

Students Tour Washington, D.C.

... Continued from front cover

Students also took in a Washington Nationals baseball game.

Students became closer to the legislative process, as they were able to meet Congressman Lincoln Davis on Capitol Hill. Davis gave them a V.I.P tour of the U.S. Capitol. A number of Tennessee lawmakers hosted a breakfast in the Rayburn House Office Building. Senators Bill Frist and Lamar Alexander spoke with students and posed for pictures with the Tennessee delegation on the Capitol steps before the breakfast.

Students also saw two ceremonies showcasing the honor, skill and valor of the United States military. First, students and adults watched in silence as members of the 3rd U.S. Infantry performed the ceremonial changing of the guard at the Tomb of the Unknowns at Arlington National Cemetery, where the Tennessee Electric Cooperative Association placed a memorial wreath.

Later, they experienced the precision of the Marine Corps Silent Drill Platoon and the music of the United States Marine Drum and Bugle Corps at the Marine Barracks, Washington, D.C., Sunset Parade, performed in the shadow of the United States Marine Corps War Memorial.

In addition to their free trip, the winners from each cooperative were eligible for financial assistance they could use to go to college. Scholarships of \$3,000, \$2,000 and \$1,000 were awarded for the top three essays in the state. The winners were announced at a Tennessee group meeting at their hotel just outside of Washington.

Lauren Moody, of Clarkrange, is the daughter of Ken and Cindy Moody. Tiffany Buckler, of Spring City, is the daughter of Larry and Dedra Buckler. Lauren Keith, of Athens, is the daughter of Mike and Darlene Keith. Danielle Gwinn, of Sweetwater, is the daughter of Dana and Theresa Gwinn.

The four students and teacher were sponsored by VEC on the all-expense paid trip and the trip was coordinated by the Tennessee Electric Cooperative Association.

Heat Pumps

We've taken the sweat out of purchasing an electric heat pump.

An electric heat pump is the most comfortable and efficient way to heat and cool your home. In warm weather it keeps you pleasantly cool and in cold weather it circulates warm air evenly throughout every room.



Program Benefits

There's a lot to consider when you're buying a heating-and-cooling system. One of the benefits of the VEC/TVA *energy right*® heat pump program is access to contractors who can give you expert advice on the right system for you.

Come by or call your local VEC service center to learn more.

www.vec.org

VEC
VOLUNTEER ENERGY COOPERATIVE

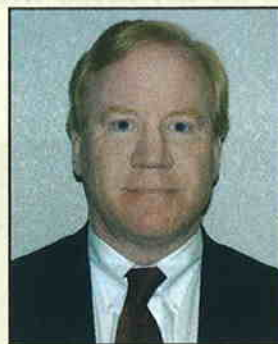
vec@vec.org

Powerlines is produced by the Volunteer Energy Cooperative's Marketing & Economic Development Department as a service to customers. Comments and suggestions can be e-mailed to vec@vec.org or mailed to VEC Marketing & Economic Development Department, P.O. Box 277, Decatur, TN 37322.

August 2006

POWERLINES

Newsletter of Volunteer Energy Cooperative



Even at Higher Prices, Copper is Not Worth a Life

By Rody Blevins President/CEO

In my column in November's *Powerlines*, I talked about the rising costs of materials we use at Volunteer Energy Cooperative (VEC). One of the materials that continues to skyrocket in cost is copper. During the period between Jan. 1, 2006 and May 1, 2006 the price of copper has risen 62%.

That is turning into a double-edge sword for many utilities.

Not only does it mean we pay more for the copper we use, it also drives up the price of scrap copper and entices some criminals to target utilities to steal copper and re-sell it to scrap metal dealers. We wind up paying more to purchase the copper in the first place and then, paying again to replace stolen copper and repair the damage thieves create while stealing the copper.

We've been relatively lucky in this regard here at VEC. But after seeing what some other utilities were going through, we've tightened our security and remain vigilant.

Of course we do this because we want to avoid the losses some other utilities have suffered. We also want to avoid the expense to our customers that these losses create. But there is another side to this issue that also demands our attention. That issue is safety.

Thieves are not just trying to steal the stores of copper wire that utilities maintain. Some have resorted to trying to steal copper grounding wires off homes and distribution equipment.

This is an extremely dangerous practice. And the danger is not limited to the thieves. It can jeopardize homes and the home's occupants, as well as utility company employees who work on the power lines.

There are plenty of good reasons not to steal electric wire. It's against the law, it creates outages and reliability problems, it poses a danger to utility workers, and it can kill you.

