

May 2021

Alabama LIVING

South Alabama
Electric
Cooperative



Powerful duo
*Johns and Senn grow into
new foreman positions*

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SAEC foremen Blane Senn and Jamie Johns have 60 years of combined experience on the job. The veteran SAEC employees reflect on what it takes to be an SAEC lineman. See story, page 8.



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Making moves

David Bailey, General Manager

As you read this article, we're all getting ready for the start of summer and the end of the school year. But here at South Alabama Electric Cooperative, we can see the light at the end of another tunnel that has been months, if not years, in the making. No, that light isn't an oncoming train, but the completion of your new cooperative building.

At the moment, cooperative employees are in the middle of a migration. While it may only be a matter of yards to our new home, it's a huge undertaking when you consider the furniture, supplies, computers and paperwork that have to come with us. But it is one of the final steps of this long process.

This project has been in the works for so long now that it can be easy to lose the forest for the trees. But I was recently reassured of the positive impact of this new building by a story I heard from one of our employees. She ran into one of our elderly members in the parking lot who asked her about the new building. While pointing at the new building she asked the employee if that part of the building was going to be a drive-thru.

This employee told her yes. In fact, the new building would have two drive-thrus for her to pay her bill. The member clapped her hands together and said, "Praise the Lord! I've been wanting this for a number of years." It's good to hear those enthusiastic responses to our new cooperative home.

Of course, in addition to celebrating the opening of the new building this month, we are also celebrating Memorial Day in honor of those who have served this country on the front lines. Right here in South Alabama, the American Legion in Brundidge has built its own tribute to those brave men and women.

In this magazine you can read about the Wall of Honor established at Post 145. It recognizes veterans with local connections to the

area who have gone above and beyond in service to their country. It's an excellent tribute to the sacrifice so many of our veterans have made, and I hope you will consider stopping by to take it in for yourself this Memorial Day.

This month we are also recognizing a couple of South Alabama Electric Cooperative employees who have reached milestones of their own. Jamie Johns, our construction foreman, and Blane Senn, our service foreman, are both celebrating their first full year in those roles.

Both have done an excellent job in their first year as foremen, which shouldn't really come as a surprise since they have almost 60 years of experience between them. You can read more about their accomplishments and the adjustment to their new positions in this magazine. And, if you see either one of them out in the community, I hope you'll join me in congratulating them on a job well done.

My hope is that by the time you are reading this, all of our members will be able to join us in using this new facility we have been working toward for so long. While some areas are still unfinished, we will have signs letting everyone know where to go and plenty of employees to point the way. As we move through the summer months, more and more of the new building will be open for you to do business with your cooperative.

As you mark the beginning of summer and Memorial Day in your own ways, I encourage our members not to forget the men and women who sacrificed so we can have this incredible country and the freedom we enjoy as Americans. We can sometimes lose our way with all the confusion in the world. But we are still the greatest country ever created, and it is our job as Americans to preserve that greatness. Until next month, stay safe. ■

Get connected with the SAEC app

You can:

- Pay your bill
- View account information
- Report outages
- View outages
- And more



Pay when you want with Pre-Pay Billing

South Alabama Electric Cooperative's Pre-Pay Billing program lets you make a payment when it best fits into your schedule.

Pre-Pay Billing gives SAEC members greater control, allowing you to monitor electricity usage and to avoid unwelcome surprises at the end of the month.

How does it work?

