

## VEC Sponsors Meigs High School Juniors to Youth Leadership Summit

Cainan Howard and Amberly Burtz, both juniors at Meigs County High School were sponsored by Volunteer Energy Cooperative to attend the Tennessee Electric Cooperative Association's 2015 Youth Leadership Summit March 16-18 in downtown Nashville. Burtz, daughter of Richard and Bobbie Burtz of Decatur, and Howard, son of Patsy Howard of Decatur, were among 46 high school juniors representing the state's 23 electric cooperatives who attended the annual event.

"The Youth Leadership Summit recognizes the best and brightest from our electric co-op service areas and teaches these young ambassadors about their hometown cooperatives and Tennessee state government," said Todd Blocker, TECA director of member relations. "Local electric co-ops, school officials and guidance counselors chose these deserving students to attend the summit based on their interests in government and strong leadership abilities."

"Amberly and Cainan are fine examples of the future leaders we're raising in our local communities," said VEC's Kristy Kelly who chaperoned the students. "VEC is pleased to provide motivated students with this opportunity to join their peers from across Tennessee to learn about rural electric co-ops and experience the legislative process in the State Capitol."

The summit began Monday evening, March 16, at the group's hotel, the Millennium Maxwell House with get-acquainted activities and an introduction to cooperatives led by electric co-op leaders and a leadership development presentation by Amy Gallimore of Four16 Training Solutions.

Tuesday morning's breakfast included presentations led by TECA Executive Vice President David Callis and Director of Government Affairs Mike Knotts in advance of the group's visit to Legislative Plaza. Senator Ken Yager of Kingston and Rep. John Forgety of Athens welcomed the students to Nashville and answered their questions about legislative issues. The 11th-graders then toured the Capitol and saw state government in action at Senate and House committee meetings before posing for photos in front of the historic building.

Burtz and Howard also met with State Sen. Mike Bell and State Rep. Dan Howell.

Following the visit to Capitol Hill, the group enjoyed lunch and leadership activities at a Nashville-area YMCA camp, where the students were also treated to a hot-line trailer demonstration by Tri-County Electric Membership Corporation and Sunbelt Rentals. TCEMC employees showed that electric power does a tremendous amount of work for us, but because it is such a powerful force, we must be careful near it and always exercise safety around power lines. The fun continued with a tour of Bridgestone Arena and a Nashville Predators hockey game, and the busy day was capped off by special guest speakers Miss Tennessee Hayley Lewis and Sgt. Mike Morgan of the Tennessee executive protection detail.

Wednesday morning, the students learned more about electric cooperatives and their daily operations through interactive games. Then they heard an overview of the history of electric cooperatives and answered trivia questions about electric co-ops and the state in the "Energy Battle" competition.

"These students will soon be our community leaders — and electric cooperative member-owners," said VEC President/CEO Rody Blevins. "We want them to see what makes their electric cooperative special, appreciate all their co-op provides for their communities and understand why it was so important to form electric co-ops in the first place."



VEC's Youth Leadership Summit participants met with their state lawmakers in front of the State Capitol Building. Pictured, from left, State Senator Mike Bell, Cainan Howard, Amberly Burtz, Kristy Kelly, and State Representative Dan Howell.

## Volunteer Energy Cooperative Hosts 'Electricity College'

Volunteer Energy Cooperative hosted about 140 sixth graders from Meigs County Middle School on April 7 for "Electricity College." The students attended several "classes" on the cooperative business model, electricity generation and distribution, the math of electric company billing, communications and outage response, electrical equipment, and safety.

Students were also escorted to their classes by VEC volunteers who shared their own educational and career paths.

This is the second year VEC has hosted Meigs County students.

"We wanted to offer something that complimented their classroom instruction on electric circuits and math, and also give them a good overview of the business of electricity distribution," said VEC Vice President of Operations Clyde Jolley. "But we also wanted to make sure it was something that was going to be fun for the students."

Jolley said the feedback from students, teachers, and VEC volunteers after last year's event prompted a second session this year.

Students were split into morning and afternoon sessions. After an introduction, an overview of electricity generation and distribution, and a brief history of VEC, students were separated into three groups. Each group rotated to three different stations where VEC volunteers taught about safety and right-of-way maintenance; a lineman's tools of the trade; and outage management systems and call center operations. At each station students received answers for their "final exam" that they turned in to earn their diplomas.



VEC Lineman Travis Kowanetz taught students about safety equipment that linemen use during the course of a typical day.



"Professor" Patty Hurley, VEC's vice president of Marketing and Economic Development gave students an overview of VEC operations.

