

Bedford Rural Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

BEDFORD REC

P.O. Box 335
Bedford, PA 15522
814-623-5101

Email: support@bedfordrec.com
Website: www.bedfordrec.com

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President & Allegheny Director

Ronald W. Wilkins
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New Paris, Manns Choice and
Schellsburg Boroughs

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Travis L. Wigfield

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South Woodbury Twps.

Attorney

James R. Cascio

OFFICE HOURS

Monday through Friday
7:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

You Get the Credit



BROOKS SHOEMAKER

BEDFORD RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE is not like other utilities. As a cooperative member, you are not a customer; you are an owner of the cooperative. We operate the cooperative on a not-for-profit basis, and one benefit of membership involves the allocation of net income, or margins, at the end of each year as patronage capital credits. They are proportionally allocated — based on kilowatt-hour (kWh) usage for a particular year — to all members who received service that year.

Once capital credits are allocated, they are held by the cooperative as equity and used as a resource to rebuild aging infrastructure, increase capacity, maintain reliability, and operate the cooperative. This helps keep your rates low and your service reliable. Those monies are then returned, or retired (paid out), at the board of directors' discretion. Capital credits retirement is based on a number of factors, the most important of which is the cooperative's overall financial condition.

In December 2023, Bedford REC returned \$1.5 million in capital credits to current and former members. If you are reading this *Penn Lines* article, you received a credit on your bill, while those who have moved off our system received a check. This is the 10th consecutive year the retirement has exceeded \$1 million.

The cooperative has returned capital credits annually for more than 40 years. The amount has totaled more than \$27.1 million. Returning capital credits to members is a practice unique to the cooperative business model and represents one of the seven cooperative principles: members' economic participation. The board of directors and employees take pride in providing you with the most affordable, reliable, and safe electric service possible.

Rate change

During the final months and weeks of 2023, Bedford REC employees worked diligently on budgets and forecasts for 2024. As you know, virtually every aspect of today's cost of living has risen significantly since 2021. Our primary goal is always to minimize the effects of potential rate increases while maintaining cost-effective service you can count on every day.

From the gas pump to the grocery store, we've all seen costs escalate significantly since our last distribution rate increase in 2020. We are no different here at the co-op. As always, we strive to minimize rate changes. However, supply chain disruptions, politically driven changes in energy policy, wars in Israel and Ukraine, and fossil fuel prices have resulted in cost increases and inflationary pressures in every sector of our business. Our industry-specific costs have increased more than 40% since 2021 — that's a staggering amount!

Unfortunately, we have no choice but to increase our rates. The change took effect Jan. 1, and it will be reflected on the bill you receive in early February. The base charge for residential and seasonal member will increase \$4 per month. For the majority of our members, that means the charge will increase from \$29 to \$33. For residential members with three-phase service, the charge will go from \$42 to \$50.

Our energy charge has also increased from \$0.0278 to \$0.0298. For the average residential member who uses 1,000 kWh per month, the bill will increase from \$135.99 to \$141.99, a 4.4% increase. Our small general service and general commercial service rates have also increased, with base charge increases of \$8 and \$13, respectively, and a

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There's No Place Like Home

JENNA REFFNER, OFFICE ASSISTANT

RISA (MILLER) AARONSON GREW UP on Smoky Ridge Road in Bedford County's Juniata Township. Her parents, Kevin and Tara Miller, worked hard to provide for their children. They passed those values on to their kids, teaching them hard work and perseverance pay off.

Risa majored in respiratory therapy at the University of Pittsburgh Johnstown. She wanted to be close to home while in school but also have some independence. Her first job out of college was at Geisinger Medical Center in Danville. She wanted the opportunity to grow and learn at a Level 1 trauma center.

"Danville is a lot like Bedford," she says. "It has one main street straight through the heart of it."

She planned to work there for two years and stayed for six. Just two weeks into the job, she helped deliver quintuplets. She decided to continue at the children's hospital, helping babies and toddlers in the neonatal

intensive care unit (NICU).

