increase electrical power usage that is occurring simultaneous to a period of time where our traditional coal-based generation is rapidly being retired and other, greener generation resources have not been able to quite keep up replacing that retired coal capacity.

Of course, if these were the only factors contributing to our current situation, I would be inclined to tell you that these are largely market forces that will be sorted out in due time. What concerns me is a more recent development that could upend the traditional utility model and have many unforeseen impacts on both the electric industry as well as all of us who use electricity, big or small.

In the last two or three years, we are seeing a huge uptick in Wall Street venture capital firms and other non-utility entities investing in power generation and transmission. Why would this be the case? First, the industry over the last few decades has become less regulated which encourages non-utilities to consider investment in both generation and transmission assets. In the past, venture capital firms would simply loan monies to utilities to build such assets but today, they are actively looking to build and own these assets for themselves – perhaps believing that the greater risk of owning and operating these assets will offset with greater returns for investors.

Consider for a moment that there are only three main manufacturers of natural gas power plants in the world today. These are the most preferred and economical replacements to coal plants. Combined, these manufacturers can only produce say 20-25 plants per year but the world need for new natural gas plants may be 35-40 plants per year. In the past, only utilities who needed more energy for their customers would compete for these limited resources but today, in addition to the utilities, there is also venture capital and non-utility entities also competing for one of these power plants. A bidding war ensues and more often than not, a rate-regulated utility will likely be outbid for an asset over a non-regulated venture capital or non-utility entity (it has been reported that Elon Musk may be looking to purchase gas generation plants to power his megafactories, for example). Regardless of who ‘wins’ these plants, in the short-term, it creates upward pressure on the price of these plants which in turn increases the cost of generating and transmitting electricity and ultimately leads to higher electricity rates.

It is within this context that I do worry about politicians or regulators looking for a quick fix. Even with the most well-intentioned legislation or regulation, I’m old enough to appreciate the law of unintended consequences. Simple fixes often lead to even bigger issues down the road. However, if I were to talk with legislator or regulator, I would encourage

them to consider tailoring a solution to address the impact of venture capital and non-utility entrants in the energy markets and how they conduct themselves when they participate in that market.

Personally, I cannot foresee a future where current electricity rates actually go down. After all, inflation impacts everyone. But I am hopeful and see a future where technological advances and markets adjust to where we do not see such rapid increases in electricity rates as we have seen over these last few years. In the meantime, know this: As cooperative members, your electricity rates are set by NineStar’s board of directors who are themselves members of the cooperative, elected by you, to look after the long term interest of the cooperative to continue to provide reliable service for members like you. They do not answer to investors or shareholders who are looking for returns on investments and dividends. They answer to members who want and need high quality, reliable service. Will NineStar electric rates go up in the future? Of course. It is not immune to inflation but I genuinely believe that cooperative utilities like NineStar are in the best position to weather our current ‘perfect storm’ impacting all ratepayers that will benefit their members in the long run.

Did you learn something from reading this? What other questions might you have? As always, I welcome your feedback or ideas of other things you might be curious about the NineStar Connect cooperative and its operations.

2026 SPRING SPORTS SEASON

Catch all the excitement from the comfort of your own home as you watch the game LIVE on NineStar Now. Sit back, relax, and take in every crack of the bat, breakaway run, and game-changing play—without leaving your couch!

Catch all the live action streaming at [NineStarNow.com](https://www.ninestarnow.com).

Game Schedule:

- **April 6** – Wapahani at Greenfield-Central – 5:30 PM
- **April 11** – Girls Softball Tournament – Teams TBD – Time TBD
- **April 13** – Hamilton S.E. at Mt Vernon – 5:30 PM
- **April 15** – Lapel at Pendleton Heights – 5:30 PM
- **April 23** – Wapahani at Shenandoah – 5:00 PM
- **April 27** – New Palestine at Knightstown – 6:00 PM
- **April 29** – New Palestine at Greenfield-Central – 6:00 PM
- **May 5** – Greenfield-Central at Pendleton Heights – 6:00 PM
- **May 7** – Mt Vernon at Pendleton Heights – 6:00 PM
- **May 12** – Greenfield-Central at Pendleton Heights – 5:30 PM
- **May 21** – Center Grove at Mt Vernon – 6:00 PM

Stay tuned for updates, highlights, and replays all season long on NineStar Now — your home for local high school softball/baseball coverage!