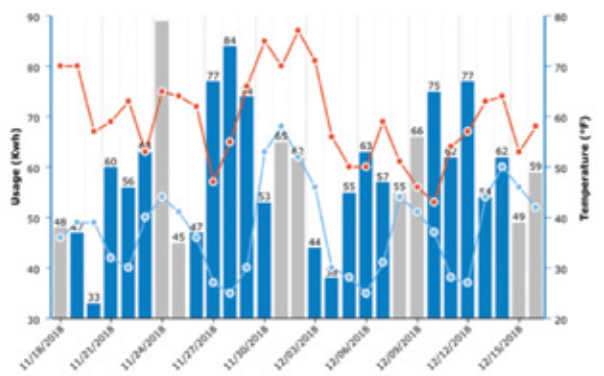
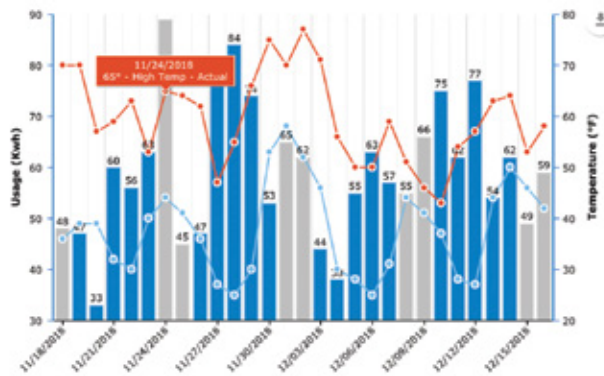
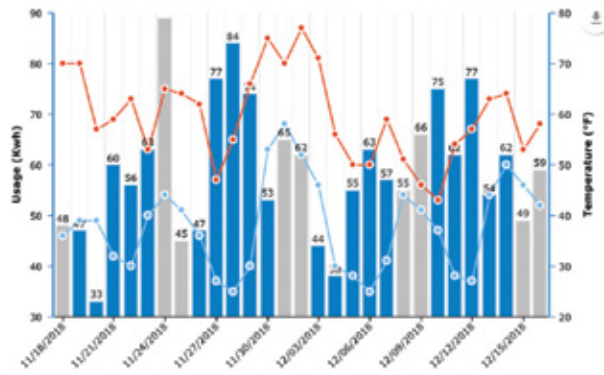
Think of Pre-Pay Billing like the gas tank of your car. You put money into your electric account just like you would fill your tank with gas. When your account starts running low, just add more money at any time, day or night, to keep the lights on.

Sign into your account online or through the SAEC app to:

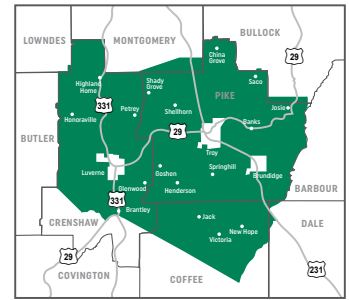
- Track your usage from any given day, week or month and compare it to past years.
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Best of all, when you sign up for Pre-Pay Billing, your deposit will go straight into your account balance to pay for your electric usage. There are also no connection or reconnection fees if your lights go out.

Sign up today by visiting our office or calling 1-800-556-2060. ■



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Commander Neil Thrasher and American Legion Post 145 in Brundidge honor local veterans who have gone above and beyond in service to their country with a Wall of Honor.

NEVER FORGOTTEN

American Legion Wall of Honor recognizes local veterans

Like American Legion posts across the country, Post 145 in Brundidge is a home of sorts to veterans born and raised in its community, as well as those who have migrated to South Alabama from across the country. Four years ago, Commander Neil Thrasher decided to start honoring those who had gone above and beyond in service to their country with a Wall of Honor at the post.

“Everyone on that wall has a local connection to Pike County. They may not have been born here, but they lived here, died here, and they served honorably,” says Thrasher, who served in the Navy as a navigational electronic technician on nuclear submarines. “This building isn’t just another Legion post. It’s a shrine to honorable veterans.”

The wall recognizes 30 veterans with local connections, as well as notable veterans throughout history. These include a trio of Medal of Honor recipients: World War I hero Sgt. Alvin York, World War II hero 1st Lt. Audie Murphy and 1st Lt. Robert Howard, an Alabama native and one of the most highly decorated soldiers of the Vietnam War. The top row is reserved for local soldiers killed in action, among them Ensign Joshua Watson of Enterprise, who died in a shooting at Naval Air Station Pensacola in 2019.