The event was also a big hit with the VEC volunteers who participated.

"I think we all enjoyed the energy and the enthusiasm of the students. It was contagious," said Connie Landrum of VEC's Marketing and Economic Development Department.



## Volunteer Energy Cooperative Celebrates 80th Anniversary

On May 29, 1935, a group of 500 Meigs County Citizens met at the Meigs County Courthouse with the intention of bringing electric service to the county.

For-profit power companies had declined to take on the expense of bringing electricity to Meigs County and many other rural areas in the region because they felt they had to run too many miles of line to serve too few customers and could not make a profit on the project. This group of 500 citizens formed the Meigs County Power Association — the organization that is now known as Volunteer Energy Cooperative.

The first lines were energized on August 6, 1936. Since that time VEC has grown to serve more than 113,000 members in all or part of 17 different counties.

Through all that growth and the many changes that have affected the electricity distribution industry, some things remain the same.

First and foremost, as the founders expected, VEC remains a not-for-profit cooperative. Owned and operated solely for the members who get their electricity from VEC, the cooperative has never made a single penny in profits. Our founders demanded that VEC charge only what it costs to deliver service and VEC remains true to that mandate after 80 years.

Our mission statement remains "To deliver the best possible service at the lowest possible price."

VEC's founders also required that their power company do more than just deliver electricity — they insisted that VEC get involved in the local communities they serve. In other sections of this edition of *Powerlines* you'll see articles about how VEC has sponsored high school students and young adults in leadership development conferences with the goal of equipping young leaders to serve their communities. VEC also sponsors college scholarships, 4-H Electric Camp Scholarships, the Washington Youth Tour for high school juniors, safety demonstrations, Project Deserve which helps the needy with their electric bills, and the VECustomers Share program which has donated more than \$5.2 million to local community service organizations.

Throughout our 80 years VEC has also remained committed to employing the latest proven technologies in order to provide superior service in the most economical fashion. That has prompted a culture of constantly evaluating the technology we have at work in our distribution system and continually reviewing equipment and systems that will improve system reliability and help us operate in the most cost-effective way possible.

In next month's issue of *Powerlines* I plan to introduce VEC's latest system-wide major improvement plan for the next five years. We call it "Vision 20/20" and it

includes significant technology and equipment upgrades all designed to provide more reliable service and more effective communications. I'm looking forward to sharing the details with you.



Rody Blevins  
President/CEO  
Volunteer Energy  
Cooperative



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VEC  
Customers Share  
Your Change Changes Things



The VECustomers Share program funded \$27,340 in community service grants in April. Since the inception of the program in October 2001, more than \$5.2 million in grants has been awarded. The deadline for grant applications is the last day of each month. For additional information, contact the office of Marketing and Economic Development, at 423-334-7051. Applications are also available online, at [www.vec.org](http://www.vec.org).



VECustomers Share Board Member Joyce Woods, third from right, presents a March grant check to representatives of Meigs County Ministries. Pictured from left are: Mary Tallent, Marlene Norbert, Clydean Liggett, Michael King, Woods, Sheila Yarborough, Carol Perkinson, and Carolyn R. Norris.

Organizations receiving grants in April

Midway Athletic Club	\$2,500	Ooltewah High School Band Booster	\$500
Rhea County High School Football Boosters for Cheerleaders	\$1,500	Homestead UMC Food Pantry, Crossville	\$500
Pickett County Soil Conservation Club	\$1,350	Polk County High School Club 21	\$500
Riceville Volunteer Fire Department	\$1,200	Grassy Cove Community Center, Crossville	\$500
Fentress County Agricultural Fair	\$1,195	Brown Middle School PTO, Harrison	\$500
Mended Little Hearts of the Upper Cumberland, Cookeville	\$1,025	McMinn County FFA	\$500
Cumberland GAP Mission, Jamestown	\$1,000	New Shepherd Hill Youth Group, Ooltewah	\$500
CommonBond Christian Women's Job Corps, Cleveland	\$1,000	Stone Memorial High School DECA Marketing Club, Crossville	\$500
Third-Fifth Math Club, Crawford	\$1,000	Polk County High School HOSA	\$500
Friends of the Park, Spring City	\$1,000	Upper Cumberland Entrepreneurial Foundation, Crossville	\$500
SpiritHorse TN at Black Fox, Cleveland	\$1,000	Double Springs Sundowners Club	\$300
Benton Lions Club	\$800	Mrs. Emily Bilbrey's 5th Grade Math Club, Byrdstown	\$270
Mended Hearts Chapter 127, Cookeville	\$750	Cumberland County High School DECA	\$250
Meigs County/Decatur Chamber of Commerce	\$700	Burks Environmental Club for 3th & 4th Grade, Monterey	\$250
Meigs County Lions Club	\$700	Bombers Travel Baseball Team, Crossville	\$250
Meigs County High School Baseball Boosters Club	\$600	Helping Hand Ministry on Peavine Road, Crossville	\$250
Stone Memorial High School Automotive Club, Crossville	\$500	Burks 7th & 8th Parent Group, Monterey	\$250
Harrison Recreation	\$500	Burks Elementary School Science Club, Monterey	\$250
Snow Hill Recreation League, Ooltewah	\$500	The Art Guild of Fairfield Glade	\$250
Happy Hearts Seniors, Benton	\$500	Evolution Travel Basketball Club, Benton	\$200
Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Crossville	\$500		

