



Warm Homes, Warm Hearts is an impactful Year-Round Program!

If you're in a position to help your neighbors during these challenging times, consider making a donation to the Warm Homes, Warm Hearts year-round utility assistance program. BEMC will match all donations, up to \$50,000 annually, doubling the impact of your generosity.

The funds are administered by Brunswick Family Assistance and the Columbus County Department of Aging, who distribute them to those in need across our service area.

Donations can be made by mail to *Warm Homes, Warm Hearts, PO Box 826, Shallotte, NC 28459*. Please do not enclose the donation with your electric bill payment.



BFA's Stephanie Bowen with a board full of client thank-you's

"As the cost of living goes up, it is getting harder and harder for folks to make ends meet, and providing a fallback in times of crisis can make all the difference. We use Warm Homes, Warm Hearts donations to help people with their utility bills so that they can get through a tough time and get back on their feet. On behalf of our clients, we are so grateful for the Warm Homes, Warm Hearts program, and the generosity of BEMC members."

Stephanie Bowen, Executive Director of Brunswick Family Assistance



Because You Want to Know...



Each month we'll answer a question that has been on a member's mind, because we bet you might also want to know. Send your questions to brookes.versaggi@bemc.org.

Q I've heard your Community Solar Garden panels are sold out. If it's true, can I get on a waiting list?

A Yes, the 738 solar panels at our Community Solar Gardens on Highway 17 in Bolivia and at the Peacock Substation in Chadburn are fully subscribed by members. The cost is \$3.50/ month per panel, and participating members receive a bill credit for the amount of energy their panel(s) generate, which will vary monthly. We also offer a full subscription for \$537 upfront, with the same bill credit. We are accepting names for a waiting list, please visit bemc.org/community-solar to be placed on the list.

Power in numbers

If 1,500 of us reduce our energy usage during a Beat the Peak event we could save more than \$100,000 in monthly wholesale power costs.

• MEMBER SPOTLIGHT •

Time-of-Use Rate Option

The Time-of-Use (TOU) rate option offers you a lower rate for electricity when demand on our system is low, balanced with a higher rate when demand on our system is high. You save money by shifting your energy consumption to times when our membership is using less. You're also helping us reduce peak demand, which reduces our wholesale power costs and benefits us all. Here's one member household's experience.

"Around three years ago I saw the Time-of-Use rate option on the website and decided to do some research because I'm always up for new ways to save. I talked with James Green at BEMC about it, and it turns out he had been on it for a while. He told us how he made it work for him and said that if we could be diligent in shifting

"It sounded like it (TOU) might work for me and my wife, so we signed up. On average, we've been saving about 20 percent on our electric bill each year ever since."

our usage away from peak times, and adjusted our thermostat by a few degrees during peak, we'd lower our bill. It sounded like it might work for me and my wife, so we signed up. On average, we've been saving about 20 percent on our electric bill each year ever since.

When I first told my neighbors they could hardly believe it, they thought I was kidding them! But it really is working for us. It's not for everybody, but if you can consistently do some simple but important things, you might save money.

"Start by knowing when rates are the highest, which,



Member Dale Hall of Ocean Isle Beach.

in the summer, are weekdays from 2 p.m. – 6 p.m. Then, install a programmable thermostat, and program it to adjust the temperature by three to four degrees during that timeframe. Next, put a timer on your hot water heater, and set it not to cycle during peak hours as well. Finally, put off doing laundry and running the dishwasher until after 10 p.m., when rates are the very cheapest. We also put off cooking until after 6 p.m. If it's discretionary, don't do it during peak hours, and if you can, do it after 10 p.m. In the winter the highest rates are from 6 a.m. – 9 a.m., so you'll need to reset your thermostat and water heater timer, and adjust your habits accordingly, but doing laundry and dishes after 10 p.m. is still the same. It just becomes part of your lifestyle, and it's an option we really enjoy." Dale Hall

For more information, visit bemc.org/time-of-use, call (800) 842-5871, or stop by any office with questions and to enroll.



Considering Home Solar? *We're Here to Help!*

If you're thinking about pursuing a home solar installation, remember to count on BEMC, your trusted energy partner, to work with you to navigate the process.

One of the first steps when considering home solar could be to give us a call, so we can offer our expertise. We can help you decide what's best for your unique situation and provide you with our specific installation requirements that make sure the grid stays safe and reliable for all co-op members.

We are a leader among North Carolina electric co-ops in rooftop-mounted solar, and we're here to help you make informed decisions that maximize your solar investment. Here are a few frequently asked questions you may find helpful.

Where do I start?

A good place to begin is at bemc.org/home-solar. You'll find a description and diagram that explain how home solar works, whether

rooftop or ground-mounted. Then, gain a deeper understanding of how you use electricity by logging into the free SmartHub app, and look at your usage by the day, week and month. If you think it's time to talk to a solar company, please consider calling us first. We'll give you all the information you need about our rates and interconnection requirements, so you can have an informed discussion with them. Solar installers might be missing important facts and details specific to our co-op, and they'll need that information to give you an accurate financial overview.

How would I be compensated for my solar generation?

We offer Net Metering. When your home uses more energy than your solar

installation produces, it will draw from the grid and run through your electric meter, just like normal. When your solar installation produces more energy than your home needs, the amount of excess energy will be captured as it passes through your meter and is delivered to the BEMC grid. Your monthly bill will reflect a deduction for the energy you drew from the grid and a credit for what you contributed back; you are responsible for the "net" difference. While some co-ops pay a wholesale rate for home-generated solar energy, at BEMC we compensate our members for their contributions at the full retail rate – or the same amount we bill you when you draw power from the grid. It's important to note that most homes, however, consume the majority, if not all the energy generated by their solar array.



EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT:

Cindy Caron

I was hired in 2006 as a Customer Service Representative in the Call Center, where I learned so much about how the co-op works and the importance of interacting with members.

In 2011, the Data Processing department needed a hand with issuing Capital Credits, and I “caught the bug,” eventually becoming a Member Accounts Specialist. My focus now is on



Cindy Caron, Member Accounts Specialist

helping members with our Weatherization Loan program, which provides low-interest loans to members for qualifying energy efficiency projects.

It’s really gratifying to spend each

day making the loan process as simple as possible for our members. Often they’re experiencing unnecessarily high bills, but aren’t sure how to pay for the improvements that will save them money each month. Sometimes they unexpectedly need a new heat pump or water heater, which can be a shock to a monthly budget. Either way, I handle each unique situation personally, and really enjoy giving them the attention they deserve during what can be a stressful time. I think it’s so important that our members have a specific person they can call directly and talk to – after all, it’s their co-op!

Updating Your Contact Information is Quick, Easy and Important!



Do we have your most recent mobile phone number and email address? If not, please consider emailing info@bemc.org or calling (800) 842-5871 and updating our records. Why is it important? Two reasons:

- If the mobile phone you use to report an outage is the one we have associated with your account, it can speed up the restoration process. Our system can automatically locate you.
- If we have your email address we can send you periodic emails containing important information and updates.

Thanks for helping us serve you better!

TRUE or FALSE?

Keeping the thermostat temperature constant while you’re away saves more energy than setting it higher or lower when you leave and come back.

False: When you leave for the day, set your thermostat a few degrees lower if using heat, and higher if using air conditioning. It requires much less energy to heat your home back up or cool it back down when you get home than it does to keep it at the target temperature all day long. Better yet, invest in a programmable thermostat, so you arrive home to a comfortable temperature and still save energy while you’re away.



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