“The wall is for veterans who did more than just the average. I made six patrols with the Navy, but I’m not on the wall,” Thrasher says. “A lot of us did our job, but these veterans were exceptional. They gave more than just a day’s work. Most of them gave blood.”

Hometown heroes

One of the locals honored on the wall is the post’s former commander, Bruel Davis. Davis dropped out of high school to join the Navy during World War II. After the war ended, he finished school and earned an engineering degree before returning to active duty and retiring as a Navy captain.

“He has really been an important leader for this post,” Thrasher says. “Before he took over, this post was used but it wasn’t taken care of. It was a disgrace to veterans. He led the work to get it turned around so it could become what it is now.”

Now 94, Davis’ service to the nation and to his local community has not only earned him a spot on the Wall of Honor, but also a new scholarship fund in his honor that Post 145 may begin offering this year.

Alongside Davis on the wall is 72-year-old Wayne Murphy of Ariton, who earned his spot after serving two tours with the Army in Vietnam as part of the 169th Engineer Battalion from 1968 to 1970. Driving a 10-ton military tractor, he would haul equipment, ammunition and even downed helicopters for the 199th Light Infantry Brigade and the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment.

Murphy gets emotional when he thinks about his photo hanging on the Wall of Honor next to those who spilled blood and gave their lives in service to their country. But as a Vietnam veteran, the recognition means all the more for having been a long time coming.

“When I came home, like most of the Vietnam veterans, we weren’t welcomed back,” he says. “Being on the wall now means so much to those of us who didn’t get the recognition at the time. It’s a blessing to me, and I know it is for many others.”

Local identity

In addition to honoring veterans themselves, Murphy hopes the Wall of Honor can continue to play an important role for the local community. Post 145 is always committed to supporting local veterans, students and first responders. But Murphy sees something different in people’s eyes when they view the Wall of Honor.

“It just means a lot to the community that they can come by and visit the wall, because these are all local people,” he says. “There have been school classes that have been here and looked at the wall. It makes them glow to see the sacrifice that a lot of these soldiers made.”

While every American Legion post is a mix of locals and transplants, Thrasher hopes the wall will help the people of Pike County better understand the veterans living right next door.

“A lot of the posts in the South do not have a local identity when it comes to their veterans,” he says. “The veterans on the Wall of Honor are all local to the Pike County area. They served honorably and never asked for anything. But it’s important to remember them because so much of that history can be thrown away or lost.”

Most of all, Thrasher hopes the wall can help preserve the legacy of those who have been ready to sacrifice everything in service to their country. “We want to recognize them to make sure the people in this community and throughout the nation never forget,” he says. “That’s a slogan among all veterans, because the worst thing you can do is forget somebody.” ■



Post 145’s former commander Bruel Davis led the effort to revitalize the post so that it could be utilized by local veterans. Davis is pictured on the Wall of Honor.



All veterans pictured on the Wall of Honor have connections to Pike County.



Murphy transported heavy equipment, like this bulldozer, with a 10-ton military tractor.



Murphy served two tours in Vietnam with the 169th Engineer Battalion.



From 1968–1970, Murphy hauled supplies, ammunition and even downed helicopters for the military.



Learning every day

Two SAEC leaders reflect on their promotion to foreman

If you dislike strenuous work, being a lineman isn't the job for you.

For Jamie Johns, South Alabama Electric Cooperative's construction foreman, and Blane Senn, SAEC service foreman, the physical nature of the job isn't an issue. Neither are the weather, the hours nor the time away from family. With nearly 60 years' combined experience, they take the difficulties of the job, and their responsibilities as foremen, in stride.

"There's only a few of us with this career, and it's not the easiest job to do," Senn says. "But we've never been afraid of a little bit of hard work." Both he and Johns took over foreman responsibilities about a year ago.

"Being foreman is a totally different job," Johns says. "You have to watch everything you do. It's my job to make sure the work gets done and make sure everyone goes home safely."