MEET THE CANDIDATES

VOTE MARCH 2ND - 19TH

ANNUAL MEETING

IN-PERSON

- ★ FRIDAY, MARCH 20TH
- ★ THE GREENFIELD-CENTRAL PERFORMING ARTS CENTER
- ★ DOORS OPEN AT 5 PM, BUSINESS MEETING BEGINS AT 6 PM
- ★ RSVP DURING VOTING
- ★ YOU DO NOT NEED TO BE PRESENT TO WIN PRIZES

ONLINE

- ★ VIEW THE MEETING LIVE AT 6PM ON NineStarNow.com

VOTE FOR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

VOTE MARCH 2ND - 19TH AT NOON

Vote online at ninestarconnect.smarthub.coop/

RECEIVE A \$10 BILL CREDIT OR DINNER AT THE ANNUAL MEETING AND BE ENTERED FOR \$7,500 IN CASH PRIZES.

To learn more visit ninestarconnect.com/annualmeeting.

DISTRICT 1

CHARLES KENNEDY



BACKGROUND: Charles Kennedy has been member of NineStar since 2016 and currently serves as the Director for District 1. He is Executive Vice President at Cambridge Capital, where he has managed several funds focused on financing and advising small businesses across Indiana since 1996. Prior to joining Cambridge, he spent nearly 12 years in banking. Throughout his career, Charles has built lasting relationships with business owners, mentoring and advising boards of small businesses and serving on the Indiana Small Business Development Center board, which supports emerging businesses through its ten regional offices. Charles earned a Bachelor of Science in Finance, Marketing, and Organizational Psychology from Purdue University (1982) and attended the Graduate School of Banking at the University of Wisconsin (1995-1997).

Active in his community, Charles and his wife Dianna are members of St. Simon's Catholic Church and participate in a group providing food for the Beggars for the Poor program. Charles has been a member of the Knights of Columbus for over 48 years.

Since joining the NineStar Board, Charles has held several leadership roles, including Finance Committee Chair, Secretary/Treasurer, and currently serves as Board Chairperson. He and Dianna live in Fishers, enjoying the small-community atmosphere. They have three married children—Patrick (Lauren), Elizabeth (Eric), and Thomas (Megan) and four grandchildren.

CANDIDATE STATEMENT: I am completing my fifth year as a member of the NineStar Board. Board members often have discussions that it takes at least one term to understand the complexity of NineStar's platform of services (electric, broadband, water and wastewater). During the last five years I obtained three educational certificates (NTCA Director Certification, NRECA Credentialed Cooperative Director Certificate, NRECA Board Leadership Certificate). Not only are these certifications a requirement to be eligible to continue to serve as a board member, but they also allowed me to be a stronger leader of the board.

After two years as the Chairperson of the Finance Committee and simultaneously Secretary/Treasurer of the Board, I was elected by the members of the board, as Board Chair. I am hopeful of being re-elected as a member of the board and continue as Chairperson. I am energized by the strategic thinking of the board and the forward direction of our NineStar organization.

DISTRICT 7

G. BLAIR DOWDEN



BACKGROUND: G. Blair Dowden has had an extensive career in executive leadership, having served as President and Professor at Huntington University, Vice President of Advancement at Houghton College, and as Special Assistant to the President at Taylor University.

Currently, Dr. Dowden is a consultant where he leverages decades of experience in higher education and organizational leadership to guide boards and organizations in strategic planning, board development, executive mentoring, fundraising, marketing, communications, and overall organizational assessment. Dr. Dowden holds a Doctor of Education and a Master's in Higher Education from Ball State University, as well as a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Wheaton College. He has also completed additional specialized training at Harvard University and the University of Pennsylvania.

