



It has been an eventful year

By **JACK HAMBLIN** | Manager, Southeast Electric Cooperative

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No one knew what we were in for when 2020 came to southeast Montana just like every other year had. We're used to welcoming each new year with a laid-back, calm assurance that this year would be just about like every other year. No one knew. We couldn't foresee a worldwide pandemic that would affect even our sheltered way of life here. All of us had to adjust. Now, as a new year approaches, we're forced to look at things a little differently, without that same calm assurance we've enjoyed for so long. Everyone is wondering if things will ever return to normal or what that new normal will be.

With the pandemic came a host of new regulations to prevent its spread. At Southeast Electric Cooperative (SECO), we did our very best to comply with these regulations while maintaining the high level of reliability you expect as members. Our lobby was temporarily closed and employees practiced social distancing as best we could. We realized this would be an inconvenience for those of you who came to the office, but we were pleased with your understanding and patience. The office was opened again when regulations allowed.

Our outside crews continued much as they had before, doing their best to keep up on construction and maintenance activities, and completing a couple large projects in a timely manner. Our pole changeout program continued uninterrupted with the help of contractors. We were able to respond to outages and power interruptions quickly and efficiently. All SECO personnel have stepped up and performed admirably during this difficult time.

An unexpected effect of the pandemic



was the associated drop in oil production in the region. As a result, our pipeline pump loads dropped off and associated revenues decreased by almost 40 percent for a short period. Those loads have been increasing gradually and are expected to return fully in the near future. As a precaution, and to avoid the potential of a rate increase, the board decided to curtail payment of capital credit refunds to all members for 2020 and to postpone several projects and planned purchases. Now, as things are slowly returning to normal, we expect to eliminate these curtailments for 2021.

Now, with COVID-19 cases increasing, earlier precautions are in place again. And we are prepared, should more strict mandates be put in effect. Through a government grant, all office staff have been set up with computer stations at home, should that become necessary. Outside crews are reporting to work in staggered shifts to maintain social distancing requirements. All customers who must come into the office are required to wear masks, as are all employees who receive them. Although inconvenient, we are doing all we can to comply with current regulations and keep our employees and the public as safe as possible.

Everyone is tired of COVID-19. We are saddened by the loss of income and jobs, and mostly for the loss of loved ones at this time. But we are heartened by the fact that we are all in this together, and we have always rallied to each other's aid when needed. And we'll continue to do just that. We are united as a board and employees to "keep the lights on" for all SECO members. RM

FROM EVERYONE AT
SOUTHEAST ELECTRIC

MERRY CHRISTMAS

AND HAPPY NEW YEAR

Youth Tour replaced with Scholarship Essay Contest, get your entry in soon

Montana's electric cooperatives have elected not to participate in The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) 2021 Youth Tour to Washington, D.C., due to the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic.

However, the Youth Tour essay contest for 2021 will still go on, with the statewide winner receiving a \$2,500 scholarship to a college or trade school. In addition, Southeast Electric Cooperative will also offer a \$1,500 scholarship to its winner.

The topic for this year's essay is: *How has reliable electricity benefitted you and your community through the COVID-19 pandemic?*

The criteria to be eligible for the Youth Tour Essay Scholarship is:



- The student must be a junior or senior in high school in the fall of 2021 (currently a sophomore or junior).
- The student and/or parent or guardian must be served by an electric cooperative.
- The essay must include a cover page with the student's name, address and telephone number.
- **Submit the application and**

essay to your electric cooperative no later than Dec. 18, 2020.

The scholarship will be awarded when the student registers for college and provides Southeast Electric with proof of their registration.

If you have any questions, please call Vicki Fix at 406-775-8773 or email vfix@seecoop.com.



Daylee Hanson

The Southeast Electric Board of Directors decided to award 2020 Youth Tour Essay Winner Daylee Hanson with a \$1,500 Scholarship as well. Daylee is a senior at Baker High School, and the daughter of Kristopher and Meghann Hanson of Baker. 

HAVING A HARD TIME PAYING WINTER HEATING BILLS?

ASSISTANCE IS AVAILABLE
OCTOBER 1 TO APRIL 30

Southeast Electric Cooperative Inc. offers energy assistance in conjunction with the Action for Eastern Montana (AEM) LIEAP program.

DON'T BE LEFT OUT IN THE COLD - CONTACT SECO OR AEM TODAY!

CONTACT INFORMATION:
SECO ENERGY ASSISTANCE - Vicki Fix 1-406-775-8762
LIEAP & ENERGY SHARE - 1-800-227-0703/406-377-3564



**Know what's below.
Call before you dig.**

*Southeast Electric
will be closed
December 25, 2020
and
January 1, 2021*

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year
from our family to yours!

