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The Tribbett Family sharing their positive experiences of their newly acquired broadband internet.



Super Fast 2.5 Gigabit Broadband Available and in demand

By Valerie Connelly, VP Government Affairs and Public Relations

With a house full of teens, a new grandbaby and a busy farm operation, Spring Tribbett and her husband David chose the fastest broadband service available — 2.5-gigabits — when Choptank Fiber came down their long gravel lane in May.

“I feel like we’re in the 21st Century now,” explained Spring. “I don’t have to walk outside and point my phone toward a cell tower to read a text or get an email.”

The Tribbetts participate in a family farm operation in Caroline County that includes poultry, grain, composting and vegetable crop production. On the home farm, David grows one of the largest commercial crops of miscanthus in the region. The ornamental grasses

are harvested annually and chopped for bedding in poultry houses.

The self-described “suburban mom” works in the farm office by day and then cheers for her kids at local sporting events by night. She worried that Taylor, age 17, Calleigh, 16, and Camdyn, 12, were missing out on important learning opportunities during the year long COVID shut down.

“The girls would call and say ‘the hotspot just dropped us again and we can’t get into class,’” said Spring. “I’d have to bring them to the farm office, or they’d have to go sit in the school parking lot to get on the Wi-Fi some days.”

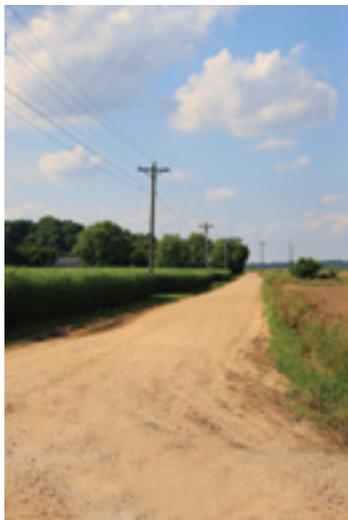
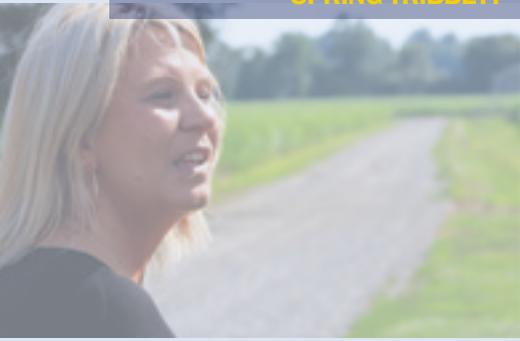
When Choptank Fiber began to offer service to Cooperative members on the Shore, Spring jumped at the

chance to get connected. “I asked who can we call and how can we get on the list?” she said. “When we were able to sign up I considered the number of devices we might want to connect — phones, TVs, computers — and decided to go with the fastest speed available.”

“I don’t know many people who can get broadband at that speed,” Spring observed. “We were not taking any chances, we wanted fast internet, so we went for the 2.5-gigabit package, and we have no regrets. The service is excellent.”

When we sat down with the family, which also included their daughter Ty, and 3-week-old Haven, who live nearby, everyone was texting and talking and excited to tell us how much better connected life is at

“WE WERE NOT TAKING ANY CHANCES, WE WANTED FAST INTERNET, SO WE WENT FOR THE 2.5-GIGABIT PACKAGE, AND WE HAVE NO REGRETS. THE SERVICE IS EXCELLENT.”
 - SPRING TRIBBETT



CHOPTANK FIBER UPDATE

Choptank Fiber was awarded another \$23 million in grant funding from the Office of Statewide Broadband in May. The grant, applied for with local government partners in Caroline, Cecil and Somerset Counties, will allow us to make broadband available to another 3,000 members over the next 18 months.

“We appreciate the confidence Governor Larry Hogan and local leaders have placed in Choptank Fiber,” said Mike Malandro, President & CEO of Choptank Electric Cooperative.

“We are getting the job done. We are doing what we promised. And we will keep working until all unserved members have access to modern-day fast, reliable broadband.” Malandro pledged. “Grant funds allow us to get there faster and allow local government partners to bridge the broadband divide in their communities – it’s a win-win.”

home. “When I got my new TV at Christmas, I could only watch over-the-air live TV,” explained Camdyn. “Our old internet was so slow and when we came home after being in a place with good internet, it took forever for our devices to connect again.”

