Regarding the world of scholarship applications, the resounding advice could be summed up with Nike’s slogan: Just Do It! Apply, apply, apply because every bit helps and it can really add up.

We asked past winners of the Shelby Electric Cooperative (SEC) scholarship to give advice to high school students who are beginning their journey into the maze of scholarship and college applications while considering career options. Having “been there, done that,” many replied with sincere, useful responses to which students and their parents may want to consider. Much of their advice could be helpful to all students, regardless of their future plans. For example, 1996 recipient Katie (Roley) Schuermann, stated that, “Employers are looking for individuals with good communication skills and a solid work ethic. Your training for that begins today, no matter your age or location.”

With that in mind, SEC has announced it will once again be awarding three academic scholarships in the amount of $1,000 each. Scholarships are awarded to a son or daughter of a current SEC member who is receiving electric service from the cooperative at the time the scholarship application is submitted.

In 2016 the winners were Jade Bleskey of Lakewood, Mallory Westrick of Taylorville and JoAnna Marley of Nokomis. “We are pleased to be able to provide these students with an opportunity to be awarded a scholarship as a way to give back to the communities we serve,” said Heidi Hall, who coordinates the program for the cooperative.

High school seniors pursuing a college education in the United States are eligible to participate in the program. Scholarships may be used for educational costs at any two-year or four-year accredited college or university, including vocational/technical schools. Candidates are chosen based on academic and community accomplishments, character and financial need as demonstrated in the application and essay. Friday, March 10 is the deadline for receipt of completed applications for 2017 graduates. Scholarship winners will be notified in June.

Applications can be obtained by visiting SEC’s website, www.shelbyelectric.coop and clicking on the “Our Community” menu tab or by calling Heidi Hall. Applications are also available from area high school guidance counselors. Please call the cooperative at 217-774-3986 or 1-800-677-2612 if you would like more information about this scholarship opportunity.

The following is good advice from another past recipient. “When filling out any scholarship application, list all of your accomplishments on your application. You’ve earned it. Always have someone proofread your essay to make sure you accurately and effectively communicate YOU. The people who review your applications do not know you. You need to write so they can know you,” said 1996 recipient Erin Ollech-Rife.

Look for more great advice from previous winners, as well as a list of past winners, and “where are they now” in future issues of Shelby News.

The 2016 scholarship recipients, pictured from left, were Jade Bleskey of Lakewood, Mallory Westrick of Taylorville and JoAnna Marley of Nokomis.
Heidi Hall receives certification

Shelby Electric Cooperative is pleased to announce that Heidi Hall, Manager of Member Services and Key Accounts, has earned recognition as a professional communicator in a national certification program offered by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA).

Hall has met the requirements to become a Certified Cooperative Communicator (CCC), which signifies standards of professionalism in communications and competency of the electric cooperative industry. She joins more than 300 electric cooperative communicators who have attained CCC status, since 1985.

NRECA is the national service organization that represents the nation’s more than 900 consumer-owned electric cooperatives, which provide service to more than 37 million people in 47 states.

SmartHub lets you know when you are out of power

Did you know you can now have your cooperative send an email or text message when you are part of an outage and when your power has been restored? All you need to do is sign up through SmartHub Web, which can be found on the cooperative’s website www.shelbyelectric.coop. Just sign in, click on notifications and select manage contacts. After determining whether to receive notifications via email, text or both, go to manage notifications and choose to receive outage alerts as well as other messages. If you haven’t set up an account yet, you can do this at the same SmartHub Web link. You can find SmartHub how-to-videos on the cooperative’s website and Facebook page. Download the SmartHub App for your smart devices from your favorite app store.
Donna Stretch retired in December.

What do you think of when you hear, “It has been a good ride”? Possibly that nice car ride to view the fall colors, maybe it is finishing up a ride through the country on your motorcycle or perhaps after a long bike ride. For Donna Stretch, it means she has enjoyed her time as an employee at Shelby Electric Cooperative (SEC). Donna recently retired as Operations Assistant after 37 years of service. She began her career at the cooperative in 1979.

To give some retrospective of what it was like to start a career in 1979; Sony released the Walkman, Margaret Thatcher was elected Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and the Three Mile Island nuclear accident occurred.

Donna’s ride began as a Capital Credits Clerk, eventually moved to assist with general office duties, and from there into the operations department as Operations Assistant. She had the pleasure of working for three different managers now called President/CEOs. “Each CEO brought their own unique talents to the cooperative and each took over at a time of needed change and improvements for the cooperative and our members,” noted Donna. “Bill LeCrone, Jim Coleman and Josh Shallenberger all have their unique strengths in helping the cooperative grow for the betterment of the membership. Each one of them playing a different role in bringing innovation, hydraulics, technology and continued safety for the employees, as well as keeping a focus on the financial integrity of the cooperative.”