"I quickly found that it takes a special person to handle that sort of heartbreak," Risa recalls.

After moving to the adult ICU, she grew up quickly watching Level 1 traumas — critical injuries such as gunshots, stab wounds or burns — come through the emergency room door.

Crazy ideas and life changes

Risa met her future husband, Steve, while they were out with friends. Their dates took place in the Danville area, going to their favorite brewery and riding the ski lift at Knoebels Amusement Resort. They enjoyed hiking the high peaks of the Adirondack Mountains. One of their favorite places to visit was Belmar, N.J. They were married on the beach there in 2014. A few years into their marriage, they were joined by Ella (now 5) and Carter (now 3). Both were complicated pregnancies, and the babies were born premature.

Eventually, the couple moved to Steve's hometown of Philadelphia. Risa worked in respiratory therapy and critical medicine in the Lehigh Valley Health Network in Allentown for seven years.

In 2020, she was working in the ICU while dealing with her own high-risk pregnancy, which required multiple hospitalizations, when word of the pandemic started. The first confirmed case in Pennsylvania was in Montgomery County, where they lived. Soon, Risa was treating COVID-19 patients, and it all began to take a toll.

"I'll never forget coming home from work one day in June, and my husband saying, 'Let's sell our house,'" Risa recalls, thinking Steve was crazy. But the real estate market was hot and interest rates were low. Steve was able to work from home. His parents had moved to Florida full time, and Risa's parents were back in Bedford. She was excited to return to her hometown, where the couple are members of Bedford Rural Electric Cooperative.

Risa started working at UPMC Altoona a few days a week.

"I was used to dealing with trauma, but COVID-19 was a whole different beast of the unknown," says Risa, who lost many work friends to the pandemic. "My husband needed a better wife, and my kids needed a better mom."

Risa also needed a change, and Steve gave her the backbone she needed to make it. She interviewed for a job at Omni Bedford Springs Resort and was hired to work in the activities office and at the front desk of the spa. She



FAMILY FOCUSED: Bedford Rural Electric Cooperative members Steve and Risa Aaronson hold their children, Ella and Carter, for a family photo.



DATE NIGHT: In this 2023 photo, Risa and Steve Aaronson enjoy a drink together in Risa's hometown of Bedford.

booked spa appointments and other reservations for guests to customize their stays. Risa also began to immerse herself in all the happenings of downtown Bedford so she could be more knowledgeable about the community with guests visiting the resort. Eventually, she left her job in health care completely.

Now in a leadership role at the spa, Risa says the spa saved her emotionally and mentally.

Opening the door to contentment

Risa wanted to continue serving her community and those around her. She reached out to Howard Hanna Bardell Realty to see what her first steps would be to earn a real estate sales license. She passed her test four months later and started her journey. Risa credits Stephanie Cardwell and Ashley Magruder of Omni Bedford Springs and Sean and Meghan Bardell of Howard Hanna Bardell Realty for taking a chance on her.

"I love to show houses," she says, "because the minute you turn the door knob and step inside, you're in a different world than the one you left on the doorstep."

Most important, Risa is able to devote time to being a mom and wife.

"Growing up in the 80s and 90s, in general, was probably the best, right?" Risa says.

She remembers spending the majority of her time outside with her sister and brother, Kayla and Kyle, and wants her kids to have the same experience. She describes her daughter, Ella, as a "girly girl" who loves playing outside. She recently tried soccer and loves it.

"She's intelligent and inquisitive, but full of sparkle and shine," Risa says.

Risa's son, Carter, loves playing outside in the dirt and with Lightning McQueen cars. Carter has a special relationship with Risa's dad, Kevin, who would rock him for hours when he was a baby. Even though Steve's parents aren't from around here, they try to see the children as much as possible.