The Tribbetts’ previous internet option was a wireless signal accessed from an antenna on a nearby barn. While they appreciated having some service, they revel in the gigafast broadband experience with Choptank Fiber. “We watch Netflix all the time now and we can get our emails immediately,” said Spring. “And the girls are able to do homework and participate in classes and other online educational activities.”

When Choptank Electric Co-op’s Board of Directors made the decision to deploy broadband for members, they considered families like the Tribbetts who live down long farm lanes.

“We know that rural families have to do a lot more from home than some of their city counterparts,” said Amy Brandt, Caroline County Director on the Choptank Board. “They want to run their farm businesses, educate their kids, place grocery orders, use telehealth and so much more.”

Choptank Fiber offers a range of residential broadband packages to help meet member needs. Members can pre-register for broadband and learn more about packages ranging from 100-Mbps to 2.5-Gbps speeds at www.choptankfiber.com.



Your Pennies at Work: Saving Lives with Awareness

Call 988 if you're in a crisis

By Elizabeth Hallett, Manager of Marketing & Communications

The Choptank Electric Trust is supporting an awareness campaign, coordinated by Jesse's Paddle, to inform communities across the Eastern Shore about the major upgrade to services for people in crisis.

Jesse's Paddle: The Jesse Klump Suicide Awareness and Prevention Program, based in Worcester County, has been dedicated to mental health awareness and suicide prevention since its inception in February 2009. The program was created in memory of Jesse Klump, who was only 17 years old when he took his own life. His mother wanted him to live on and create something out of the tragedy.

"Jesse worked with me here at the Pocomoke River Canoe Company since he was 14," said Ron Pilling, Corresponding Secretary, volunteer, and one of the founders for Jesse's Paddle. "He was a smart kid, good athlete, fantastic musician, and just an all-around good kid. It blind-sided everyone when he took his life."

This group's sole goal and desire is to raise awareness and educate local community members on the lower shore about mental health, the warning signs, and how to act in the face of a crisis situation. As the largest suicide prevention group on the lower Eastern Shore, they visit over 75 events annually along with educational opportunities with health departments, schools, and other county entities.

Their biggest goal yet has come this year as the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services

Administration begins a new campaign for promotion of an easy and cohesive number anyone can call in the event of a personal mental health crisis or if you know someone in a mental health crisis and don't know what to do. The new number is called 988. Similar to 911, this line is dedicated to helping those who

Board provide funds above and beyond the requested amount to reach out," said Tom Terry, Chairman of the Choptank Electric Trust Board. "So Jackie and I sat down with Ron and asked if they could expand their services to all counties on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. When he agreed, we were ecstatic that the



are in an emergency mental health crisis. Trained counselors will be on standby 24/7 to help anyone who is struggling with their mental health or substance abuse.

To help spread the word that this national number has universally changed to 988, the Jesse's Paddle program wanted to hold an awareness campaign originally for the lower three counties.

When Trust Board Member Jackie Brown began her initial assessment of the application from Jesse's Paddle to cover a 988 awareness program for the three lower counties, she recommended that the Trust

group would go above and beyond their initial budget and reach out to additional counties to educate even more people about the new 988 number for suicide prevention and mental health."

With the donation of \$12,000 from the Choptank Electric Trust, Jesse's Paddle will be promoting this new and essential service to all counties on the Eastern Shore of Maryland.

"First off, I want to thank the Trust for the generous grant, and for the idea and opportunity to reach farther than we originally planned," said Ron Pilling. "This is not the first time that the trust has generously



donated to our program. A few years ago, they bought our first computer and projectors so that we could take presentations to schools and health facilities. They also bought for us the big exhibit table that we use for our booth at events. This is the third donation and it's so timely. It's the most generous funding they have supplied to date."

