



SEE PAGE 4

## NINESTAR MARKETING DEPARTMENT WINS AWARD

The Rural Broadband Association (NTCA), recognizes the vital role marketing and communications play in the broadband industry.

## INTELLIGENT FIBER NETWORK TO BE ACQUIRED BY ZAYO

Intelligent Fiber Network (IFN) announces it has entered into a definitive agreement to be acquired by Zayo Group Holdings, Inc.



# THE SPEED YOU NEED

## NINESTAR OFFERS NEW INTERNET PACKAGES

### 50

**50/50Mb**

Upload & Download  
Speeds

*Great for Social  
Surfing and  
Streaming*

**\$62.50**

### 150

**150/150Mb**

Upload & Download  
Speeds

*Perfect for Streaming  
and Gaming*

**\$89.50**

### 500

**500/500Mb**

Upload & Download  
Speeds

*Ideal for Working  
from Home and  
Smart Homes*

**\$119.50**

### 1GIG

**1Gig/1Gig**

Upload & Download  
Speeds

*Work, Stream, Game  
and be on all Devices  
at the Same Time*

**\$149.50\***

*\*Includes Managed WiFi*

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## NINESTAR WELCOMES THREE NEW DIRECTORS

**PAGE 9**

## KENNEDY REPLACES DULIN ON NINESTAR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**PAGE 10**





NineStar Board Chairman Phil Hayes presents retiring NineStar Director Don Shaw with a board resolution honoring his 28 years of service at his last board meeting, March 25, 2021.



**OUR EMPLOYEES MAKE THE DIFFERENCE. HERE'S A CUSTOMER REVIEW FOR GARY OUELLETTE.**

"HE'S SUCH A WONDERFUL GUY. HE DID A GREAT JOB IN HELPING ME CONNECT TO MY WIFE. I THINK HE IS THE BEST CUSTOMER SERVICE AND TECH SUPPORT PERSON YOU HAVE WORKING AT THE COMPANY. WHEN YOU HAVE PEOPLE THAT REALLY KNOW WHAT THEY ARE DOING AND ARE REALLY HELPFUL, CUSTOMERS FEEL SATISFIED."



**CUSTOMER WALFORD**

Customer service is at the tips of your fingers. NineStar Connect's tech support call center is open around the clock. **317-326-help** [ninstarconnect.com](http://ninstarconnect.com)

**STORY IDEA?**

Contact **David Spencer** at [dspencer@ninstarconnect.com](mailto:dspencer@ninstarconnect.com)

**COVER STORY PAGES 4**

NineStar offers new internet packages that can supply the speed you need in today's connected world.

**INTELLIGENT FIBER NETWORK TO BE ACQUIRED BY ZAYO PAGE 5**

Intelligent Fiber Network (IFN) announces it has entered into a definitive agreement to be acquired by Zayo Group Holdings, Inc.

**NINESTAR MARKETING DEPARTMENT WINS AWARD PAGE 7**

The Rural Broadband Association (NTCA), recognizes the vital role marketing and communications play in the broadband industry.

**FORMER HANCOCK RURAL TELEPHONE EMPLOYEE AND INDUSTRY LEADER PASSES AWAY PAGE 10**

Fredrick Thomas Rowland, age 69, of Lafayette, TN passed away, leaving behind a legacy of leadership.

**NINESTAR WELCOMES THREE NEW DIRECTORS**

Robin Ritchie, Scott Pittman, and Timothy Bryant were elected to the NineStar Board of Directors.

**PAGE 9**



**POWER OUT? NO INTERNET OR TV?**



**CHECK NINESTAR'S FACEBOOK OR TWITTER PAGE!!**

Social Media is exploding and if you aren't checking your laptop, tablet or smart phone for the latest and greatest fads, trends and updates.....you are not living in the 21st century! We have found that posting news about NineStar Connect on Facebook and Twitter has been a successful line of communication for all of our social media followers. Once you "like" our page, you will automatically be notified of any post we share whether it's information about an outage, an event we are planning, local Channel 9 broadcasting or energy information to save you money.

Additionally, if you have a question for us, send us a message. We will research and respond to your question as quickly as possible. We don't want to "leave you in the dark" about any issues or inquiries you might have for us. Our Customer Service has always been a significant piece of what we do and giving you the answers you need is imperative to keeping you knowledgeable and satisfied with our service. To add, when there is that unfortunate outage, your communication to us is just as helpful in determining where the problem is and who it is affecting so we encourage you to share your thoughts.

So if you haven't already, grab your tablet or smart phone and "Like" or "Follow" our Facebook and/or Twitter page. We will do our best to keep you informed and post all the latest details about NineStar Connect news. But don't forget, we still like to hear your voice! When you need answers fast and need to talk to someone, a phone call to our 24/7/365 Support Center is always just a dial away - 317-326-HELP.



The *NineStar Connection* is a publication of NineStar Connect servicing retail and residential customers. Nearly 16,000 families and businesses receive this newspaper as part of their membership. *NineStar Connection* provides news, information and features about people, places and issues related to readers.