A seasoned board member and advisor, Dr. Dowden has served on numerous local, regional, and national boards, often in officer roles, and has consulted widely with organizations across the United States on leadership and organizational effectiveness. His expertise has also been recognized at the national level, having co-authored several chapters in nationally distributed

books, published numerous articles on leadership and higher education, and provided expert testimony before a U.S. House of Representatives committee.

Dr. Dowden is an avid long distance cyclist. He has completed numerous 100+ mile rides as well as four 450+ mile rides across Iowa. Prior to cycling, he participated in running events, having completed 7 full marathons, 25+ half marathons (including the Indy Mini) and numerous shorter rides.

Dr. Dowden is actively involved in his community and faith. He attends Park Chapel Church, has participated in planning committees for service projects, and currently serves on the board of Traders Point Christian School. He has also provided consulting to organizations such as Life Choices Care Center. Throughout his career, he has served on community boards including the United Way, Chamber of Commerce, Red Cross, and has provided leadership to community planning work. Blair and his wife Chris have two children, Marli and Beau, and reside in Greenfield.

CANDIDATE STATEMENT: I want to use my expertise and background to assist my community. As a consultant, I believe I can provide effective and informed services in areas such as strategic planning, executive mentoring, facility planning, marketing, communication, leadership development, and organizational development. As a former CEO and executive, I feel that I have an understanding of business processes, issues, and decisions and can assist the CEO, executives, and NineStar Connect in making informed decisions. I desire to give my time to an innovative company that impacts the community in significant ways. I am impressed with NineStar Connect and its senior team and would be honored to serve with this outstanding group.

DISTRICT 7

JACK NEGLEY



BACKGROUND: Jack Negley has been a member of NineStar since 1987 and currently serves as the Director for District 7, a role he has held since 2020. Retired as of July 2024, Jack brings decades of technical sales and leadership experience from positions with WEG Electric, GE, Siemens, Furnas Electric, Teradyne, and Reliance Electric. Throughout his career, he specialized in technical sales of electrical equipment—including power distribution systems, transformers, and motor control—building a strong working knowledge of electrical systems and industry operations.

Jack is a graduate of Purdue University, earning a Bachelor of Science in Industrial Engineering in 1979. He has completed four director certifications through NTCA and NRECA, strengthening his expertise in cooperative governance. He currently serves on NineStar's Advocacy, Public Policy & Bylaws Committee and the People, Culture & Director Development Committee, and also represents NineStar Connect as a Director on the Wabash Valley Power Alliance Board.

Deeply committed to his community, Jack is active at Zion Lutheran Church and School in New Palestine, where he has served in numerous leadership positions, including President (two terms), Vice President, Stewardship Chairman, Elder, and Bylaws Committee Member. He also founded and served on the church's Endowment Committee. His civic involvement includes service on the Buck Creek Township Advisory Board and as Trustee, as well as membership on the Sigma Nu Purdue Alumni Board. Previously, he was a member of the Mount Vernon Optimist Club, where he ran the youth basketball program for six years. Jack and his wife, Carol, have lived at their current home since 1987. Carol recently retired after 36 years with the Greenfield School System. They have three children—Brittany, Kyle, and Kayla—all graduates of Zion Lutheran School (K-6) and Mount Vernon Schools (7-12), and all college graduates. The family resides in Greenfield.

CANDIDATE STATEMENT: I am honored to currently serve our members as a Director of NineStar and would look forward to continue working with NineStar directors, CEO, and executive staff with the goal of our members having the highest quality of life by providing you with the best utility services in electric, fiber, water and wastewater. We are experiencing economic growth and with it comes challenges as we continue to invest in infrastructure and working through opportunities to best serving our members. I believe it is critical that we invest in technologies that give us the most reliable electric power, safe and secure internet, clean water, and wastewater services at the most affordable cost to each of us. Long term strategic planning is essential to NineStar's success, keeping financial sustainability as a priority. I look forward to the opportunity to represent you as a Director for District 7.

