OFFICE CLOSING:

SVEC offices will be closed
Monday, Sept. 4, in
observance of Labor Day.

Offices will reopen on
Tuesday, Sept. 5.

Have a safe holiday weekend!
Effective Sept. 1, Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative will discontinue the practice of collecting member-owners’ past-due payments at the service location.

SVEC has traditionally sent personnel to homes and businesses to collect money and an associated $50 collection fee if an account is subject to disconnection for nonpayment. After careful consideration of the value of this practice to SVEC and our member-owners, the Cooperative determined that field collecting will stop.

While stopping field collections will require an adjustment to some member-owners’ schedules, SVEC still offers several ways to pay bills and avoid the cutting of electric service. These options include:

- **By mail**, using the remittance envelope provided with your bill statement.
- **Eazy Pay**. SVEC member-owners can sign up for this free service to automatically deduct payments from their bank accounts.
- **In person** at any district office, open 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, or drive-through windows in the Staunton and Winchester offices.
- At any of our conveniently located **kiosks** available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with no transaction fees.
- Through the **night deposit box** at any district office location.
- **By credit or debit card**, via telephone at 1-800-234-7832, or online at www.svec-online.coop.
- **MySVEC app.**
- **MoneyGram or Western Union.** Fees may apply.

Please note that payments made at any location other than an SVEC office may be delayed up to five days.

According to SVECs Terms and Conditions for Providing Electric Service (Section IX, Part B), any service disconnected for nonpayment “shall not be reconnected until full payment is received for:

a. All obligations to date;
b. A Reconnection Charge and/or applicable fees; and
c. Any required deposits.”

Further, settlement of charges and fees received before 4 p.m. Monday through Friday will entitle a disconnected member-owner to be reconnected on that day for a regular work hour’s reconnection charge of $50 per trip per account. If a member-owner requires that service be reconnected at a time other than regular working hours, an after-hours reconnection charge of $85 per trip per account will be assessed.

Thank you for your understanding as we work to better serve our member-owners.

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**STATEMENT OF NON-DISCRIMINATION**

This Institution Is An Equal Opportunity Provider, Employer, And Lender.

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA’s TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992.

Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

1. mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
   Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
   1400 Independence Avenue, SW
   Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
2. fax: (202) 690-7442; or
3. email: program.intake@usda.gov.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

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**EQUAL EMPLOYMENT POLICY**

In order for Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative to abide by its Affirmative Action Statement, the Cooperative publishes the following Equal Employment Policy. This is not a solicitation of applicants for employment.

All applicants for employment shall be considered and hired on the basis of merit, without regard to race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex (including gender identity and expression), marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or veteran’s status. The employment practices shall ensure equal treatment of all employees, without discrimination in rates of pay or other opportunities for advancement because of an employee’s race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or a part of an individual’s income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.) Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative is an equal opportunity provider and employer. To file a complaint of discrimination or unfair work practices, contact Vivian Michael, Vice President of Corporate Services & HR at SVEC, by calling (540) 574-7248, faxing (540) 574-7230, or email: vmichael@svec.coop

“This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer. SVEC supports our armed services and veterans in employment opportunities.”
A sound system blares in the background, undergoing tests for the evening’s life-changing event as the bride-to-be prepares tables for the pending festivities. Make no mistake, it was to be her night, but one could argue the real star of the show surrounded her. That would be The Highland Center, dazzling in all of its $3.1-million renovated glory. The facility is an events venue and so much more, promoting and housing everything that Highland and surrounding counties have to offer. If there’s a story about courtship and holy matrimony to be told in Monterey, it’s about the center and the programs and businesses it supports.

“We’re involved in so many things,” Cornelia Granbery said, “it’s hard to distinctively define it.”

Granbery is the local foods coordinator for the nonprofit organization The Highland Center. The group operates out of the building bearing the same name, the Highland Center, which is the former Monterey High School and, until 1997, an elementary.

The nonprofit, which was created to be a catalyst for cultural and economic development, purchased the former school from the Highland County Board of Supervisors in 1998, the year it was established. In 2016, the multi-million-dollar renovation to the building was complete, improving spots for business incubator tenants, such as artists and community programs, and space for private events, retreats, performances and more.

But the center’s 21,000 square feet only begins to describe the nonprofit’s contributions to the area, many of which are connected to local food production.

Local ‘Gem’ Stands Out

As a vital cog in the area’s economic development, the nonprofit sees its most successful efforts in the form of local food programs. The Highland Farmers’ Market, in its 20th season, operates in front of the renovated building, featuring vendors from Highland and Bath counties in Virginia, plus Pendleton County in West Virginia.