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**NineStar Connection**

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Director District 7  
Jack Negley

Director District 8  
Raymond Kerkhof

Director District 9  
Phil Hayes

Director District 10  
Shelly Kleiman

**AT LARGE**

James Cherry  
Darrell Thomas  
Timothy Bryant



# NINESTAR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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DISTRICT 2



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DISTRICT 3



ROBIN RITCHIE

DISTRICT 4



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DISTRICT 5



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AT LARGE



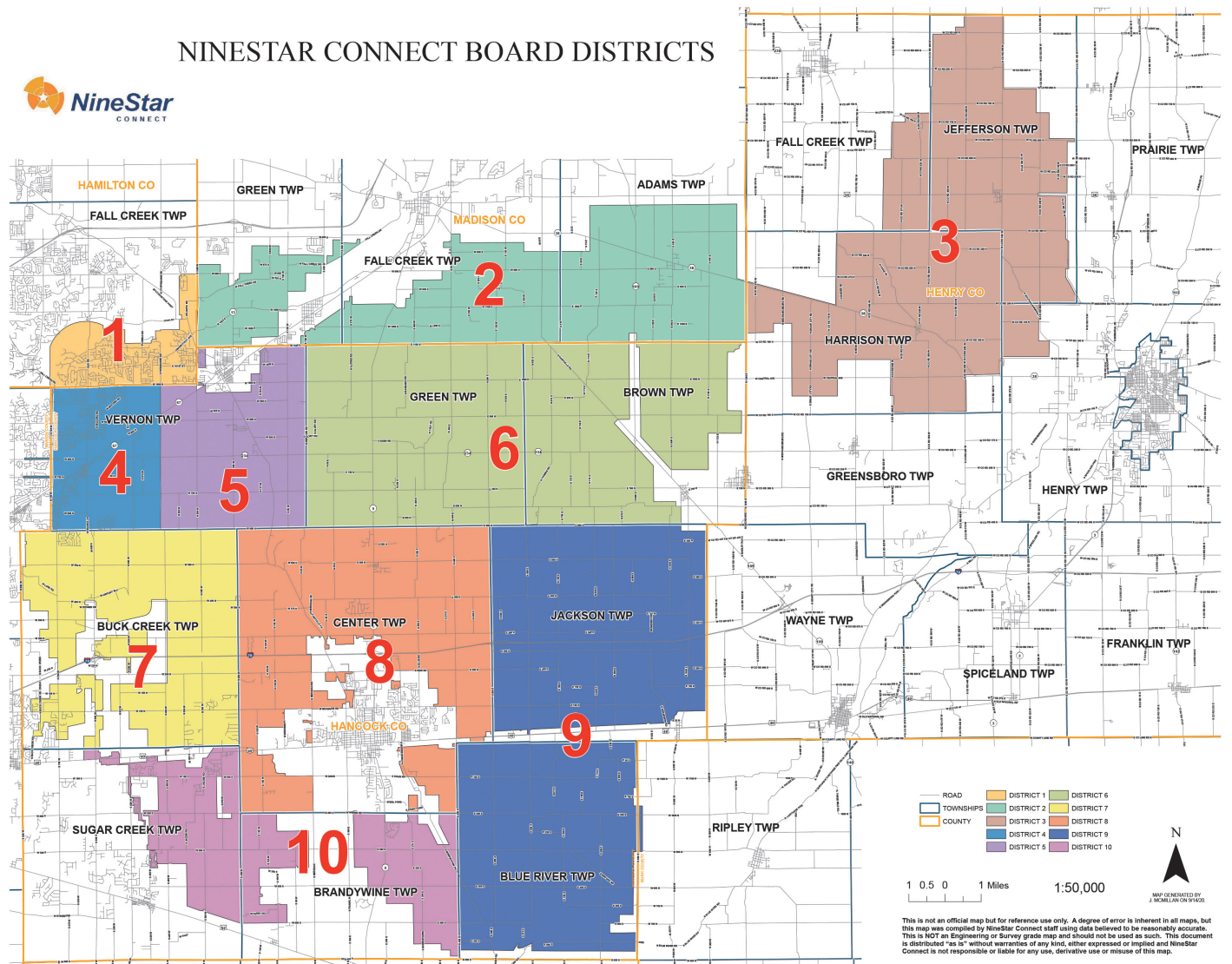
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# THE SPEED YOU NEED NINESTAR OFFERS NEW INTERNET PACKAGES



## CHOOSE YOUR SPEED!

✕ WORK ✕ STREAM ✕ GAME

## POWER UP & CONNECT. FAST!

✕ BETTER BANDWIDTH ✕ BETTER PRICING



317.326.3131 | [ninstarconnect.com](http://ninstarconnect.com)

By Julie Young

Beginning May 1st, NineStar Connect members can experience a different kind of Internet that in many cases will cost less and offer more! In an effort to provide members with products that match their budgets and their lifestyle, the Co-op has created new Internet packages designed to meet your needs.

“We still have packages such as our triple play for those who want TV, internet and phone, but these new packages are broadband only and designed for speed,” said Darrin Couch, Director of Customer Service and Billing at NineStar Connect.

Previously, NineStar offered **internet and phone packages** at speeds of 75, 150, 300, 600 Mb and 1 GB beginning at \$75 per month, but the revamped **internet only packages** feature comparable speeds at prices that offer more bang for the buck. Couch says NineStar offers the 50 Mb (50/50 Mb) package for \$62.50 per month, the 150 Mb (150/150 Mb) option for \$89.50, the 500 Mb (500/500 Mb) package for \$119.50 (down from \$150-\$200 for the 300 Mb and 600 Mb options) and the 1 GB package price has been slashed from \$250 to \$149.50.

“In most cases, members will get more speed for less money,” Couch said.

In order to determine which internet packages to offer members, NineStar evaluated the number of customers on each option and took into account the current trends. Couch said today’s households tend to be more dependent on electronic devices such as smart home appliances and security systems so the average household’s need for additional internet continues to increase. Not only that, but the average family includes several members who utilize a variety of devices to surf the Web, watch movies, listen to music, play games, work from home and participate in online classes all at the same time, so they need a strong bandwidth to shoulder the burden.

“It’s one thing if you are merely passing documents back and forth between teacher and student, but when there is a video link, then the need for bandwidth increases,” Couch said. “Our consultants are ready to help you evaluate the devices you have and how you use them in order to determine what internet package is right for you.”

For those who primarily use the Internet for social surfing and streaming, a 50/50 Mb connection may be the right speed while gamers may need to make the jump to 150/150 Mb. For those who have a number of smart home appliances or work from home, the 500/500 Mb package

may meet your needs, but when fast just isn’t enough, a busy family with multiple devices may get their best value from the 1 GB service.

