

## Customer Spotlight

# WifeSaver's New Restaurant Serves Up Fried Chicken With a Side of Energy Savings

Since 1965, Augusta, Georgia, residents have flocked to WifeSaver for its award-winning fried chicken. George Cunningham started the quick-service restaurant in his front yard as a way to cover the medical bills for his son, Chris, who was battling a childhood bout with polio. Fifty years later, grown-up Chris is president of the growing company, which now operates seven restaurants in Georgia and South Carolina.

Visitors to WifeSaver's newest location at 1510 North Leg Road can enjoy the restaurant's signature dishes while seated in a building outfitted with energy-efficient features that not only reduce energy costs, but also improve comfort.

Nearly \$7,600 in rebates from Georgia Power's Commercial Energy Efficiency Program reduced the up-front cost of purchasing more efficient equipment that will save energy and money for years to come.

## The Opportunity

When the restaurant had outgrown its North Leg Road location, a building constructed in 1974, Chris Cunningham wanted to start fresh. "We moved across the street and built a brand-new building," he says. The new facility is 3,400 square feet in size with a drive-thru window and dining room seating for 83 people.

Starting with a clean slate, Cunningham solicited advice from his contractors and vendors when specifying equipment to build out the new space. For example, a trusted electrical contractor Cunningham had worked with for years advised him to consider light-emitting diodes (LEDs) to light the new space, while a restaurant equipment supplier encouraged him to switch from gas to electric fryers.

"We've been using gas fryers for 50 years," Cunningham says, "but my restaurant supplier told me the technology of electric fryers has gotten better and that I should look at them. He brought in a manufacturer's rep who was already selling me my gas fryers, so he didn't have a dog in the hunt. He gave me the names of people who switched over to electric, and everyone I talked to said they liked them."

Talking with his Georgia Power account representative, Cunningham learned about the energy efficiency incentives he could be eligible for.



Chris Cunningham, President, WifeSaver

## Savings at a Glance

WifeSaver used incentives from Georgia Power to install energy-efficient LED lighting and kitchen equipment and switch from gas to electric fryers at its new restaurant in Augusta.

**Energy savings:**

18,760 kWh/year

**Total project cost:**

\$94,088

**Incentives paid:**

\$7,598



Long-lasting LEDs brighten up the dining area while reducing the restaurant's energy and maintenance costs.

## The Georgia Power Solution

Through Georgia Power's Commercial Energy Efficiency Program, businesses can take advantage of direct incentives to reduce the cost of upgrading to energy-efficient technologies, resulting in lower energy use and costs. Incentives are available for retrofit projects, replacement of aging equipment and high-efficiency equipment installations in new construction.

Specifically, the new restaurant qualified for incentives available for high-efficiency indoor lighting. The new LEDs Cunningham selected fit the bill, and he installed dozens of them throughout the restaurant. ENERGY STAR® certified commercial LED lighting products use at least 75 percent less energy and last 35 times longer than incandescent lighting.\* And LEDs provide optimal light color for any environment, from dining areas to parking lots.

Other new equipment that qualified for rebates included two commercial refrigerators, an ice machine and pipe insulation for the restaurant's refrigerators. WifeSaver received rebates for upgrading to this high-efficiency lighting and kitchen equipment.

## The Benefits

Cost savings was one reason Cunningham was interested in installing LEDs in his restaurant. But the main reason, he says, "was not having to change the bulbs so often. It is a pet peeve of mine to not have burned-out bulbs in my business. It's a sign of bad management to not keep things up." Another benefit of LEDs is that they produce virtually no heat, a small yet important feature when installed in a warm environment.

It's no secret that summers in Georgia are sweltering. Couple that with a half-dozen frying vats in a restaurant's kitchen and you've got a recipe for a potentially uncomfortable working environment for kitchen staff. That's the big reason Cunningham wanted to switch from gas to electric fryers.

"I've cooked in front of gas fryers for a long time, and I know how hot they are," he says. "We were looking to reduce the heat in the kitchen and make it a better place to work. And of course to save money. We did the switch, and we're happy with them. Our employees have definitely noticed that it's cooler in the kitchen."

WifeSaver's Georgia Power representative was there every step of the way. "He came to the restaurant and looked at the plans to make sure we took advantage of every available rebate," Cunningham says. And the effort paid off. Not only have these upgrades made the restaurant a better place to work and a more comfortable environment for customers, but the restaurant also stands to save on its monthly energy costs.

**"The trick is finding a common ground where you can make it a better place for your employees to work. And to save money."**

- Chris Cunningham, WifeSaver



This high-efficiency ice machine is among the equipment that qualified for Georgia Power rebates.



These new electric fryers not only use less energy, but they also reduce ambient heat in the kitchen.

Georgia Power's Commercial Energy Efficiency Program makes incorporating energy-efficient improvements into your business even more attractive.

Available incentives help reduce the cost to install high-efficiency equipment that results in lower energy use and costs. Incentives apply to:

Lighting • Heating & Cooling  
Food Service & Grocery • Water Heating  
Reflective Roofing • Custom Projects

For more information, visit [georgiapower.com/commercialsavings](http://georgiapower.com/commercialsavings) or call 1-877-310-5607.