MEET THE CANDIDATES

DISTRICT 8 DAVID BERTY



BACKGROUND: David Berty serves as Vice President at Solential Energy, where he applies his deep expertise in energy and utility systems to support innovative solutions for clients and communities. His career includes significant roles such as Project Developer at Trane, Plant/Site Engineer for Citizens Thermal and Covance, and Energy Goal Champion at Mussett Nicholas, giving him broad experience across multiple sectors of the energy industry.

David is a graduate of the Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology, where he earned a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering. He is a licensed Professional Engineer and a Certified Energy Manager, with a professional background centered on the design, construction, operation, and maintenance of electrical, water, wastewater, steam, chilled water, natural gas, and process water systems.

Active in his community, David is an engaged member of St. Michael Catholic Church, where he has served as School Commission President, Finance Committee Member, Parish Council Member, and Faith Formation Commission President. He has also contributed to youth development as a Boy Scouts/Cub Scouts Den Leader.

David and his wife, Stephanie, live in Greenfield and are the proud parents of four children: Emma, Isaac, Nash, and Lorelei.

CANDIDATE STATEMENT: After attending the Leadership Academy in 2021, hearing the guiding principles & mission of the co-op resonated with me. I feel very aligned with this mindset. I have always sought to put the customer first and I am driven to work deeper with NineStar Connect than as simply a member. I have a significant background in the energy and utility industries and I bring an expertise in complex project development and project management. The projects I work on utilize new energy technologies like renewables, battery energy storage and microgrids to help solve my customers' energy challenges. This is the type of value I hope to bring in serving the co-op as a director.

My family has made Hancock County our long-term home. NineStar is a significant part of why this county is such a wonderful place to live. I look forward to the opportunity to be part of that excellence.

DISTRICT 8 RAY KERKHOF



BACKGROUND: Ray Kerkhof has been a member of NineStar since 1975 and is completing his ninth year as a director. He currently serves as Vice Chairman, following four years of service as Chairman of the Board. Now retired after a long career as an Ag Center Manager, Ray spent many years with Harvest Land Co-op in various management and sales roles and serves as President of 3-K Farms Inc., where he remains actively involved in farming with his family.

Ray is a graduate of Greenfield-Central High School and holds a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture from Purdue University. Throughout his career, he has completed numerous management and leadership courses. His cooperative education includes an NTCA Certificate of Achievement, the NRECA Credentialed Cooperative Director (CCD) Certificate, and the NRECA Board Leadership Certificate (BLC), with completion anticipated this December. He has also participated in multiple CFC training courses and water conferences. Ray currently serves on the Trinity Park Church Finance Committee.

His civic and community involvement includes service with Farm Bureau Inc., where he is a past president; the Greenfield-Central School Board as First Vice President; the Farm Credit Mid-America Nominating Committee; the Hancock Health Foundation Board; the Hancock County Extension Board; and the Indiana Electric Cooperatives Board. He remains an active member of Trinity Park Church.

Ray and his wife, Pam, live just outside Greenfield, where they farm alongside his brother and youngest son. They have farmed continuously since Ray graduated from Purdue and continue to operate their family business, 3-K Farms Inc. The Kerkhof's have three children: Chad, Brandi, and Nick.

CANDIDATE STATEMENT: It has been an honor to represent District 8 for the past nine years and to witness the growth of NineStar and the area it serves. Every year the directors and the staff engage in strategic planning with a focus on the long-term direction of the cooperative and its investments to meet the needs of the future. This critical thought process helps in driving value and opportunities for our members not only for the present but for years to come. I believe the cooperative model lends itself to the success of NineStar where the ownership lays with the members and where the members share in its margins and its investment back to the community. I am proud of what the employees and directors of NineStar have accomplished and would welcome the opportunity to continue serving the members in the future.