“Our membership is so diverse we are trying to make our new packages as economical as we can while still meeting their needs,” said Regina Bever, Ninestar’s vice-president of administration. “We took a look at those needs and developed packages for the best service at a competitive price. For someone who only has the basic Internet, then the 50/50 Mb speed may be perfect, but with cable TV going by the wayside and people relying more on streaming services, they may need something more.”

“No matter which option you choose, you’re getting the speed and reliability you need.” Couch said.

Not only can NineStar help members evaluate their internet needs, they can also help you determine what streaming platform may offer you the best TV options so that you can get the most of your internet and cut the cord from your cable service.

“Every household is different and NineStar Connect doesn’t believe in selling you a product or service that members do not need. We pride ourselves on being informative and going in depth with our customers to see what they want and need when it comes to their channel options and their bandwidth,” Bever said. “We’ll help you find the most cost effective option to give you what you want.”

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

NineStar Connect’s new packages offer members a new way to connect to the Internet. With new upload and download speeds at new lower price points, you can get the most from your bandwidth no matter what you do online. Here’s what you need to know about the new packages

- **50/50 Mb (\$62.50/mo.):** Perfect for social surfing, online shopping some streaming.
- **150/150 Mb (\$89.50/mo.):** Great for streaming, being on multiple devices and gaming.
- **500/500 Mb (119.50/mo.):** Ideal for streaming, gaming, work from home and utilizing multiple Smart Home devices.
- **1 GB service (\$149.50/mo.):** Perfect for families with multiple TV’s and Smart Home devices, working from home and want to run all devices at the same time.

For more information, call NineStar Connect at **317-326-3131** or visit [www.ninstarconnect.com](http://www.ninstarconnect.com)

## WHEN FAST JUST ISN'T ENOUGH.

50 50/50Mb	150 150/150Mb	500 500/500Mb	1GIG 1Gig/1Gig
Upload & Download Speeds	Upload & Download Speeds	Upload & Download Speeds	Upload & Download Speeds
Great for Social Surfing and Streaming	Perfect for Streaming and Gaming	Ideal for Working from Home and Smart Homes	Work, Stream, Game and be on all Devices at the Same Time
<b>\$62.50</b>	<b>\$89.50</b>	<b>\$119.50</b>	<b>\$149.50*</b>
*Includes Managed WiFi			

✕ BETTER BANDWIDTH ✕ BETTER PRICING

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# INTELLIGENT FIBER NETWORK TO BE ACQUIRED BY ZAYO

**INDIANAPOLIS (March 9, 2021)** — Intelligent Fiber Network (IFN) today announces it has entered into a definitive agreement to be acquired by Zayo Group Holdings, Inc. The acquisition culminates several years of strong growth for IFN. Following its rebrand to Intelligent Fiber Network in 2018, IFN has continued to expand its footprint with recent network investments in Northeast Indiana and the launch of additional solutions such as a new SD-WAN product.

Headquartered in Boulder, Colorado, Zayo is a leading provider of fiber infrastructure in North America and Europe. Its 126,000-mile network includes extensive metro connectivity to thousands of buildings and data centers across both continents. Zayo's acquisition of IFN will further densify its Midwest network and enable significantly enhanced reach and value to IFN's customers and legacy owners. Together, IFN and Zayo will support investment and growth in Indiana's communications infrastructure and advance the ubiquity of high-speed connectivity.

"IFN's acquisition by Zayo represents a robust vote of confidence in what we have grown over the past several years, with our Board and owners reiterating this confidence through strong support of the transaction," said Jim Turner, CEO of IFN. "By joining with Zayo, we will not only provide our customers with a strong fiber backbone throughout the Midwest, but around the globe. We are excited for the opportunities to come."

"IFN brings to Zayo another unique and dense regional fiber network and a dedicated local team that excels in serving its customer base," said Matt Steinfort, chief financial officer for Zayo. "This team, the additional network assets and the nearly 1,000 incremental on-net buildings will aid our efforts to accelerate growth as we look to capitalize on the enterprise opportunity within our network reach."

Founded in 2007, Zayo was built upon the strong backbone of multiple regional fiber acquisitions, similar to the acquisition of IFN. Zayo's global fiber network serves 400 markets with 13 Million fiber miles and 1,300 on-net data centers with offices in Denver, London, Paris, and Tulsa, Oklahoma. Zayo will retain the office building that currently serves as the IFN Headquarters in Indianapolis.

The transaction is expected to close during the second half of 2021, subject to customary regulatory approvals and closing conditions. The transaction will be funded with a combination of cash on hand and debt. Houlihan Lokey and Stifel are acting as financial advisors to IFN in connection with the transaction, and Dentons Bingham Greenebaum is serving as its legal advisor. Skadden Arps is serving as legal counsel to Zayo.

For more information about IFN, please visit [www.intelligentfiber.com](http://www.intelligentfiber.com). For more about Zayo, please visit [www.zayo.com](http://www.zayo.com).

## **ifn** About Intelligent Fiber Network

Intelligent Fiber Network (IFN) is owned by 21 Indiana local exchange telephone companies and one rural electric cooperative. IFN provides high-speed fiber-optic backbone capabilities to these owners as well as to other telecommunications providers and business direct customers including hospitals, schools and government facilities. IFN's network consists of more than 5,000 route miles of fiber-optic line across more than 60 Indiana counties. IFN offers commercial service in Indiana and throughout the US via a network of national partners. For more information, visit [intelligentfiber.com](http://intelligentfiber.com) or call (866) 406-4636.