Suicide and mental health are still taboo subjects among most Americans, and awareness is more than half the battle in saving lives. In 2020, suicide was the 12th leading cause of death in the United States at 13.48 suicides per 100,000 citizens. Rural America is even more affected by suicide than urban areas. In Maryland in 2020, rural counties on the Eastern Shore tended to have higher suicide rates as compared to more urban areas in the state. With Maryland's overall rate being 10.15 suicides per 100,000 people, the Eastern Shore's rate is 13.2 per 100,000. The CDC also suggests that one suicide costs the country on average \$1.1 million when you add up that around 40 people are affected, the counseling that is needed, and lost time at work.

"Roughly, we have spent around \$350,000 in suicide prevention since we started the organization," said Mr. Pilling. "We don't often know for a fact that what we have done has directly saved a life, but when you hear one or two stories at every event that speaks to how we saved someone indirectly because of our

education, or someone they knew took on our classes and saved a life, it's worth it."

"This is what makes this grant so timely," he continued. "Mental health is critical today and people are finally starting to talk about it. Parents and community members are requesting information or a class for students now. With this easy to remember number, 988, it will make it so much more accessible to people who really need help."

"This program is near and dear to my heart," said Jackie Brown, Worcester County Representative for the Choptank Electric Trust Board. "Jesse was my daughter's classmate and was a fine young man. When I heard that the organization was beginning this campaign, I reached out to one of the board members and we collaborated with Ron on what they really needed. We cannot thank Ron enough for all he is doing to make this outreach as impactful as possible. It is a privilege to come alongside this organization to help promote the upcoming release of the 988 suicide response number."

If you would like to donate to Jesse's Paddle and their efforts on suicide awareness and prevention, you can visit jessespaddle.org. If you have an idea to share, or for more information about the Choptank Electric Trust, you can visit our website at choptankelectric.coop or call our Member Service Center at 1-877-892-0001.

CALL 988 for CRISIS PREVENTION

A warning sign is an indication that a suicidal crisis may be imminent. This is the time when action is necessary.

WARNING SIGNS INCLUDE

- ANXIETY, ANGRY OUTBURSTS THAT ARE UNCHARACTERISTIC
- GIVING AWAY VALUED POSSESSIONS
- CHANGES IN EATING OR SLEEPING HABITS
- CHANGES IN DRESS AND/OR PERSONAL HYGIENE
- TALKING OR WRITING ABOUT DEATH (in kids, drawing grim pictures)
- EXPRESSING USELESSNESS, WORTHLESSNESS, PURPOSELESSNESS ("You'd all be better without me; My life is going nowhere and never will; I'll always be a loser.")
- SELF-ISOLATION (A student sits alone in the cafeteria rather than with friends; a farmer stops going to church or hanging out with other friends over coffee.)
- LOSS OF INTEREST IN THINGS THAT ONCE GAVE ONE PLEASURE
- ENGAGING IN RISKY ACTS (driving too fast, experimenting with drugs)

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT



*Charge Up
with
Power Player*

**BARBIE
FAULKNER,**
CPA
MANAGER OF
ACCOUNTING

HOW DOES YOUR JOB FIT INTO THE OVERALL COOPERATIVE BUSINESS?

For the past 10 years, I have served as the Manager of Accounting at the Cooperative's headquarters in Denton, MD. I lead the Accounting Department, which is comprised of myself, three Staff Accountants, and three Office Specialists. Together, our team manages the financial transactions of the Cooperative, including billing, payment processing, accounts payable, capital credits, banking, and monthly financial reporting.

WHAT IS THE MOST REWARDING EXPERIENCE YOU HAVE HAD IN YOUR JOB?

Back in 2012, when I had been with the Cooperative for about six months, Hurricane Sandy hit our service territory and caused major power outages. Cooperatives from other states came into our area to help in restoration efforts. During this time, many employees were assigned to district offices to provide support and my primary task was to make sure the crews in our St. Michaels territory were fed!

We all had one goal — getting the lights back on for our members. This is when I realized the true meaning of a cooperative.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE BEST ABOUT YOUR JOB?

The best part of my job are the people I get to share my day with, especially my accounting team. The Cooperative truly has a workforce that works together to serve the membership. Additionally, work-life balance is especially important to me, and the Cooperative has provided the balance I need. I feel fortunate to work for a great organization that is close to home.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO OUTSIDE OF WORK?