AT LARGE A BRIAN MUCKERHEIDE



BACKGROUND: Brian Muckerheide is a Certified Public Accountant with extensive experience in auditing and managing nonprofit organizations. Over the past 25 years, he has held leadership positions in finance and operations, including Manager at Crowe Chizek & Company, Accounting Manager at Indiana Blood Center, Controller, CFO, and COO at Hancock Physician Network, and VP of Physician Practice Management and Strategic Finance Officer at Hancock Health.

A graduate of Ball State University with a Bachelor of Science in Accounting (1995), Brian earned his CPA license in 1998. He has served on numerous nonprofit boards and finance committees, contributing his expertise to strengthen governance and financial oversight.

Active in his community, Brian has held leadership roles with the Central Indiana Land Trust, Regreening Greenfield, Boy Scouts Troop 770, United Way of Central Indiana, St. Michael Catholic Church, and the Community Foundation of Hancock County.

Brian has lived in Hancock County since 2001, working locally since 2004, and has been an engaged member of St. Michael Catholic Church since moving to the area. Brian and his wife, Michelle, have two children, Sarah and Luke, and reside in Greenfield.

CANDIDATE STATEMENT: I am interested in serving as a director of NineStar Connect to contribute my financial expertise and commitment to community service. As a Certified Public Accountant with extensive experience in financial management, strategic planning, and organizational oversight, I understand the importance of fiscal responsibility, transparency, and long-term sustainability. I believe our cooperative plays a vital role in supporting the local economy and ensuring reliable, affordable service for all members. Throughout my career and community involvement, I have worked to strengthen trust, accountability, and collaboration within local organizations. Serving on the board would allow me to give back to the community that has given so much to me and to help guide the cooperative's future with sound financial stewardship and a member-focused perspective. I am committed to representing our members' interests with integrity, fairness, and a dedication to continued improvement.

AT-LARGE RICHARD GRIFFIN



BACKGROUND: Richard Griffin has served as a member of NineStar since 2003, representing the District At-Large. He works as a Paramedic for Community Health Network, bringing decades of experience in emergency services and public safety. Richard previously served with the Buck Creek Township Fire Department as a Firefighter Paramedic, retiring after a long and committed career.

A graduate of Greenfield-Central High School, Richard completed the Community Health Network Paramedic Program, earning his Paramedic License. His background also includes numerous certifications in firefighting, technical rescue, public safety, and education. He studied electrical engineering at IUPUI. Richard has earned the NTCA Director Core Certification, enhancing his knowledge of cooperative governance. His professional career has provided him with a strong understanding of utilities and their delivery systems.

Richard is actively involved in his community and church. He is a member of Brandywine Community Church, where he serves on the Men's Leadership Committee. He volunteers as needed for the Greenfield Community Aquatic Team (GCAT) swim club and has previously served with the Volunteer Greenfield Fire Department, led the Reboot First Responder PTSD Program, volunteered with LOVE Inc., and supported Dance East as a parent volunteer.

A lifelong resident of Hancock County, Richard has built his career, community involvement, and family life locally. He and his wife of 22 years, Carrie, founded a small business—Green Horizon Turf Care, LLC—in 2021. Richard and Carrie have one daughter, Grace, and reside in Greenfield.

CANDIDATE STATEMENT: I want to serve on the NineStar board because I believe in community, service, and working together for the common good. As a retired firefighter, serving others has always been a central part of my life. Through my experience responding to emergencies locally and serving hurricane-stricken areas, I've seen firsthand how vital reliable electricity, internet, and clean water are to people's safety and well-being. I value teamwork, integrity, and accountability—qualities essential to effective leadership. I want to use my experience and dedication to help the cooperative continue providing dependable services and support to its members. I would like to be part of a board that is and will bring a positive change to our community.

BREAKER BOX BASICS: PROTECTING YOUR HOME FROM OVERLOADS

Your home's breaker box may not be something you think about every day, but it's one of the most important safety features in your home. NineStar reminds members to understand how their breaker panel works and to recognize the warning signs of electrical overloads.