## About Zayo Group

Zayo Group Holdings, Inc. provides mission-critical bandwidth to the world's most impactful companies, fueling the innovations that are transforming our society. Zayo's 126,000-mile network in North America and Europe includes extensive metro connectivity to thousands of buildings and data centers. Zayo's communications infrastructure solutions include dark fiber, private data networks, wavelengths, Ethernet, dedicated internet access and data center connectivity solutions. Zayo owns and operates a Tier 1 IP backbone and through its CloudLink service, Zayo provides low-latency private connectivity that attaches enterprises to their public cloud environments. Zayo serves wireless and wireline carriers, media, tech, content, finance, healthcare and other large enterprises. For more information, visit [zayo.com](http://zayo.com).

# 2021 CONGRATULATIONS NINE STAR SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS!



**ANNA CASTER**  
LUTHERAN HIGH SCHOOL



**KAITLYN CRAIG**  
SHENANDOAH HIGH SCHOOL



**COLE HESS**  
MT. VERNON HS



**ADDISON HILL**  
GREENFIELD-CENTRAL HS



**RYAN KIHLS TRUM**  
EASTERN HANCOCK HIGH SCHOOL



**EMMA MUFFLER**  
MT. VERNON HS



**HANNAH MULLEN**  
HAMILTON SOUTHEASTERN HS



**MICHAEL NASH**  
HAMILTON SOUTHEASTERN HS



**AUSTIN NIGH**  
GREENFIELD-CENTRAL HS



**CALEB PERKINS**  
HAMILTON SOUTHEASTERN HS



**LILLY RICHMOND**  
EASTERN HANCOCK HIGH SCHOOL



**EMILY ROLLO**  
MT. VERNON HS



**HEATHER SCHAFER**  
GREENFIELD-CENTRAL HS



**RILEY SCHRINK**  
PENDLETON HEIGHTS HS



**KAMBELL TRAPP**  
GREENFIELD-CENTRAL HS



# BUILDING A HOME?

## MAKE IT A POWER MOVES HOME AND SAVE



If you're thinking about building your own home, you've probably spent a lot of time figuring out the details. You've considered different floorplans and selected complementary colors that pop. But have you considered energy efficiency?

The Power Moves Home program is perfect for anyone about to build their own home. NineStar helped create the program with its power supplier, Wabash Valley Power Alliance, to help homeowners achieve better energy efficiency—a benefit that will pay off for years to come. You can build a Power Moves Home and save on longterm energy costs.

### THE POWER MOVES HOME TRIPLE ADVANTAGE

Homes constructed to the program's standards are on average 20 percent more energy efficient than a traditional home. That pays off in some pretty wonderful ways. First, your home will use less electricity when you build it to Power Moves Home standards. This leads directly to the second benefit:

Your home will cost less to live in. (After all, if you're not using as much energy on heating and cooling, you won't have to spend the money to pay for it, either.)

Best of all, when you build a Power Moves Home, you'll be a lot more comfortable all year long. Instead of fighting with the thermostat every time the weather changes, you'll enjoy more consistent temperatures while using less energy.

**HOW TO GET STARTED** If you want to build a Power Moves Home, it's never too early to give NineStar a call. NineStar's Energy Advisor, Matt Strahl will work with the rest of the Power Moves team to get you started. The team will talk with your builder and assign a Home Energy Rating System® (HERS) rater to the project to verify that the program requirements are met before and during construction. Once construction is done, you'll receive a full energy efficiency report that includes your HERS rating.

From start to finish, this is a free service provided by NineStar, but you're encouraged to be involved every step of the way! NineStar's goal is to make sure you end up with a home that doesn't just look great — it works great, too.

**GET STARTED TODAY** Even if the idea of building your own home feels more like a dream than a reality right now, it's never too soon to get in touch. NineStar can help answer questions, offer advice, and — when you're ready to build — help you achieve our high standards of energy efficiency. Learn more by contacting NineStar's Energy Advisor Matt Strahl at [mstrahl@ninestarconnect.com](mailto:mstrahl@ninestarconnect.com) or **317-323-2042** or visit the program page at [www.powermoves.com/power-moves-home](http://www.powermoves.com/power-moves-home).

# MONEY IN THE BATH:

## PUMP UP YOUR SAVINGS BY UPGRADING TO A HEAT PUMP WATER HEATER

While your steaming hot shower may leave you feeling like royalty, the appliance heating that water may be dethroning money from your wallet.

A variety of energy resources power different kinds of water heaters to warm the water that people use in their daily lives. The type of water heater in your house could lead you to spend significantly more on energy costs than needed. An energy efficient heat pump water heater can save homeowners hundreds (or even thousands) of dollars over the life cycle of the appliance. There are several reasons to consider upgrading to a heat pump water heater:

**MORE ENERGY EFFICIENCY MEANS MORE SAVINGS.** Upgrading from an older electric resistance tank or propane water heater, for instance, to a heat pump water heater could lead to significant energy savings. The heat pump water heater's electric energy is

more cost effective than propane, and it uses much less energy than typical electric resistance water heaters. The lower electricity use means more money left in your bank account each month.

### YOU CAN REDUCE YOUR CARBON FOOTPRINT.

If you are switching to a heat pump water heater from a propane or natural gas water heater, you will significantly lower your carbon footprint (especially as renewables are generating an increasing amount of electricity on the energy grid). You also will remove a potential source of carbon monoxide in your house.