I have been married to my husband Joey for 20 years. We have two children, Brady (17) and Gracie (14). Between work, school, and sports, our family life is always busy. When we are not on the go, I enjoy brunch and bonfires with friends and spending time with family.

Board Member Bob Thompson Receives Board Leadership Certification

At the May Board Meeting, Bob Thompson, Board representative for the Ocean Pines District, was presented with his Board Leadership Certification by Chairman Jeff Rathell. This is an NRECA certification that recognizes directors that are committed to continuing their education beyond typical board education. This credential demonstrates their ongoing commitment to advancing knowledge and performing their fiduciary duty to the best of their ability. Congratulations, Bob!



Answering Our Members Regarding Solar Facilities

We often get questions from members about the large solar and/or battery storage facilities that have popped up on the Eastern Shore in recent years. There are many regulatory and market forces that have prompted this renewable energy development.

In most cases, solar developers unaffiliated with Choptank build these projects and then sell the output to Choptank Electric, Old

Dominion Electric Cooperative, or into the open market in the regional grid operator transmission grid. These projects are different from the smaller solar arrays eligible for net metering for individual Choptank members.

For more information regarding renewable energy, log onto the Cooperative's website at choptankelectric.coop/green-energy.com.

Notice to Members Of Revised Power Cost Adjustment

Choptank Electric Cooperative members will see an increase in the cost of power supply starting with July 1, 2022, billing. This will be reflected in the Power Cost Adjustment (PCA), which will change from a charge of \$.01388/kWh to a charge of \$.03159/kWh.

The monthly bill of a residential member who uses 1,000 kWh per month will be increased by \$17.71. This adjustment reflects an increase of wholesale power cost from our generation and transmission supplier, Old Dominion Electric Cooperative.

This rate increase results from rising costs of generating power — specifically the cost of fuel used to run power plants across the mid-Atlantic and country. Natural gas prices have doubled this year, and that fuel source is used to generate approximately 40% of all the electricity used in our region.

This entire rate increase is passed directly to members with no profit benefiting Choptank Electric Cooperative or ODEC, which generates the power for our cooperative and 10 other not-for-profit co-ops regionally.

Renewable Energy Certificate (RECs)

Interested in renewable energy but don't have the space or can't install on your home?

- Choptank Electric offers RECs for anyone who is interested in purchasing renewable energy without the hassle.



Biomass



Geothermal & Heat Capture

- Purchase green power in blocks of 100 kWh for \$0.20 cents each.
- RECs appear as an extra line item on your monthly bill for easy tracking.

Minimum purchase of 1 block required, and there is no maximum - buy as much renewable energy as you want! A one-year commitment applies. Signing up is easy! Simply visit www.choptankelectric.coop/renewable-energy-credits and complete the form.

MEMBERS NOTES

Our members are the reason Choptank Electric Cooperative exists. Whether on social media, by phone, or through handwritten letters, we want to say thank you to our members who let us know when we are doing a good job! Thank you, all!

“I am very happy with C.E.C. My electric hardly ever goes out. I have been with them for 42 years. The workers are very helpful and well-trained in the field and at the office.”

- Eddie Collins Jr.

Choptank Electric Trust Awards

The Choptank Electric Trust is a 501(c)(3) charitable foundation funded by Operation Round Up donations from members of Choptank Electric. Funds from the Trust are distributed in all nine counties of Maryland’s Eastern Shore.

May 2022

- Community Fire Company of Millington - \$2,300
- New Beginnings Youth & Family Services - \$2,200
- Somerset County Historical Society - \$500

The total of approved applications was \$24,244, which included \$19,244 for individual home and medical expenses.



Choptank Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Choptank Electric, a Touchstone Energy Cooperative, is a not-for-profit, member-owned, electric distribution Co-op serving approximately 55,500 residential, commercial, and industrial members in all nine counties on Maryland’s Eastern Shore.

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Choptank Fiber, LLC

Choptank Fiber, LLC is a wholly-owned broadband subsidiary of Choptank Electric Cooperative. Choptank Fiber’s goal is to install true Gigabit broadband with no data caps one community at a time until we serve all our members on the Eastern Shore.