"When too much electricity runs through a circuit, the breaker is designed to trip," said Matt Strahl of NineStar. "That quick action shuts off power and prevents wires from overheating, which could otherwise lead to a fire."

Warning signs of overloaded outlets or circuits include:

- Lights that flicker, blink, or dim
- Warm outlet or switch covers
- Burning odors from outlets or switches
- Circuit breakers that trip often
- Crackling or buzzing sounds near receptacles
- Mild shock or tingling when touching appliances or switches
- Appliances or tools not running at full strength

If you notice any of these issues, check your breaker panel, usually located in the basement or garage. A tripped breaker will be in the "off" or middle position. To reset it, switch it fully to "off," then back to "on."

Knowing which rooms and appliances are on each circuit can save time and stress when something trips. NineStar suggests members take a few minutes with a notepad to map out circuits and label the breaker panel.

Extension cords may be a quick fix when outlets are limited, but heavy reliance on them often means a home needs additional outlets installed by a licensed electrician.



Source: Electrical Safety Foundation International

How to reset a breaker safely

When a breaker trips, your electrical system is doing its job to protect you from an overload. Here's how to safely reset it:

- Unplug or turn off devices in the affected room.
- Open your breaker panel and locate the switch in the "off" or middle position.
- Flip the breaker fully to "off," then back to "on."

If the same breaker keeps tripping, call a licensed electrician to investigate.

Source: Electrical Safety Foundation International

Extension cord safety 101

Extension cords are meant for temporary use. Using extension cords correctly can reduce the risk of overheating and fire.

KEEP THESE TIPS IN MIND:

- Keep cords away from water.
- Show older kids how to plug in safely and never yank cords from the wall.
- Avoid overloading cords with too many devices.
- Replace cords that are cracked or damaged.
- If your home relies heavily on extension cords, it may be time to add more outlets.

Source: Electrical Safety Authority, Complete Electrical Solutions

REAL TIME PRICING REMINDER

As a reminder, NineStar electric members are on a Real Time Pricing electric rate structure. The time-based rate defines on-peak, off-peak and, super off-peak hours. To learn more, check out these frequently asked questions, below.

REAL TIME PRICING FAQ'S

Q. What is Real Time Pricing?

A. Real Time Pricing is the time-based rate for Residential and General Service electric members. The time-based rate defines on-peak, off-peak and super off-peak hours. The charge for electricity is higher during on-peak hours than it is during off-peak or super off-peak hours. NineStar on-peak hours are 5pm-8pm Monday – Friday.

Q. Why charge a time-based rate?

A. NineStar is a distribution utility. NineStar purchases power from a generation and transmission provider. The charge for energy during the on-peak hours is higher than it is during the off-peak or super off-peak hours. A time-based rate passes those higher costs on to those members that use energy during the on-peak hours.

Q. How does when I use electricity affect my bill?

A. Households that can decrease energy usage during the on-peak hours and move energy usage to the off-peak or the super-off-peak hours can minimize the impact on their electric bill.

Q. What holidays are excluded from on-peak hours for Real Time Pricing?

A. New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Friday after Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, and Christmas Day.

Q. Do I have another option?

A. Yes. Members can choose the Peak Time Savings rate. This was formerly known as Time of Use. The Peak Time Savings rate allows members the opportunity for greater savings on their electric bill if they minimize electric usage during the on-peak hours.

Q. Can I stay on Budget billing?

A. Yes

Q. Can I monitor my usage?

A. Yes. Members can log into SmartHub and see graphs of their usage broken down by the hour and grouped by on-peak, off-peak and super off-peak usage.

Q. Can I still use my appliances during the on-peak hours?

A. Members do not have to change their household electricity usage. Members can still use appliances, lighting, electronics, etc. at any time. The cost of using those electric devices will just be more from 5pm-8pm Monday-Friday. To learn more about Real Time Pricing, visit ninestarconnect.com!