### IT'S A COMPLIMENTARY DEHUMIDIFIER TOO!

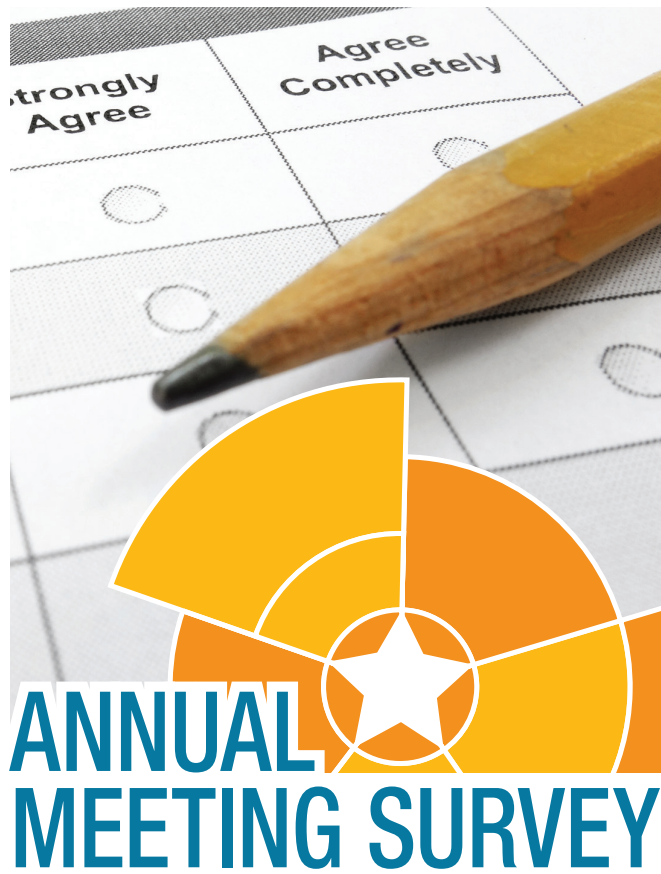
A heat pump water heater also acts as a dehumidifier, reducing the humidity in nearby air. If your water heater is in your basement (which is sometimes a damp space in a house), a heat pump water heater can help make the space cooler and drier. If you run a dehumidifier in



the basement, you may find that you can run it less – or maybe not at all. The heat pump water heater can save you even more energy and money!

While heat pump water heaters cost a bit more upfront than other types of water heaters, you will save more over the long-term in lower energy costs. You also can receive a Power Moves rebate offered by your local electric cooperative to upgrade to a qualifying heat pump water heater. For more details, contact NineStar's Energy Advisor Matt Strahl or visit [www.powermoves.com/waterheater](http://www.powermoves.com/waterheater).





## ANNUAL MEETING SURVEY

**We want your feedback!**

Please take a few minutes to fill out our survey for the 2021 Annual Meeting and Celebration. Your feedback is important and will help us to improve on next year's event.

To fill out the survey visit [www.ninestarconnect.com/annual-meeting-survey](http://www.ninestarconnect.com/annual-meeting-survey)

# ELEVEN GRADUATE ELECTRIC LINEWORKER APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

Eleven lineworkers graduated from Indiana Electric Cooperatives' apprenticeship program, Rural Electric Apprentice Program (REAP).

REAP is a four-year program that professionally trains apprentice lineworkers from across Indiana. Graduates complete 612 hours of classroom-related study and 8,000 hours of on-the-job training at their electric cooperative. Students also complete four additional classes through Ivy Tech Community College. Upon completion of the program, graduates earn an Associate of Applied Science and a journeyman lineman certificate.

"Lineworkers are the backbone of our operations and their dedication to the consumers of Indiana's electric cooperatives is outstanding," said Jon Elkins, vice president of safety, training and compliance at Indiana Electric Cooperatives. "We are proud to have these hardworking individuals as part of the cooperative family."

### THIS YEAR'S GRADUATES ARE:

- Clayton Akers, Boone REMC
- Nicholas Shepherd, Boone REMC
- Bruce Dean, Electricom
- Wade Martin, Electricom
- Eric George, Hendricks Power Cooperative
- Chase Deaton, Kosciusko REMC
- Sawyer Cripe, Marshall County REMC
- Levi Johnson, NineStar Connect
- Greg Sandusky, Parke County REMC
- Jared Paxton, Parke County REMC
- Aaron Miller, Stebuen County REMC



LEVI JOHNSON

# NINESTAR MARKETING DEPARTMENT WINS NATIONAL AWARD

Each year, The Rural Broadband Association (NTCA), recognizes the vital role marketing, and communications play in the broadband industry with its annual Marketing Excellence Awards program. The award program is open to all NTCA telco members.

This year, the NineStar Marketing Department was honored to receive a Marketing Excellence Award for website redesign. Congratulations to David Spencer, Christa Riggs and Erika Whittington for their achievement.



CHRISTA RIGGS



DAVID SPENCER



ERIKA WHITTINGTON

## PAPERLESS BILLING



Each month we pick a new winner for just choosing to get your billing statement electronically. If you are drawn as a lucky winner, you will receive a \$50 Amazon Gift Card.

**Congratulations to our latest monthly winners:**

**February** Mark and Christina Nigh, Fishers

**April** Richard and Anna Patras, McCordsville

Paperless Billing is the easiest, cheapest way of paying your bill each month. Please feel free to give one of our Residential Service Consultants a call at 317-326-3131 to help you set up if needed. It will be a call you are glad you made!



# VP of Operations Message

**N**ineStar Connect operates four different utilities: Electric, Communications, Water & Wastewater. While diversity is a great benefit to our cooperative, that same diversity can be a formidable task as each division comes with very individual and unique challenges including, but not limited to: Safety, Regulatory Compliance, FCC (Federal Communications Commission) and IDEM (Indiana Department of Environmental Management).

In 1936 Hancock County REMC (Rural Electric Membership Corporation) was created, with the first poles being installed in 1937, and today doing business as NineStar Connect. Although today's electric usage is considerably higher, the method by which power is delivered is relatively the same; poles, wires, and transformers are still needed. The poles have gotten taller, the wires have gotten bigger, and the transformers have gotten more efficient.

NineStar Electric Territory falls within some of the busiest counties in the state for new housing. While most of NineStar's Hamilton County territory is rich with new development, that same growth is expanding into Hancock County. NineStar also proudly serves Madison County and a few members in Rush County, however, much of the current expansion is in the McCordsville and Geist area. Construction season is well under way and growth has been the name of the game. In fact, NineStar has added an additional 4450 new electric customers or an increase of 26% in the last ten years. 2020 was our busiest year to date for new services at 685, and at the current rate, 2021 is going to surpass last year's numbers.

