

Rooted in Community

For Jeff Cornett, community is more than a place — it's a lifelong commitment.

Born and raised in Ripley County in the Versailles and Holton area, Jeff graduated from South Ripley High School in 1991. As a student, he spent countless hours playing basketball in the Tyson Gym, a place that would later come full circle in his life.

Like many families in the area, Jeff has been served by Southeastern Indiana REMC for as long as he can remember. His connection to the cooperative runs even deeper through his father, John Cornett, a former Tree Trimmer Foreman at SEI REMC. As a young man, Jeff worked summers and some winters alongside his dad, helping with tree trimming and working as a groundman with linemen. He remembers listening to their stories, watching them work, and gaining an appreciation for the teamwork and dedication required to keep communities powered.

After high school, Jeff attended Ball State University before beginning a long professional career. He worked for the Jackson County Sheriff's Department and later spent 28½ years with UPS, serving as a Driver Supervisor for the final 18 years. Throughout that time, Jeff remained actively involved in the community, including serving on the South Ripley School Board from 2012 through December of 2024.

In January of 2025, Jeff took on a new role as Transportation, Buildings, and Grounds Director for South Ripley Schools, continuing his commitment to supporting local students, families, and educators. He and his wife, Aimee, have two sons and a daughter, and their family roots have only strengthened Jeff's desire to stay involved and give back to the community they have always called home.

Beyond his professional work, Jeff shares a deep passion for preserving a meaningful community space: the Tyson Activity Center.



Built in 1950 as an addition to the Tyson Elementary School, home of the Versailles Lions, the building served students until South Ripley Elementary opened in 1991. Even after classes moved, the Tyson Gym remained a place where students continued to play sports — including Jeff, who created many memories on that court that he still carries with him today.

After a tornado caused significant damage in the Holton area in 2012, the Tyson Gym was used as a donation site. Jeff remembers donation boxes being slid across the floor and grew concerned about the damage they could cause. Wanting to protect the building and ensure it didn't fall into disrepair, he approached the Town Board to ask about its future. After further discussion, Jeff made an offer to purchase the building — and it was accepted.

“The day my offer was accepted,” Jeff said, “I went home and told my wife, ‘Hey, we just bought a gym.’”



Since then, Jeff and Aimee have worked tirelessly to restore and reimagine the Tyson Activity Center as a place for the entire community. Today, the facility includes a weight room and hosts a wide range of activities, including basketball programs, pickleball three times a week, baseball batting practice, soccer conditioning, volleyball, golf swing practice, gymnastics, Peer-to-Peer and Smart Programs, and RCATS, which allows students facing challenges at school to continue their education while completing community service. The gym can also be rented for birthday parties and special events.

In December of 2025, the Tyson Activity Center hosted a South Ripley High School boys basketball game — an experience Jeff described as both meaningful and nostalgic. Around 1,200 people attended, former coaches and players were recognized, and many longtime fans sat in the same seats they had decades earlier. Because the first game at the Tyson Gym was played in 1950, the event was recognized as the gym's 75th anniversary game.

"People reached out to me during and after the game," Jeff shared. "They said thank you for having it there. It felt like going back in time and reliving those memories."

Jeff is quick to credit the many people who help make the Tyson Activity Center possible, including Shannon and Stacy Schmaltz, Joe and Amy Mann, and Jerrid McDonald. He shared that their support and willingness to step in wherever needed have made a huge difference in keeping the gym running and welcoming for the community. Recent improvements to the facility include refinishing the gym floor and installing new scoreboards.

At its heart, Jeff Cornett's story reflects what it truly means to be part of a cooperative. From growing up around SEI REMC crews, to supporting local schools, to preserving a space where generations can gather, learn, and grow, Jeff embodies the belief that strong communities are built through service, stewardship, and connection.

Like the cooperative he has been part of his entire life, Jeff understands that when people invest in one another, the impact lasts far beyond a single moment.

SEI REMC EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT



Bobby Schaeffler

As Outside Plant Manager, Bobby Schaeffler oversees the integrity of SEI REMC's outside fiber infrastructure and helps ensure reliable service for members across our service territory. He leads a dedicated team responsible for the full lifecycle of the fiber plant, from installation to restoration, while also managing locates for both fiber and electric systems.

Outside of work, Bobby is very family-oriented and enjoys spending time with his wife, son, and extended family. He stays involved in his son's activities and enjoys hobbies such as golfing, gardening, learning new skills, and following the stock market.

Thank you, Bobby, for your incredible service and dedication.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

If you know an SEI REMC member who deserves to be featured, [click here](#) to share their story with us. Together, we'll continue shining a light on the members who make our cooperative family so extraordinary.