In recent months at least four people, three in Kentucky and one in British Columbia, died while trying to remove copper wire from electricity distribution systems. A study conducted by the University of Alabama Birmingham determined that in Jefferson County Alabama, seven people have died trying to steal copper wire from power suppliers.

Under the most common of circumstances, grounding wires are not energized and pose no real threat for electrocution or shock. But often, during normal system operations, energy is diverted to the ground through these copper grounding wires. If someone happens to be touching a grounding wire during one of these times, the electricity will use the person as its route to the ground. There is a significant risk of serious injury or death.

VEC will prosecute, to the fullest extent of the law, anyone caught tampering with ground wires. But that could be the least of the thief's worries. I have to ask these thieves: Is it really worth risking your life for a dollar or two worth of copper? Is it worth endangering the lives of others?

I'd certainly hate to see someone killed because they are trying to steal a dollar's worth of copper. And we certainly don't want to see one of our employees injured or worse because someone has been tampering with grounding wires.

I also encourage everyone to report thefts or tampering with electric lines. You might just be saving someone's life.

High School Juniors Tour Washington, D.C.

Four high school juniors and a teacher from Volunteer Energy Cooperative's service area were among 114 Tennessee Students and about 1,800 students from across the country who attended the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's 2006 Washington Youth Tour.

Lauren Moody of Clarkrange High School, Tiffany Buckler of Rhea County High School, Lauren Keith of McMinn County High School, and Danielle Gwinn of McMinn County High School were VEC's participants in this year's trip.

Each of the 114 students was rewarded with an expense-paid trip

to the nation's capital for writing award-winning essays showing the benefits of cooperative power for the 2006 Washington Youth Tour Writing Contest, sponsored by Tennessee's electric cooperatives.

The topic for this year's contest was "Electric Cooperatives: Going Beyond the Wires." Students across Tennessee were invited to write short stories, no longer than 800 words, showing electric cooperatives' commitment to their communities – a commitment that goes beyond providing electric service.

Lauren Keith's short story was judged best overall in the VEC service district. That story appeared in the June edition of *Powerlines*. Her story was forwarded for state-wide judging and it also earned a spot on the tour for her English teacher, Gwen Lane of McMinn County High School.

In and around Washington, students were able to visit the historical places they had studied in school, including the homes of two of America's founding fathers: Thomas Jefferson's Monticello and George Washington's Mount Vernon. And they were able to see many of the famous Washington, D.C. landmarks including the Jefferson, Lincoln, World War II, Korean War and Vietnam Veteran's memorials; White House; Smithsonian Museums complex; Library of Congress; Washington National Cathedral; and the Holocaust Memorial museums.



Volunteer Energy Cooperative's Washington Youth Tour participants pose with U.S. Sen. Bill Frist on the steps of the U.S. Capitol. Pictured, from left, are: Lauren Keith, Gwen Lane, Frist, Lauren Moody, Danielle Gwinn, and Tiffany Buckler.

Continued Inside...

VEC Customers *Share*

A Little Change Goes a Long Way

By allowing their electric bills to be rounded up to the next dollar Volunteer Energy Cooperative (VEC) customers funded \$33,250 in community service grants in May. Since the inception of the program in October 2001, a total of \$1,833,551 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.

Organizations receiving grants in May include:

Hilltoppers Inc., Crossville - \$2,330; Meigs County Emergency Services 2nd District - \$2,000; Nocatula Civitan Club, Decatur - \$2,000; Byrdstown Senior Center - \$1,500; Fentress County American Red Cross - \$1,500; Ocoee Outreach, Cleveland - \$1,500; Birchwood Church of God Community Cemetery - \$1,400; Community Thrift Store, Cleveland - \$1,150; Decatur Volunteer Fire Department - \$1,000; Midway Athletic Club - \$1,000; Athens Civitan Club - \$1,000; Benton Elementary School PTO - \$1,000; Cleveland/Bradley County Keep America Beautiful - \$1,000; Calhoun PTO - \$1,000; Midway Quarterback Club - \$1,000; Evensville Fire District - \$1,000; Monterey Lions Club - \$1,000; Senior Lighthouse Center, Spring City - \$1,000; McDonald Cemetery Association, Ooltewah - \$600; Fentress County Tennessee Scholars Program - \$500; Greenwood Baptist Church Youth Group - \$500; Lakeside Youth, Ten Mile - \$500; U.T. Extension Cumberland County 4-H - \$500; Friends for the Sheandoah Library Club, Cleveland - \$500; Tri-State Exhibition Center, Cleveland - \$500; Monterey Football Field Crew - \$500; American Legion Post 79, Decatur - \$500; Fair Park Senior Center, Crossville - \$500; York Institute Future Business Leaders of America, Jamestown - \$500; Burks Baseball Boosters, Monterey - \$500; G.A.'s of Mountain Springs Baptist Church, Old Fort - \$500; Linsdale Community Services - \$500; Fentress County Longbeards - \$500; American Red Cross, Chattanooga Chapter - \$400; Stone Memorial High School Wrestling Boosters, Crossville - \$370; Bread of Life Rescue Mission, Crossville - \$300; and Rhea County Wrestling Club - \$200.