Currently, we have fourteen active subdivisions and many more on the horizon as the housing market remains strong. As part of that growth, the older infrastructure must be updated to meet the demand we see today. NineStar crews will be visible changing poles and wire over the current system to keep up with the demands.

We have also seen a spike in commercial properties around the Mt. Comfort corridor. In addition to adding larger wire and new poles, we are incorporating smart devices to help keep outages and outage times down. The use of these devices allows us to operate and monitor lines from different locations; for example, if a line is down due to a windstorm, we have the ability to operate these devices and reroute the power

from a different area. Prior to the use of smart devices, that same downed line would have resulted in 2000 houses without power awaiting line repair. The smart devices allow us to isolate that problem and possibly have fewer than 100 houses without power. The total outage time will be far less. While the goal is to remain 'outage free', we are always going to have to work in conjunction with Mother Nature, animals, trees, and the human impacts (i.e., automobile accidents). "We want our members to understand that we take outages personally and we try to mitigate them the best we can." says Tommy Nance, Electric Operations Manager.

Our communications division is the 'engine' that drives much of our 'smart utility' initiatives across the cooperative. Our fiber-optic infrastructure supports business and residential services in ten counties in East-Central Indiana. We provide access to next-generation broadband services to the members and customers we serve. Conduit and fiber-optic cables are simultaneously placed jointly with our other utilities, where possible, ensuring all cooperative members have immediate access to these services in both new developments and in rural areas.

We also partner and routinely explore opportunities for growth well outside of our cooperative service areas, including planned (and already completed) projects this year to construct in portions of Greenfield, Shelbyville, New Castle, New Palestine, Rushville, Shirley, Wilkinson, and Kennard. All-in, more than 160 miles of fiber-optic cable will be added to the NineStar network in 2021. With an entrepreneurial spirit, and a focus of continual innovation and technology-based improvements, our communications team is 'at the ready' to get and keep you connected wherever you choose to call home.

In 2020, NineStar spent most of the year on construction of new facilities in the Gem water serving area. Upgrades included an expansion to the existing water treatment plant in Meadow Havens Park in New Palestine and a new 500,000-gallon water tower at Gateway Park in Mt. Comfort and I-70. Both upgrades will allow for the continued growth of the western Hancock



**JEFF CONLEY**  
VP OF OPERATIONS

County area. Construction on both projects will be completed by late Spring of this year. Several new subdivisions were approved last year and will soon be ready for homes to begin popping up, some of which already have started. Subdivisions include Heron Creek, Copperstone, and Centennial North. Doubling the treatment plant's capacity to nearly a million gallons per day will ensure future demands are easily met, increase storage, and adds additional fire protection capacity. Plans continue to roll out new metering infrastructure that will continue into 2021. Nearly half has been completed in 2020. These upgrades ensure accurate metering to minimize water loss and allow us to operate as efficiently as possible. Construction has begun in the New Palestine area on one main extension project. This will create a loop to better serve existing homes while meeting future demands as these areas continue to grow.

Customer service and continued progress are incorporated into our daily duties. We are proud to continue to offer excellent services we are long known for, while incorporating new and innovative options to better facilitate our members/customers. We greatly appreciate your patience while NineStar Connect strives to work toward the best interests of the members and communities we serve in this ever-changing world.



# NINESTAR WELCOMES THREE NEW DIRECTORS



## DIRECTOR, DISTRICT 3

### ROBIN RITCHIE

**BACKGROUND:** Robin Ritchie has been a cooperative member since 2015. She has a Bachelor Degree in Business from Indiana University and a Master of Library Science (MLS) also from Indiana University. She currently is employed with the New Castle – Henry County Public Library as a children’s assistant. She was previously employed at AT&T/Lucent Technologies as a software associate/systems consultant. Robin is a 2001 graduate of Leadership Hancock County, Dale Carnegie Training of Central Indiana. Robin and her husband David live in Middletown.

**DIRECTOR STATEMENT:** While employed at AT&T/Lucent and the Courier Journal my main focus was customer service. Working together with my team and the client’s team to implement the installation of telecommunications equipment and software upgrades. This involved an understanding of the client’s business needs, the needs of team members and working together to complete the project. Working at the library I have learned a lot about the needs of our patrons and conditions present in the community. I am a team player and the knowledge and experience I gained in my career journey will help me develop an understanding of the needs and expectations of our community and make informed decisions for the direction of NineStar Connect. I am eager to learn more in serving the people in our communities.



## DIRECTOR, DISTRICT 4

### SCOTT PITTMAN

**BACKGROUND:** Scott Pittman has been a cooperative member since 2016. He has his Bachelor Degree in Youth Ministry from Olivet Nazarene University, his Masters in Ministry Leadership from Indiana Wesleyan University and his MBA from Indiana Wesleyan University. He currently works at Indiana Wesleyan University as the Director of Enrollment Staff Development. Previously, Scott was a Corporate Representative at IWU, an Office Claims Adjuster at Farmers Insurance and an Associate Youth/College Pastor at the Church of the Nazarene. Scott is Corporate Trainer Certified and is a current member of the Association for Talent Development. He is an appointed member of the Guiding Coalition for the Student Experience at Indiana Wesleyan. He is also an ordained elder in the Church of the Nazarene. In his free time, he is an active volunteer with Harvest Church and coaches youth sports. Additionally, Scott and his wife Amanda own two businesses based out of McCordsville, Pittman Technologies and Indy Laundry Fairy. They are Hoosiers by choice, moving back to Indiana in 2016, after having lived in Indiana from 2002-2009. Scott and Amanda live in McCordsville and have four children; Isabella (15), Bianca (13), Jacob (9) and Maezie (5). Scott and his family are committed to Hancock County and having their children graduate from Mt. Vernon schools.