“So much has changed over the years. We used to have one computer we all shared for data entry, which we also used to send billing information to Central Area Data Processing Cooperative. Now all employees have a computer and even the line crews work off of iPads in their trucks,” explained Donna.

As things at the cooperative continued to change over Donna’s career, she recalls having five bosses in her current position in the operations department, as well as a few others when working as a Capital Credits Clerk and helping with general office duties. “I’ve had so many people I worked under and with over the years and can’t imagine doing anything differently. This place and the people here have been like family to me. I really enjoyed working at SEC and serving our members’ needs,” she commented.

Donna graduated from Findlay High School in 1967 and took classes at Sparks College. In 1972 she moved to Shelbyville with her husband Tom. They will be celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary later this year. Tom and Donna have two daughters and two grandchildren.

Donna has accomplished a great deal over the course of her career. She participated in several cooperative cookouts to raise money for various community needs, participated in a legislative conference in Washington D.C. and assisted the Illinois Electric Cooperative’s Federal Credit Union.

What some call bucket lists, Donna calls basket lists due to the fact that she has collected Longaberger baskets over the years. She has even crossed something off her basket list; she took a hot air balloon ride last fall.

After 37 years of working, what does retirement hold for Donna? “Whatever comes up I guess. I’ll continue to enjoy my grand-kids, going on walks, piddling around with crafts, be spontaneous and do things we haven’t had time to do,” said Donna. In retrospect, Donna concluded that her career at SEC has been a good ride!

Your cooperative family and friends wish you good health and best wishes. Congratulations on your retirement, Donna!

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

According to the Consumer Electronics Association, the average household owns 24 consumer electronics products, which are responsible for 12 percent of household electricity use. ENERGY STAR-certified audio/video equipment is up to 50 percent more efficient than conventional models.

Source: EnergyStar.gov
Driving along our rural roads, it seems new home sites pop up overnight. In many cases, this is due to the ease and convenience of manufactured homes.

Approximately 20 million Americans live in manufactured homes and about 90 percent of those homes are in rural or suburban areas. The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association reported that residents of manufactured homes spend significantly more money on energy than residents of site-built homes. In fact, they spend about 70 percent more per square foot.

To understand this substantial difference, we must first understand how manufactured homes are built. Manufactured homes are constructed entirely in a factory and then transported to a site. Minimal assembly is required once the home arrives, well, home. Unlike site-built homes, manufactured homes are not subject to state building codes. Instead, they comply with standards that are enforced by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). These regulations were passed in 1976 and last updated in 1994.

Energy efficiency has come a long way since 1994. Per the U.S. Department of Energy’s website, they are considering new energy conservation standards for manufactured housing. However, if you are considering purchasing a manufactured home now, for comfort and energy efficiency purposes, look for the Energy Star® label.

Yes, Energy Star certifies manufactured homes. An Energy Star manufactured home will have better insulation, tightly sealed air ducts and Energy Star certified windows. The Energy Star Certified New Home label is usually placed on the home’s electrical panel or next to its HUD data plate.

If you currently live in a manufactured home, most can benefit from energy efficiency upgrades, as can many stick-built homes.

Here is a list to help you get started with improving your home’s comfort and energy use:

- **Air seal, air seal, air seal.** Start with air sealing gaps and cracks by using caulk and weather stripping.
- **Check the ductwork.** Ductwork is out of sight, out of mind, in any home. Look for solid connections and damage. Often, flex-tubing is used under manufactured homes. This can become damaged by pests and years of wear-and-tear.
- **Check the underbelly for sagging, gaps and damage.** Damage to the underbelly can allow pests in and cause moisture issues.
- **Check the placement of the thermostat.** Remember, a manufactured home is built in a factory. Once moved to a permanent location, the home may be positioned so that the sun shines on the thermostat, influencing its controls. Thermostats should also be placed centrally in the home (remodeling and additions can affect this) and away from vents and heat-producing appliances, such as stoves and ovens.
- **Rooms with single pane windows may benefit greatly in the winter from plastic window kits.**
- **Look for Energy Star certified appliances when it is time to purchase or replace existing appliances.**
- **Consider hiring an experienced professional to add cellulose or foam insulation.** Many manufactured homes have narrow wall and roof cavities, making it difficult for a novice to add insulation.

To learn more about what you can do to make your home more energy efficient give us a call at 217-774-3986.

~Marla Eversole
Member Services