



Cooperative scholarships available!

As high school graduation inches closer, the frequency increases of hearing, “So, where are you going to college, and what will you be studying?” Probably a bigger question that arises, “How are you going to pay for it?” Scholarships are a great way to help relieve some of the financial responsibility. Past Shelby Electric Cooperative (SEC) scholarship recipient Samantha McCue reminds high school seniors to not procrastinate. “Apply for as many scholarships as you can. Make sure you include all your high school activities as well as activities outside of the classroom, highlighting all your skills and abilities.”

The cooperative will once again award three academic scholarships in the amount of \$1,000 each. Eligible students are sons or daughters of any current SEC member who is receiving electric service from the cooperative at the time the scholarship application is submitted. Students must be high school seniors pursuing a college education in the United States. These \$1,000 scholarships may be used for educational costs at any two-year or four-year accredited college or university, including vocational/technical schools.

Recipients are chosen based on academic and community accomplishments, character, and financial need as demonstrated in the application and essay.

The deadline for receipt of the completed applications for 2023 graduates is Tuesday, March 7. The three scholarship winners will be notified by May and announced at the cooperative’s 85th Annual Meeting of Members on Friday, June 9.

In 2022, the recipients were Alexis Kent of Taylorville, Lizzie Schafer of Owaneco, and Tucker Tippitt of Taylorville. “Offering these scholarships gives us an opportunity to acknowledge the outstanding youth in our service territory and allows us to give back to the communities we serve,” noted Faith Wheeler, who coordinates the program for the cooperative.

Another past recipient, Jodi (Miller) Clark, urges students to, “Always give 100 percent of yourself to the task at hand; whether it is homework, extracurricular activities, your job, or writing essays for scholarships like this one.”

Scholarship guidelines, official rules, and applications can be obtained by visiting SEC’s website, shelbyelectric.coop, and clicking on the “Community” tab. They are also available from area high school guidance counselors. Please call the cooperative at 217-774-3986 if you would like more information about this scholarship opportunity.

The deadline is ahead, so do not delay! Now is the time to start filling out scholarship applications before it is too late.

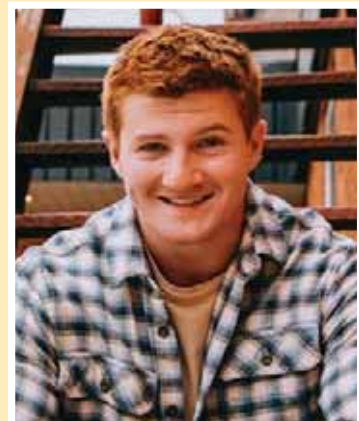
2022 Scholarship Recipients



Alexis Kent



Lizzie Schafer



Tucker Tippitt

It's a car, it's a bird ... no, it's a squirrel?

What do cars, birds and, yes, even squirrels have in common? They can all trigger a power outage. We can all understand when Mother Nature packs a punch to the electrical system, and we can even understand about a vehicle hitting a pole causing a power outage ... but animals?

Have you ever wondered what caused that occasional blinking of your lights or thought to yourself, "Hey, why did the power go off, it's nice outside?" The answer very well could be an animal. As the chart indicates, 11% of cooperative power interruptions can be blamed on animals.

Animal attraction to power infrastructure hurts animals and leaves our members in the dark. Clean up, recovery, and restoring power costs utilities nationwide between 15 and 18 million dollars a year, estimates Tyco Electronics, a utility equipment firm.

Squirrels are the main culprits, but they are not alone. Opossums, raccoons, foxes, snakes, birds, and other animals can also trigger outages.

Electricity seeks the fastest route to the ground. Utility pole insulators



keep power flowing safely in your neighborhood, but unwitting squirrels offer high-voltage electricity a way around insulators. If a squirrel does not jump far enough, a powerful electric current, up to 12,500 volts, makes the

squirrel a conduit to the ground. The squirrel does not survive.

If a squirrel's body falls to the ground, the power blinks but stays on. If it falls into equipment, like a transformer, safety measures shut off power.

Like squirrels, birds may get hurt and cause power interruptions as high-voltage electricity looks for a path to the ground. You might wonder how can a bird cause a power outage because you see them sitting on the lines all the time. As long as both of the bird's feet are on the same wire (or wires of the same voltage) the bird is safe. The current does not have anywhere else to go, so the electricity will not pass through the bird—it stays on the path of least resistance, the wire. If a bird pecks at a bug on the pole or insulator it would create the path to ground, killing the bird and creating a power interruption.

So, the next time your lights blink or the power goes out on a nice sunny day, you might have a better idea of who was the culprit.



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Causes of Co-op Power Interruptions

Power outages may be caused by many unknown factors but bad weather remains the primary cause.