**DIRECTOR STATEMENT:** As a corporate trainer and talent development professional, I am invested in developing people and organizations. I have been a part of non-profit leadership for most of my career and understand the value that cooperatives provide in improving the quality of life for their members. I am invested in Hancock County and desire to give long-term leadership to the community in which I live, and make a positive impact on my friends and neighbors. NineStar Connect is an innovative organization in an industry that is seeing rapid changes, and I believe I can help give strategic direction for the future, while staying committed to the legacy of service that NineStar Connect embodies. As a lifelong learner, I would serve the board with an attitude of learning, growth, and innovation. It would be an honor to represent my community by serving on the NineStar Connect Board of Directors.



## DIRECTOR, DISTRICT AT-LARGE #2

### TIMOTHY BRYANT

**BACKGROUND:** Timothy Bryant has been a cooperative member since 1991. He has his Bachelor’s degree in Engineering from Purdue University (West Lafayette) and his MBA from Indiana Wesleyan University and is a SHRM Certified Professional. He is currently the Managing Director at IT Synergistics, LLC. Previously, he was VP of Administration for the Indiana Blood Center. Tim has over 25 years of experience in the executive management field specifically working for non-profit and small businesses serving as CEO/CFO/CIO roles. He has also worked and reported directly to a board of directors, so he understands the responsibilities and nature of that interaction. Tim is a member of New Palestine United Methodist Church (past treasurer and Sunday school teacher); County Chairman for FNRA (advancing 2nd Amendment rights); past adjunct faculty for IUPUI; volunteer for the Indy 500 Festival/Mini Marathon. Tim and his wife Susan have lived in Hancock County for over 30 years and raised three children: Erin, Matthew and Lauren. Additionally, Tim and Susan have six grandchildren.

**DIRECTOR STATEMENT:** I’ve known NineStar for 30 years, both professionally and as a customer. These experiences give me a thorough understanding of NineStar’s offerings and management. I value three qualifications for this role. Commitment – I understand the time needed, and I’m ready for the challenge. Skills – A candidate should have skills that align with a director role. Having both engineering and management degrees combined with over 25 years senior-level management allow me to bring both governance and technical experiences that align with those of a community board. I currently report to a corporate board, so I understand the oversight required of a board. Community – Finally, a candidate should have a good sense of community. My wife and I committed to raising a family in this community, and I want to give back the time and talents I have. I will work hard to continue the community efforts NineStar has worked to establish.



## FORMER HANCOCK RURAL TELEPHONE EMPLOYEE AND INDUSTRY LEADER PASSES AWAY

Fredrick Thomas Rowland, age 69, of Lafayette, TN passed away Tuesday, January 26, 2021 at Vanderbilt Hospital in Nashville, TN. Tom was born in Indianapolis, IN on March 19, 1951. Tom ran track and cross country at Greenfield High School in Greenfield, IN. He married Melissa Jones in 1971.

Tom started his career in telecommunications as a temporary contract worker for Hancock Rural Telephone Cooperative now Nine Star Connect, when he was hired by then President Dan O'Connor in 1969. "Hancock was changing from a 10-party open wire system to a one-part buried system. I spent the summer laying wire and rewiring many subscribers' houses for the switch." After that first summer he spent another 10 years with Hancock, working in installation repair and central office operations, before taking on a managerial role within the cooperative as supervisor of installation and maintenance. This background gave him an important perspective on the daily operations of a telco.

In 1979, Tom became the general manager of Davies-Martin Rural Telephone Cooperative in Montgomery, Indiana. In 1984 Tom was hired as the general manager of North Central Telephone Cooperative in Lafayette, TN where he retired in 2008. He has a long distinguished history in telecommunications. He was a past member and president of the National Telecommunications Cooperative Association Board and served for 13 years as a Group Health Trustee, a highly technical leadership position that guides NTCA's health program.

In addition to leading North Central Telephone and the NTCA board he was active on numerous state and association boards, including the Tennessee Rural Communications Cooperative Association, the Kentucky Telephone Association and the Tennessee Telecommunications Association. Tom was also a board member and served as president of both the Rural Telephone Finance Cooperative and National Rural Telecommunications Cooperative.



FREDRICK THOMAS ROWLAND



CHARLES KENNEDY

## KENNEDY REPLACES DULIN ON NINESTAR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

They say timing in life is everything. For Michael Dulin the timing wasn't right but for Charles Kennedy it couldn't be more perfect. Dulin was recently chosen by the NineStar board of directors to replace Chris Jeter on the board representing District 1. A little over a month into his tenure with NineStar, Dulin accepted a new job as Chief Operating Officer for Shamrock Environmental Corporation. The work at the new company not only came with a new title but also a more extensive travel schedule. Dulin saw that he wouldn't be able to devote the necessary time to NineStar and as such tendered his resignation.

The NineStar board met and decided to review once again the pool of now seven candidates who had expressed interest and went through the process to replace Jeter. After brief discussion, the board landed on Charles Kennedy. Charles was offered the position and accepted immediately. He joined the board at their April meeting.

President and CEO Michael Burrow stated, "We understand Michael was presented and offer he couldn't refuse and we wish him best of luck in his future endeavors. While we hate to see him leave so early in his tenure, we are blessed that we had so many qualified people express interest in the open seat. We are thrilled to have Charles join our board and I believe he will add to the depth and breadth to our board."

Charles Kennedy has been a member of NineStar since 2016. He has a Bachelor's Degree from Purdue University majoring in Marketing and Finance. In addition, he attended the Graduate School of Banking at the University of Wisconsin. Since 1996, he has been with Cambridge Capital Management Corporation and serves as their Executive Vice President and Portfolio Manager. He has participated as a Director on several entities boards and not-for-profit organizations. Charles and his wife Dianna have three grown children and resides in Fishers.

**Join Us On NINESTAR DAY at the Hancock County 4-H Fair!**  
**Tuesday, June 22nd** *Let's have some fun!*

Visit our tent for games, prizes & giveaways!