Risa and Steve also love taking their kids fishing at Red Oak Lake and Shawnee. They make lots of trips to local ice cream shops year-round. The kids beg to go to Holiday Nights of Lights at the Bedford County Fairgrounds almost every night of the holiday season. Ella and Carter also love visiting the Bedford Springs Resort and Juniata Trading Company.

Risa loves and appreciates Bedford for everything it has to offer. She encourages everyone to take a stroll downtown.

"I think you'll be surprised just how much our hometown charm shines in the store fronts," she says.

If you're looking to purchase or sell a home in the Bedford area, contact Risa at 814-977-7994. She looks forward to sharing that hometown charm with you. 🏡



MONUMENTAL MOMENTS: Bedford Rural Electric Cooperative members Risa and Steve Aaronson hike through the high peaks of the Adirondack Mountains.

NON-TRADITIONAL STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP

Bedford Rural Electric Cooperative will award four \$1,500 scholarships to non-traditional students whose primary residence is served by the cooperative.

For an application, click on "Scholarship Info" under the "Member Services" tab at bedfordrec.com. Applications are also available at the office.

All applications and required information must be postmarked by March 1, 2024.

**Mail application to:
Bedford Rural Electric Cooperative
P. O. Box 335
Bedford, PA 15522**

HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS

Bedford Rural Electric Cooperative will award four \$1,500 scholarships to seniors whose parents' or guardians' primary residence is served by the cooperative.

For an application, click on "Scholarship Info" under the "Member Services" tab at bedfordrec.com. Applications are also available at the office.

All applications and required information must be postmarked by March 1, 2024.

**Mail application to:
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FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER & CEO

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\$0.002 kWh increase.

At Bedford REC, our members enjoy certain rights customers don't have with investor-owned utilities. For instance, you can choose to run for a seat on our board of directors or serve on one of our committees. Each member has a vote in the annual election for the board candidates, all of whom live and work in the areas we serve.

Many people don't understand the various ways their membership in a cooperative affects their rates. Our rates are based on two main components — the actual cost of the wholesale power we buy (generation) and the cost for us to get that power to you (distribution). Our power supplier, Allegheny Electric Cooperative, Inc. (Allegheny), sets our wholesale power rates. Since we have a seat on Allegheny's board of directors, we ensure our power supplier works hard to keep rates low while guaranteeing a stable supply of electricity.

The distribution component is the cost for us to get power to you. It

includes all other operational costs, such as poles, wires, substations, maintenance of trucks and buildings, employee costs, and costs associated with keeping and maintaining our records.

One of the biggest advantages of being served by a cooperative is that we work only for you; there are no stockholders expecting dividends. Our primary goal is to provide you with economical, reliable service. Our rates are set to provide enough money to pay our operating expenses, make debt-service payments and provide an emergency reserve. We also collect some money, which is figured into your rates, for capital improvements. This funding helps to finance many of the expensive capital improvement projects we undertake each year to ensure our system is not only properly maintained but also delivering reliable service. Any profit (or margins) at the end of each year is allocated to each customer account as patronage capital. Patronage capital represents your investment in the cooperative and its assets. 📍

BROOKS SHOEMAKER
GENERAL MANAGER & CEO

OUTAGE REPORTING

In case of an outage...

- 1 Check your fuses or circuit breakers.
- 2 Check with your neighbors, if convenient, to see if they have been affected by the power failure.
- 3 Call the 24-hour number, 814-623-7568, OR call 800-808-2732* during office hours.

**(Please help us save money – only use this number if toll charges apply.)*

Please give the person receiving the call your name as it appears on your bill, your telephone number and your map number, if known. Any specific information about the outage will also be helpful in pinpointing the problem.

**To report an outage call:
814-623-7568**

During widespread power outages, many members are calling to report power failures. You may receive a busy signal, or in certain cases, your call may go unanswered. This occurs in after-hours outages when the office is not fully staffed. Please be patient and try again in a few minutes.