Per number of interruptions	
Weather	31%
Equipment	14%
Maintenance	12%
Animals	11%
Planned Outages	7%
Other	7%
Power Supply	5%
Public	5%

Source: NRECA

Winter weather and your propane tank

Winter can produce some of the most magnificent scenery, but it can also be challenging. Accumulated snow and ice have the potential to damage your propane system. While you can not always predict snowstorms or hazardous weather conditions, you can take safety measures to protect your equipment during and after winter storms.

Keep snow and ice from accumulating on propane equipment

Snow or ice accumulation can potentially cause parts of your propane system to crack or break, resulting in a gas leak. It is your responsibility to make sure that all propane pipes, valves, regulators, and tanks are clear of snow and ice. Gently brush away snow or ice that has accumulated around the tank, meter, regulator, and any other piping. Do this using a broom or by hand. If you must use a shovel, use extreme caution around all equipment. If you notice any snow or ice buildup that cannot be removed easily, contact Shelby Energy Company. DO NOT attempt to remove snow or ice by kicking or hitting any equipment.

Be alert to snow buildup on rooftops and other areas

Frequently check where snow or ice collects on your roof, structure, or nearby trees, and clear it if you believe it might fall on any part of your propane system. Never shovel snow off of roofs and onto propane equipment. Heavy accumulations of snow or ice falling on tanks, regulators, meters, piping, or valves may cause damage that could result in a gas leak.



Keeping your propane tank free from snow and ice will allow your propane provider safe and easy access to service your tank.

Keep vents clear

Appliance vents and chimney flues must ALWAYS be clear of snow or ice. Some homes may have “direct” vents, which are close to the ground. Improper venting can cause carbon monoxide to become trapped in your home, resulting in serious illness or even death.

Clear driveways and pathways to propane tanks

Please remember that a propane delivery truck needs at least a 10-foot-wide path to be able to deliver fuel to your home. Also, keep the tank area and

a path to the tank free of snow. When plowing, snow blowing, or shoveling, do not push or pile snow around your tank, meter, regulator, or piping.

Talk to your contractors

If you use a snow removal service, make sure that the service knows the location of all propane equipment on the property. Instruct them to keep their equipment clear of all parts of your propane system. If your snow removal service shovels snow off your roof, instruct them to never shovel snow onto any part of the propane system.



Propane safety tips



Shelby Energy Company

- Handle any propane-powered equipment cautiously and always follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- Cylinder tanks for equipment such as stoves and ovens must be located outside of the home.
- Never store or use propane gas cylinders larger than one pound inside the home.
- Never operate a propane-powered gas grill inside the home.
- Have propane gas equipment inspected periodically by a professional for possible leaks or malfunctioning parts.
- Carefully follow the manufacturer's instructions when igniting a pilot light.
- If you smell a strong odor of gas, leave the area immediately, call 911 from outside the home, and then call your propane provider.

Shelby Energy Company is an LP gas subsidiary of Shelby Electric Cooperative.

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REAL LIFE REAL POWER

Getting Real with Marla and air purifiers

The winter doldrums are in the air, and that is not all! Your home's air has the potential for holding and circulating miniscule particles of mold spores, pet dander, dust mites and their debris, smoke, bacteria, and more. It is enough to make you disgusted and potentially sick.

According to the EPA, Americans spend approximately 90 percent of their time indoors on average. People who are most susceptible to the adverse effects of air pollution tend to spend even more time indoors. Additionally, the indoor concentration of some pollutants is two to five times higher than outdoor concentrations.

An air purifier is a tool for removing airborne particles.

Unfortunately, it will not magically clean every surface. Particles that settle on the floor, furniture, and other surfaces should be removed with a vacuum, mop, and by dusting with a cloth that traps the dust.

Keep in mind that air purifiers do not fix the cause of mold and musty odors. Mold is caused by a water or moisture problem in the home. A mold problem must be solved by getting rid of the source of moisture and cleaning up the mold.

We all know that cleaning is not a one-and-done solution. It must be performed regularly and an air purifier can help improve or maintain air quality in between cleanings. If you are considering purchasing an air purifier, consider the following tips:



- Look for a unit that uses a high-efficiency particulate air filter (HEPA).
- Find an air purifier designed for filtering pollutants specific to your needs (removing pet dander, pollen, dust, or cigarette smoke).
- Purchase the right size unit for the area it will be located. You will need to know the square feet of the room(s).
- Choose an ENERGY STAR-certified room air purifier. These units are over 25% more energy-efficient than standard models.

All air purifiers require periodic cleaning and filter replacement to function properly. Some units have a filter-replacement indicator light. Follow manufacturer's recommendations on maintenance and replacement.

Take heart! An outing in the fresh outdoor air will soon be possible, regardless of what the groundhog sees. I wonder if he has an air purifier in his burrow?

*~Marla Foor,
Communication Specialist*

Sources: consumerreports.org, epa.gov