GOOD FOR ONE DOLLAR OFF

NINESTAR CONNECT

Look for a card for **\$1.00 OFF** a lemon shake-up. **COMING TO MAILBOXES SOON!**



# ANOTHER WIND IN THE WALL: INDIANA FAMILIES AND BUSINESSES INCREASINGLY POWERED BY RENEWABLE ENERGY

By Amanda Steeb  
Director of Marketing and Communications  
Kankakee Valley REMC

**A** blustery chilly day may be the reason you're avoiding the outdoors. It's also the reason you have the electricity you need to stay inside.

When you plug an appliance or device into a wall outlet, renewable resources are increasingly powering them up. Renewable energy resources such as wind and solar power have been added to the energy grid in recent years, including in Indiana. The U.S. Energy Information Administration reported that in 2019, annual energy consumption from renewables in the U.S. exceeded coal consumption for the first time in more than 130 years.

As technology has evolved, once expensive resources such as renewables and natural gas have diversified the nation's power supply, including in Indiana. Currently, 38 electric co-ops in the Hoosier state use wind energy (tied for the third most co-ops in the country) while 39 Indiana electric co-ops use solar energy (the second highest total in the nation), according to the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA).

This increasingly diverse power supply helps keep rates low by safeguarding against price volatility for any particular resource. If one resource becomes more expensive, other more competitive resources can ensure that families and businesses can seamlessly continue to have their energy needs met affordably. Renewable energy resources also benefit the environment. More renewables replacing fossil fuel means that less carbon dioxide is emitted into the atmosphere, reducing everyone's carbon footprint. This has even become an economic development tool for electric co-ops, which regularly work with businesses to offset their energy consumption with renewables to help them meet their sustainability goals. Community solar programs and additional options may even be available for residential members to take advantage of renewable resources.

Technology improvements can benefit you in other ways: your local electric energy cooperative may offer rebates for energy efficiency upgrades to your home or business that will lower your long-term energy use, saving you even more. All of these developments mean that when you plug an appliance or device into the wall, technology improvements combined with resources such as the sun and wind are doing more than ever to power your day.

*Curious about how a small utility coop operates?*

*Interested in serving as a NineStar Director one Day?*



*Are you a NineStar member who just wants to know more about your cooperative?*

## NineStar Connect members are eligible to enroll in five 90 minute courses that include:



**OPERATIONS:** Learn about NineStar's electric, telecommunications, water and wastewater distribution systems, how they are built and maintained and major maintenance or expansion over the next 36 months.

**August 17, 2021, 6:00pm at South Campus – Jeff Conley**



**TECHNOLOGY:** Learn about NineStar's current and future technologies, how it is adapting to change to meet member's needs along with how it operates its support center.

**September 28, 2021, 6:00pm at South Campus – Ross Ferson**



**FINANCE:** Learn about NineStar's current and upcoming capital budgets, along with the taxes that a non-profit utility pays and how capital credits are allocated and retired.

**October 19, 2021, 6:00pm at South Campus – Scott Hiatt**



**ADMINISTRATION:** Learn about NineStar's customer service, subscriber billing, marketing/member relations and HR/employee development.

**November 16, 2021, 6:00pm at South Campus – Regina Bever**



**CORPORATE DEVELOPMENT:** Learn about NineStar's current strategic plans, how it assists other cooperative utilities and how it acts to assist communities in business development and quality of place through investments in utility infrastructure.

**December 8, 2021, 6:00pm at South Campus – Michael Burrow**

*(There is NO CHARGE for enrolling and attending the NineStar Leadership Academy. Only members of NineStar Connect in good standing may enroll. Enrollment is limited to the first 25 members. Enrollees attending and completing all five courses will receive a certificate and recognition.)*

**For more information or to enroll in the NineStar Leadership Academy, contact Ross Ferson at 317.326.3131 during regular business hours.**





## COOL TECHNOLOGY:

# A WI-FI THERMOSTAT CAN KEEP YOU COMFORTABLE WHILE LOWERING COSTS

Over the last few years, Wi-Fi-enabled thermostats have become a popular upgrade for people updating equipment in their homes. Thermostats such as the Nest and Honeywell Wi-Fi thermostats (among others) connect to a home’s wireless Internet network and can be programmed remotely from a wireless device, such as a smart phone or tablet. You may want to consider upgrading to a smart thermostat for several reasons:

## THEY ARE EASY TO SCHEDULE AND ADJUST.

Unlike programmable thermostats, Wi-Fi thermostats are much easier to set up on a schedule and refine as needed. Since a wireless device can be used, homeowners can update them anytime — even when in a different location. This can be especially useful when you want to change settings on the go, such as when you are on vacation.

## SEVERAL VERSIONS TAKE ADVANTAGE OF MACHINE LEARNING TO GET TO KNOW YOUR HOUSE.

Some models of Wi-Fi thermostats can learn how settings impact your home’s heating and cooling systems and adjust accordingly. This ongoing learning will ensure that the thermostat most effectively reaches the desired temperature to keep your home comfortable.

## SOME WI-FI THERMOSTATS OFFER OPTIONS TO MAXIMIZE SAVINGS OR COMFORT.

Advanced options for some Wi-Fi thermostats

allow the user to optimize the settings for greater control. Homeowners can choose settings to ensure that they are the most comfortable, for instance, while the energy savings mode will encourage you to use less energy to help lower your carbon footprint and save in long-term energy costs.

If you are considering upgrading your thermostat, a Wi-Fi thermostat can be a great option to keep you comfortable. And if you are looking to save energy, check out the ENERGY STAR website for the list of its certified Wi-Fi thermostats that can help homeowners save energy — and money! You also can visit NineStar’s Energy Advisor Matt Strahl for more information, and you can visit [www.PowerMoves.com](http://www.PowerMoves.com) for more information and tips on saving energy.