VEC Customers Share Board Member Barbara Rector, right, presents a grant check in the amount of \$1,500 to Diana Dowdy, director of the Byrdstown Senior Center.

Candidates Vying for VEC Board Positions

As of press time, the following candidates have expressed their intention to run for the Volunteer Energy Cooperative Board of Directors. A finalized ballot will be mailed to VEC members in the applicable districts in mid-August with the names of the official candidates included.

District 1

Marvin Stinnett

Marvin Stinnett, of Old Fort, is the incumbent member of the Volunteer Energy Cooperative Board of Directors representing Polk County. He has served on the VEC Board since 1987. He is retired and a co-owner of Stinnett Pallet.

He has served as a Gideon for more than 30 years and is a member and past president of Old Fort Community Club.

He and his wife, Evelyn, have two children, Mike Stinnett and Ann German, and attend Blue Ridge Temple Baptist Church where he serves as a deacon.



Marvin Stinnett

District 5

Sammy Norton

Sammy Norton, of Decatur, is the incumbent member of the Volunteer Energy Cooperative Board of Directors representing Meigs County. He has served on the VEC Board since 2000. He has received Credentialed Cooperative Director certification from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

Norton is a dairy farmer and a graduate of Meigs County High School. He has served on the board of directors for the Valley Farmers Cooperative and served on the Farm Services Agency board from 1983 to 1997. He is also a member of Meigs County Masonic Lodge. He and his wife, Sherry, have four children, Shelly, Chris, Andrea, and Tonya. They are members of Pisgah Baptist Church.



Sammy Norton

Ronnie Colyer

Ronnie Colyer, of Ten Mile, is challenging for the District 5 seat on the Volunteer Energy Cooperative Board of Directors.

He is a real estate and livestock auctioneer, a farm operator, and an equipment operator. He is a graduate of Midway High School.

Colyer has been a member of the National Auctioneer's Association and the Tennessee Auctioneer's Association since 2000. He has also received a certificate of appreciation from St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital for fund-raising.

He and his wife, Shelia Enix Colyer, are members of Pleasant Hill Baptist Church in Ten Mile.



Ronnie Colyer

District 9

Randy Bond

Randy Bond, of Crossville, is the incumbent member of the Volunteer Energy Cooperative Board of Directors representing Cumberland County East. He has served on the VEC Board since 1997. He is executive vice president at Cumberland County Bank.

Bond graduated from Fort Knox High School in Fort Knox, KY. He earned his Bachelor's of Business Administration degree from the University of Kentucky and his Master's Degree in Business and Education from Tennessee Technological University. Bond served as an Infantry Squad Leader with the U.S. Army's 7th Cavalry Division in Vietnam from 1968 to 1970.

He also serves as Board of Directors chairman for Hilltoppers, Inc., a board member for Uplands Retirement Village, treasurer of the Mabel Harrison Fund, and as a board member for VolFirst Telecommunications Services. He and his wife, Glenda have two children, Michael and Scott, and are members of First United Methodist Church in Crossville.



Randy Bond

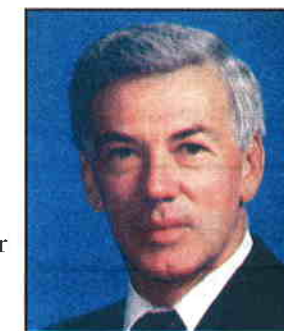
J.C. Cook

J.C. Cook, of Cumberland County, is challenging for the District 9 seat on the Volunteer Energy Cooperative Board of Directors.

Cook served on the VEC Board from 1978 to 1981. He is semi-retired and works part-time in the construction industry. He worked in retail sales for more than 30 years. He spent 12 years with Goodyear Tires, owned Cook Tires for 13 years, and was part owner of Cumberland General Store for 8 years.

He is a graduate of Cumberland County High School and attended Draughon's College of Drafting. He was also a member of the Crossville Jaycees from 1968 to 1974.

He has two children, Lourae Cook Henry and Charlie Cook. He attends Oak Hill Baptist Church where he has been a member since 1964 and where he served as church secretary for 12 years.



J.C. Cook