Often working in extreme temperatures and during storms, watching over their crews is sometimes easier said than done. "I've been out there with lightning flickering all around, heavy rains, snow and more," Senn says. "In the end, you know you've got a job to do. You get satisfaction from getting someone's lights back on because you're filling a need for them."

They've formed strong bonds with their co-workers. "You stay out here long enough, working with these guys day and night, and you become like family," Senn says.

"We don't have a bad group of guys working out here with us," Johns adds.



Jamie Johns took a job with SAEC two weeks after he graduated from high school.



Blane Senn became a lineman at SAEC when he was 25.

While both Johns and Senn now have a large, extended work family, that wasn't always their goal. Johns took a job at SAEC only two weeks out of high school, and Senn joined the SAEC team at age 25.

"I never thought about doing this for a living, I just happened to be the right person at the right time," Senn says. Seizing that opportunity also helped him meet his wife, Tonya, who was a receptionist at SAEC when the two started dating more than 25 years ago.

There's always an unexpected element to the work. "The blizzard of 1993 was my first major storm," Senn says. "It was thundering through the night, and I just thought it was a rainstorm. When I woke up the next morning, I couldn't see my car in my driveway because it was covered under a snowdrift. The job keeps you on your toes."

"You don't ever know exactly how you're going to do the job until you get there," Johns says. "You learn something different every day." ■



Foremen Blane Senn and Jamie Johns are in charge of overseeing their crews and making sure their work is done safely and correctly.

BRUNDIDGE

is waiting for you




The mayor and council of the City of Brundidge welcome you to stop by for a visit. Enjoy the unique small-town atmosphere in a community where everyone knows their neighbor.

www.brundidgealabama.com



www.alabamaliving.coop

CHILL OUT ON SUMMER ENERGY BILLS



Several tips can reduce electricity usage during warm months

Summer is a season when homes can use lots of energy if homeowners aren't careful. Extremely hot temperatures tend to stress air conditioning units and other appliances, driving up electric bills.

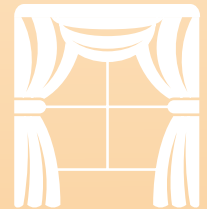
Fortunately, South Alabama Electric Cooperative members can invest a little time, energy and money to generate major savings. Following these tips from the U.S. Department of Energy will help ensure families have enough spending money to enjoy their vacations.

THERMOSTATS/FANS



- Set thermostats as high as comfortably possible. A good target is 78 degrees when you are at home. Programmable thermostats can ensure energy efficiency while you are away from home.
- Use ceiling fans, which can help rooms feel comfortable even if the air is set at 4 degrees higher than normal.
- Use bathroom suction fans to remove heat and humidity during showers.
- Suction fans can also benefit kitchens and utility rooms, where appliances like ovens and dryers generate heat. Make sure that fans vent the hot air to the exterior of the home and not to the attic.
- Conduct regular maintenance of the climate-control system.
- Do not place TV sets or lamps near thermostats. The heat these items produce can trigger the air conditioning system to run longer than necessary.
- Vacuum the registers for heating, ventilation and air conditioning regularly to improve the unit's efficiency.

WINDOWS/DOORS



- About 76% of the sunlight that hits a standard double-pane window becomes heat energy inside. Storm windows with low-e coatings reduce the solar heat gain by reflecting the heat outward, resulting in energy savings of up to 33%.
- Keep coverings, like blinds, closed to reduce heat gain, especially on windows receiving direct sunlight.
- Seal cracks around windows and doors to prevent hot air from seeping into the home.
- Open curtains and blinds that aren't in direct sunlight to utilize natural light and reduce the need for artificial light.

OTHER GENERAL TIPS

- Avoid using the oven during peak heat times. Grilling outside reduces heat inside.
- Upgrade to more efficient lighting options such as LED or CFL, which burn cooler than traditional incandescent bulbs.
- Wait to wash dishes and laundry until there's a full load to be done. Consider air drying as an option.