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Another constant through VEC's 80-year history has been the democratic control of the cooperative. Since our inception VEC has been governed by a board of directors that has been directly elected by our members. This board sets policy, rate schedules, and determines the policies that govern the operations of VEC.

The democratic control of the cooperative that was so important to our founders remains an important part of what is so different about being a member of a cooperative instead of a customer of an electric company. By electing their local board representatives, members can make sure their voices are heard and their interests and concerns are being addressed.

In many ways conducting our business exactly as we did 80 years ago would be unacceptable to today's electricity consumers. We have to constantly adapt to how our members use electricity and how they want to interact with their electric cooperative. But while we work hard to respond to our members' ever-changing needs, we feel like it's equally important to continue to embrace the principles that were so important to our founders. A commitment to the communities we serve, a commitment to providing the best possible service at the lowest possible price, and a commitment to the democratic control of your cooperative are values that never go out of style.

Don't Let Thunderstorms  
Come as a Shock to You

As temperatures start rising, so do the chances of thunderstorms. And when thunderstorms hit, lightning can be a serious threat to personal safety. It can also cause power outages and create serious problems for your electronic equipment and electric appliances.

The best atmospheric scientists in the world cannot determine exactly when or where lightning will strike, but there is one thing we can be certain of – it will strike. And when it comes to thunderstorms and lightning, the best defense is to be prepared.

Volunteer Energy Cooperative (VEC) offers Midland weather radios at all its customer service centers. The Midland weather radios offered by VEC can be set to monitor several different counties and provide an alert when threatening weather is approaching. They have a battery backup and also operate on your regular household current.

VEC also offers surge protection that can help protect your homes electronics and appliances from electrical spikes that often occur during thunderstorm season. For more information about Surge Guard and weather radios, visit [www.vec.org](http://www.vec.org).

Lightning has been known to strike more than 10 miles from the storm in an area of clear sky above. So just looking up at the sky may not provide a true indication of whether or not a threat exists.

It's also important to prepare a [thunderstorm/power outage](#) kit that includes:

- Canned/package food
- A manual can opener
- Fresh water (bottled)
- Blankets
- Battery-operated radio
- Flashlight with fresh batteries
- Extra batteries



Happy Mother's Day

Don't let Thunderstorms  
Catch You Off Guard



Protect your home, your appliances, and your sensitive electronics with VEC's new and improved Surge Guard protection system.

Call your local VEC Customer Service Center or get the details at [www.vec.org](http://www.vec.org).

It's also important to prepare now by making sure VEC has your correct phone number on file. This insures an outage at your home can be restored in the most efficient way.

During a thunderstorm:

- Do not take a shower or bath. Water and copper tubing are excellent conductors of electricity.
- Stay away from windows. A central location in the house in an area away from doors and windows is the safest.
- If your power goes out, immediately report it to VEC and then avoid using the phone. (Phone lines may also conduct electricity.)
- Never touch downed power lines. Dial 911 or VEC immediately to ensure that the line is turned off so repairs can be made.

During a power outage:

- Report the outage immediately to VEC.
- Unplug major appliances to prevent a system overload when power is restored. Gradually plug in and turn on appliances after power is restored.
- Avoid opening your refrigerator and/or freezer. The appliance will keep food fresher longer if the door is kept shut.
- Use battery powered flashlights rather than candles whenever possible to avoid the threat of fire.

Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA)

Residential & Outdoor Lighting Fuel Cost Adjustment  
Effective May 1, 2015

2.494¢

For the most current FCA information, visit [www.vec.org](http://www.vec.org)

Volunteer Energy Cooperative is an Equal Opportunity provider and employer.