In 2016, more than $35,000 was spent at the market.

Given the longevity of the local space, Betty Mitchell, the center’s executive director, jokingly brags that Highland opened a market before having one became “cool.”

“We really do a lot of work within the two states and region for food programs,” she said.

Those efforts include Faces of Farmers, a website dedicated to connecting consumers with their food producers to show that food does not just come from a farm, but from people.

The website features stories on various local farmers, searchable by location or by product. Contact information is available for specific farms in the region, and a “Where to Get the Goods” section tells site visitors where they can purchase local products.

Mitchell’s Cress Farm, where she and her husband raise lambs, is among those featured.

“I think it’s so important that people continue to work with their hands,” she
Cooperative Living

www.svec.coop

sells the site. “We have friends from Richmond who have never been on a working farm or watched an animal being born. They are fascinated and I’m always happy to have extra hands at lambing time.”

Cress Farm’s lambs are locally processed at Alleghany Meats, a USDA custom meat-processing facility outside of Monterey. Here, to no surprise, the road again leads back to The Highland Center.

Alleghany Meats opened in 2012 with 92 investors, including the nonprofit center that helped lead the charge in securing the funding to open. Local producers rejoiced as they finally had a facility nearby — and one with modern amenities, on top of that — to spare them time and costly trips to more distant spots in the state, Mitchell said. The next-closest facility is in Harrisonburg, she said.

Alleghany Meats offers high-quality USDA beef, bison, pork, goat and lamb products from local producers and others around Virginia, West Virginia, and even North Carolina. It began selling directly to consumers in May with the opening of an indoor market at the business.

“We’re trying to fill a niche here,” said Troy Snead, Alleghany’s financial manager.

The business is now its own company, independent of the Center, but the nonprofit continues to provide assistance. It helps secure grant funding, creates marketing materials and has developed a new website for the slaughterhouse.

“It’s an incredible gem for the region and to livestock producers here,” Granbery said.

Highland Inn Revitalization

A more prominent jewel sits in the heart of Monterey.

Before The Highland Center could begin renovations to the former school, it needed temporary housing for staff and tenants. That search yielded something more permanent and substantial.

In February 2015, the Center purchased the historic, and vacant, Highland Inn and restaurant in Monterey. The 1904 landmark, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and Virginia Landmarks Register, went out of operation in October 2014 and ownership had gone to a bank.

In 2016, the Center reopened the restaurant and adjoining Black Sheep Tavern, and a renovation to the 18-room inn, including making the facility handicap accessible, is planned for this fall. The restaurant will remain open through the process.

Mitchell is encouraged by the work of Executive Chef Dan Evans, whose menu includes food and drinks from a dozen local farmers and four Virginia breweries. The dining room is lined with pictures of the farms from which Evans gets his ingredients — a physical version of the Center’s Faces of Farmers initiative.

Mitchell said the inn possesses potential to attract young people with workforce-development opportunities in the culinary and hospitality industries. Last year, the inn launched a 10-week internship open to two college undergraduates.

The internships fall perfectly in line with other youth programs offered through The Highland Center, which last year matched 16 Highland youth with 20 local worksites to help them gain essential skills for their futures.

The Center’s Future

It does not take too long for a visitor to connect the dots in Monterey to find that The Highland Center plays a role in most local food ventures. For the farmers who process at Alleghany Meats, they can rent extra freezer space at the former school. For diners at the Highland Inn, they could end up eating meat from those same producers.

Mitchell, the executive director since the nonprofit was established in 1998, and Granbery, who joined the team this year after working for a grass-fed beef brand in Northern California, are optimistic that the Center’s best years may still be coming, too.

The upstairs auditorium of the former school is prime event space, such as for wedding receptions, and has capacity for 150 people. Conference rooms, co-working areas and business incubation space wrap all around that main area and below it. Two commercial kitchens with freezer and cooler space are available for rent by food-based businesses.

Current tenants include the Highland County Arts Council, Highland County Visitors Center, Valley Program for Aging Services, Allegheny Mountain String Program and the Dance Academy. The upgraded downstairs of the building is just now ready to hold additional tenants.

“We have lots of room to fill,” Mitchell said.

For more information about the Center, visit www.thehighlandcenter.org. To see what life is like in Highland County, go to www.highlandliving.org.

Below: Betty Mitchell, executive director of The Highland Center, raises lambs at Cress Farm. Photo courtesy: The Highland Center.

• Right: The dining room at the Highland Inn is lined with pictures of the farms from which the chef gets his ingredients. Preston Knight photo.